

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

<https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/03/colonialism-why-write-back/>

GEORGE SEFA DEI AND CHIZOBA IMOKA, JAN 3 2018

We write this paper as a critique of colonization from the standpoints of our African subjectivities. While we enter the discussion from the intellectual landscape of the African experience, we believe other colonized peoples may share our stories. The stories we tell matter as much as who is telling these stories. George Dei is an anti-racist educator and anti-colonial theorist born in Ghana. He emigrated to Canada in 1979 for graduate studies and upon completion of his doctorate, has been teaching in Canada in the areas of anti-racist, minority youth and schooling, anti-colonial thought, Indigenous knowledges and African development. The question of knowledge and decolonization has been a major part of his work, focusing on Indigenous cultural knowledges as sites and sources for counter-visioning schooling and education. Chizoba Imoka is a Nigerian educator with ten years of experience in youth programming, social justice and education reform advocacy. Her interest in anti-colonial and decolonial discourse began as a teenager when she started to observe the contradictions and shortcomings in her secondary school education. Despite attending private primary and secondary schools that followed 'international standards', Chizoba still graduated ill-equipped to contribute to the transformative development of her community and continent. Instead of learning from an African centered perspective, Chizoba was immersed in a curriculum that upheld European histories, social contexts and norms over indigenous knowledge systems and cultural context. Even though her secondary school qualifications facilitated her admission into a Canadian university, Canadians still wanted Chizoba to justify her "Englishness". They wondered why she spoke "such good English" and had "such diverse life experiences". Within the Canadian context, Chizoba was made to feel exotic and inadequate. In the face of the myriad social problems facing Nigeria, Chizoba felt incompetent and unable to proffer relevant and immediate solutions, even after a university degree from Canada. This set Chizoba off on a journey to unveil and disrupt the deceit in contemporary education and recolonizing conceptions of 'development' that negate colonial history and its associated violence.

The inherent defects in the colonial project on our lives is real and ubiquitous in our communities. We cannot afford to remain silent for others to tell our stories. We remember growing up in our respective communities in Ghana and Nigeria, there was a joke about inviting the Whiteman to come back and rule over us. It was a joke that was said out of frustration with the current state of development in the hands of our leaders. In one breadth, this is a very confounding joke, in another, it is a form of intellectual lunacy. No one in their right mind wants or should want to be recolonized. Reflecting, to be colonized, is to have your personhood, humanity, and the historic existence of your community be denied and completely disregarded. Amongst other things, colonization was an assault on our basic human decency, a denial of our rights as a people and domination over us. To desire or aspire to colonize another person/community requires an extremely warped mindset, a high level of intellectual arrogance and a dehumanized personhood. One has to equate the purpose of life to material acquisitions, affirm their personhood only through their ability to dominate/bully others, shrink their mental capacity so as not to respect/understand human diversity and rationalize a wide range of unfettered violence. Enthusiasm about enacting saviorhood on others is troubling, and represents a sign of colonial complex with a very incoherent understanding of global history. As colonized subjects, becoming the Whiteman's burden is not a compliment, it is an insult, it is too much to fathom when left alone.

As African scholars, we have to write back to the imperial narrative. If we do not respond, we risk emboldening fallacious narratives that serve to re-write history, erase historically sidelined voices/experiences and in so doing, reaffirm racist and colonial logics of 'development'. Yet, in 'writing back', we stand accused of always reacting to the dominant narrative. However, there is a place and time to reinfuse consciousness into the polity about the ongoing

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

colonial project and the unfinished and urgent business of bringing about justice and decolonization. We write in this spirit.

The Intellectual and Political

To be clear, there can be no Africa without Europe and vice versa. But this does not mean that the world began with Europe. It simply means our journeys have been inter-twinned by the accident of history and of the conscious attempt of Europe to interfere in our affairs. We may never know the future for the colonized if colonization had not happened. So, for anyone to take one dominant narrative about the supposed gains of colonization as the only history worth talking about is intellectual lunacy and mediocrity. What might have happened had Europe not intertwined in our histories. It is conceivable we could have had different and positive futures. This fact cannot be taken out of the equation when narrating the story of colonization as far as African peoples are concerned.

We are unapologetic in affirming that colonization has not ended. In fact, we are still fighting the vestiges of colonization in thought, action and practice. As Grosfugel (2007) reminds us, "one of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of the 'postcolonial' world" (p. 219). In the 'post-colonial' world, we continue to feel the grip of colonialism and see clearly that colonization has done and continues to do more harm than good. Even though political and economic leadership of the post-colonies are in the hands of locals, Torres (2007) cogently illustrates that colonialism has morphed into invisible patterns of power relations that pervades every part of society. The legacy of colonialism is "coloniality". He explains:

Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breath coloniality all the time and everyday (p.243).

Colonization has done and continues to do more harm than good and we will be deluded to be calling for its return and sustenance even from those who think colonialism has ended. Colonialism is an affront on our intelligence and ability to design our own futures.

We enter this discussion from the discursive position of the power of ideas to bring about change. Understanding colonization can shape our everyday thinking and political practice. The damage of colonization was physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. There is little wonder that people may see material progress (whatever that is) as the only measure of good and bad. The harm of colonization was more mental than the physical havoc it has created and continues to create. We cannot decouple a discussion of colonialism from White supremacist logics. On-going processes of colonization continue to be mired in what long ago Smith (2010) identified as the three main pillars of White supremacy logics: slavery, genocide and orientalism. These logics are continuing features of the processes associated with Euro-modern colonialism that is intertwined with the flow of Western capital. The colonized body was historically enslaved, denying our humanity and making us disposable, a process, Cesaire (1972) describes as "thingification". Granted, the colonization process played out differently for colonized populations across the world. For Africans and Indigenous groups, our deliberate slaveability and objectification was simultaneously accompanied by various types of genocides – death to our humanity, our knowledge systems, and local languages and our identities. The ultimate goal of colonial genocide is the complete elimination and extermination of the Indigene and our sense of history and culture. These systems needed to be annihilated in order to pave way for imperial expansion. If this is too severe a characterization for readers, we ask: How else will we call the polices of the international financial community and the global education architecture that continues to determine life and death of the colonized? Our lands and rich natural resources still continues to be exploited by imperial powers. For landmines in Malawi, pipelines in Canada and agribusinesses in Brazil, Mexico to be established,

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

indigenous populations are constantly being displaced from their lands. Even though English language and European knowledge system is indigenous to a minority of the world population, the global education architecture upholds a narrow and Eurocentric understanding of education. The success of students across the world is measured and determined by their: competence in English language, embodiment of Eurocentric norms/perspectives and alienation from their indigenous cultures. Teachers across the African continent are constantly denigrated for their “incompetence” in western knowledge systems/languages which is foreign to them and their immediate environment. These teachers, such as the 21,780 primary school teachers in Kaduna have lost their livelihood as a result of a competence test they failed (Vanguard Newspaper, 2017). Yet, the competence and intelligence of British, Canadian, French teachers will never be measured by their expertise in African knowledge systems or languages!

It is a misinterpretation of history to argue that colonized people have and continue to allow these atrocities to happen. The reach of the imperial force through its globalization mantra holds powerful sway. A neo-modernization approach to development as being run down the throat of a number of colonized populations can be seen as a form of Westernization that privileges and universalizes Western values, ethics, and governance over Indigenous knowledge systems and claims. Admittedly, colonized people can and do resist. But this is not our argument here except to say it is in the nature of our resistance that we argue. Moreover, we don't need to glorify colonialism and advocate for its return. As we contended earlier, colonialism is still here, it is on-going. What must be done and what we are insisting on here is for a sincere and intellectually upright journey towards justice and structural changes to finally begin. Socio-political-economic structures must be reconfigured so as to enable colonized subjects create their own paths, carve a new course, and develop a new futurity that reflects their intellectual, political and spiritual agencies.

Colonialism Is Not a Charitable Enterprise

Contrary to contemporary assertions about the “benefits” of colonialism or the civilizing mission of colonization, Cesaire (1972) cogently reminds us that “Colonization is (was) neither evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law” (p.32). Instead, colonialism is a sickening civilization (Cesaire, 1972), a bloodthirsty civilization (Bird, 2004) that measures its worth solely based on Europe's global domination and its economic acquisitions by *any means necessary*. It has involved trickery, bullying, manipulation, unrestrained violence and the global imposition of a Eurocentric social order and values. While the primary purpose of colonialism was imperial expansion, Mignolo (2006) shows that this economic expansion was predicated on the secularization of a distorted ‘modern’ reality that foregrounded and presented European culture, religion, values, knowledge systems as the superior and universal way. In unveiling the deceit of colonialism and disrupting the ‘charitable’ narrative of colonization, Mignolo reveals the geo-particularism of this euro-modernity social order in his seminal paper: *Delinking: The Rhetoric of modernity, the logic of Coloniality and the grammar of decoloniality*. Mignolo traces the philosophical underpinnings (emancipation; I think, therefore I am) of Euro-modernity to three historical experiences in the 17th & 18th century. Namely, they are the Glorious revolution of 1668 in England, the independence of American colonists from the British Empire in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789. Even though these ‘revolutions’ were led by the White bourgeois and Anglo-descendants of British colonizers for the freedom of a new social class and for subsequent imperial control/independence, the tenets of the struggle (emancipation/enlightenment) was exported around the world through subsequent imperial expansion and colonialism. Christian missionaries were the initial agents. Through their proselytizing missions, they paved the way for an intricate social system of colonization to be planted across the world. Starting from advancing the idea that non-Europeans and their cultures are inferior, savage and heathenistic, they performed “epistemicides” and universalized this conception of a superior European modernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Ndlovu-Gatsheni explains:

Having performed these epistemicides, the constructors and drivers of global coloniality that included Christian missionaries, proceeded to make their own patterns of producing knowledge and modes of knowing to be the only legitimate and scientific ways of understanding the world. They mystified their own patterns of knowing and knowledge production (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; p.194). But they also tried to consistently place these Euro-North American-centric patterns “far out of the reach of the dominated” (Quijano 2007; 169).

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

This epistemicide and cultural invasion accompanied with military violence across colonies facilitated the supplant of indigenous systems globally for replacement with European economic, political and social systems. Put together, Mignolo describes these as the three “major macro-narratives of western civilization” (Liberalism, Capitalism and Christianity). These macro-narratives are the pillars of “euro-modernity”. They are rooted in a “Greco-roman epistemological foundation” and are driven by the six imperial languages of the world (English, German, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and French). A critical event in the consolidation and universal spread of euro-modernity narratives/values in contemporary society is the Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1886. It is important to remember that this conference was not a social gathering to eat cake and drink tea but a gathering of 14 European men to arbitrarily divide Africa and Africans amongst themselves for their imperial aspirations. Apart from the sheer evil, arrogance and racist audacity associated with this action, this division involved splitting families apart, forcing people with conflicting cultural values to live together in countries and pitting citizens against each other. The series of post-independence civil wars and tensions that swept across former colonies (Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon) starting from the 90’s is amongst the enduring violent legacies of colonialism. The creation of the United Nations International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organizations at the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944 was in the same breath of upholding a global colonial social order. After World War II, this conference set out to create a global governance architecture that could help ‘manage’ the world. At this time, many countries were still under colonial rule and the racist underpinnings of the ‘new world order’ remained intact.

Racism Anchors Colonialism and Capitalism

It is well documented that imperial expansion relied on the intentional creation of hierarchies between cultural social systems but also on human lives. Specifically, this hierarchy is upheld by what Quijano (2000) articulates as a “colonial model of power” that interlocks a certain colonizing conception/manifestation of human life, subjectivity and knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) explains:

Coloniality of power..... is a global hegemonic model of power established since colonial encounters *that articulated race and labour, as well as space and peoples, according to the needs of capital and to the benefit of White European peoples (our emphasis)*. Thus, this neoliberal democracy that currently masquerades as a global salvation for the multitudes only hides coloniality of power that maintains the hierarchies of races created in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as Europe constructed itself as the centre of the world civilization and Whites put themselves at the apex of the human development ladder while pushing Africa into a permanent subaltern position (p.18).

In conceptualizing a world that will be at the service of the imperial desires of White European people, colonial difference (Mignolo, 2007) across race, knowledge systems, philosophy, subjectivity, gender, religion was spelt out by European colonizers. European race, knowledge systems, religion and male gender were upheld as superior while the others were marked as inferior. The inferior knowledge and race were open to dispensability, “disposability” (Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2000) and selective use for the purpose of advancing Europe’s imperial desires (Torres, 2007). In the article: *Dispensable and Bare Lives: Coloniality and the Hidden Political/Economic Agenda of Modernity*, Mignolo’s description of inferior beings, racism and imperial expansion is instructive:

Dispensable lives are instead the consequences of the racist foundation of economic capitalist practices: cost reductions, financial gains, accumulation to re-invest to further accumulation, are economic goals that put human lives in second place. Racism is a necessary rhetoric in order to devalue, and justify dispensable lives that are portrayed (by hegemonic discourses) as less valuable. Once again, the bottom line of racism is devaluation and not the color of your skin. The color of the skin is just a marker to devalue (P. 81).

Enveloping the rhetoric of racism and the racist economic foundation is a corrupted and co-opted knowledge base/atmosphere that powerfully determines whose lives are dispensable/disposable or not and sustains the accompanying social value of these lives/skin color. This “knowledge atmosphere” and the accompanying treatment/social value meted on certain lives also produces a certain kind of subject and subjectivity towards maintaining the hierarchies in a colonial economic social order. Mignolo (2009) describes this “knowledge atmosphere” and the accompanying social value of lives/skin color as a consequence of “epistemic imperial racism”.

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

In order to carry on such projects (slavery and holocaust), you have to be able to make human beings feel that they are not quite human like you, either because they are a commodity (or exploited like animals) or because they are made into illegal criminals that do not deserve to be in the polity of citizens. Briefly, common to both the economic legacy of slavery and the political/legal legacy of the Holocaust, is the epistemic racism of the modern world: the coloniality of knowledge. *The coloniality of being is a consequence of the coloniality of knowledge (our emphasis)* (p.82).

Coloniality of being and knowledge are two sides of the same coin, marching towards and sustaining a colonial social order. It has also facilitated the systemic pillaging that Europe has used to enrich itself. Rodney (1972) explains that the impact of slavery on Africa's economic development is immeasurable. Apart from the social violence meted on various African communities and the loss of lives, slavery involved systemic removal of able-bodied (15-25 years) young Africans from their respective communities. This population loss meant that African economies were slowed down as a result of the knowledge loss and the subsequent need to restructure the economy. In Europe and America, surviving slaves were exploited and used as free labor to build their economies. In the Gold Coast, slave trade undermined the gold economy because humans were now deemed to be more valuable for capitalistic exploration in Europe.

Colonialism and Colonization Produced Eurocentric Education

Mazama (2003) said it cogently, "colonization was not simply an enterprise of economic exploitation and political control, as it was commonly held, but also an on-going enterprise of conceptual distortion and invasion, leading to widespread confusion and ultimately, mental incarceration" (p.3). In education, mental incarceration and conceptual distortion amongst citizens is brought to life through the general orientation of schools, the curriculums, the expectations and associated practices. Wane (2008) points out that: "it should be understood that colonization through education was part of a much bigger and lengthier process. All the learning was embedded in a social structure designed to erode traditional knowledges and values. Colonial education succeeded in planting seeds for expansion, growth and sustainability of imperialism." (p.185). Historically, the purpose of colonial schooling was twofold: to respond to the immediate economic needs of the imperial capital and to develop local foot soldiers and systems that will continue to uphold the imperial mission and social order. This involved developing a new generation of "mis-educated citizens" (Shujaa, 1994) that are culturally decentered (Asante, 2007), alienated from their heritage (Dei, 2006), self-denigrate and advance the superiority of Europeans. Achieving these outcomes involved upholding colonized knowledge in the curriculum and in so doing, colonizing the intellect of citizens. Colonialism of knowledge is not only about deceitfully establishing hierarchies amongst various cultural knowledge systems (European knowledge – superior; 'other' knowledges –inferior) but also transitioning and enforcing this social construction into a human embodiment and an unquestioned universal lived reality that is upheld/defended by both the colonizers and some colonized people. In the colonized, this is made possible through "intellectual colonization" which Toure & Sloan (1972) defines as "a sum of acquired habits, of uncontrollable behavior, a way of life, a way of thinking of which the whole constitutes a sort of "second nature" that really seems to have destroyed the original personality of the colonized" (p.8). Undergirding intellectual colonization is a "colonized complex that blemishes our evolution and even marks our reflexes" (p.8), to the extent that the colonized learn to proclaim their inferiority and justify their domination. In the colonized, intellectual colonization manifests like what Wa Thiong'o describes as a "cultural bomb" (p.3). He explains:

The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces which would stop their springs of life. It even plants serious doubts about the moral rightness of struggle. Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death wish.

Intellectual colonization hinges on the dehumanization and cultural self-estrangement of the colonized. The colonized

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

have to be reduced into “things” and “exotic objects” without history or memory (Serequeberhan, 2003, p.53). From this line of thinking, the dehumanized colonized “things” come to believe that they can only gain subjectivity and social value through the assimilation of ‘superior’ European values. Their success as human beings can be measured by their ability to reproduce and perpetuate Eurocentric ways of being across economic, social and civic life. As Toure (1972) observes, *“this science of dehumanization of colonized is so subtle in its methods at times that it progressively succeeds in warping our natural physical carriage and in devaluing our original virtues and qualities with a view to our assimilation”* (p.8).

The dangerous consequences of the resulting identity crisis and cognitive violence associated with colonization is deeply felt in Africa’s current and future leadership situation. Many high ranking and influential public servants (Finance Ministers, Education Ministers, governorship candidates) are often poached from Eurocentric institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, private banks where Eurocentric ways of being, knowledge systems and conceptions of development are the stock in trade. With such Eurocentric training, these African leaders are ill-equipped to enable and promote a vision of development that is inclusive, people centered and draws from the indigenous knowledge systems of Africans on the ground. Instead, you hear many of the African leaders speak about developing social systems that becomes the “Dubai of Africa” or the “African New York”. Amongst the upcoming generation, students are being schooled in a way that is ahistorical, disconnected from their lived realities/aspirations, reinforces colonial ethnic relations and ill-prepares them for social-political leadership. In Imoka (2014)’s study on the schooling practices at the Pre-University program of African Leadership Academy, South Africa, the aspiring young leaders reported going through secondary school in a way that made them believe Africa had nothing to offer to its self or the world. In their classes, they were not allowed to think critically or explore creative ways of thinking. Instead of their curriculums being responsive and reflective of their immediate cultural environment, it was reflective of Europe. Even though students wanted to provide meaningful leadership to their communities both in urban and rural areas, they lacked basic understanding of their environment and as a result, unable to create meaningful bridges of dialogue. In Imoka’s doctoral research on student experiences in Nigerian secondary schools (Imoka, 2017), only 22% of the 882 students that were surveyed took History as a subject in school. Students that were streamed into science class learnt nothing about the socio-political evolution of the country. Even though these students took social studies in junior school, they learnt about Nigeria from independence era. When the various epistemologies of the Nigerian communities were discussed in class, it was presented as a thing of the past. Colonization was also taught to the students as a beneficial event for the evolution of Africa. Even though Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups and 400+ languages, only three ethnic groups are foregrounded in the curriculum. English, a foreign language to all students and their families is the language of instruction. The tensions and prejudices between ethnic groups that stem from the colonial era was incubated within the school system and made manifest in the violent relationships students had with each other. Out of the thirty students that were interviewed, none believed school adequately prepared them for leadership.

Conclusion

It is impossible to have a sincere reflection about the question of development without an anti-colonial lens. Through colonial and colonizing relations, oppressed communities continue to find themselves inserted in very hostile politico-economic conditions that reproduce dependency and imperial savior complexes. Elsewhere (Dei 2000; Dei and Alireza (2001) and Dei and Kempf 2006) have built on the pioneering works of Fanon (1963, 1967), Memmi (1965), Cesaire (1972), wa Thiong’o (1986) and many others to define the anti-colonial discursive framework as a theorization of colonial and re-colonial relations in society. Beyond the dynamics of colonial relations, the anti-colonial discursive framework concerns itself with the after effects of colonial encounters on power relations and social structures that frames nation building and citizenship. In reconstituting power relations and repositioning social structures towards critical inclusion for all, the anti-colonial discursive framework foregrounds three key postulations: a) an assessment of the processes of knowledge production, interrogation, validation, and dissemination; b) reaffirming claims of Indigeneity and Indigenous ways of knowing and; c) upholding citizen’s recourse to agency, subjective politics, and resistance (see Dei, 2000). Among the theoretical suppositions of the anti-colonial framework is the awareness that the transformation of social realities must start with asking new questions about the what, how, and why of development: What sort of development should be taking place in our communities today? Whose knowledge informs this development? To what extent is the vision of development that is advanced aligned to and

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

grounded in the indigenous epistemologies, histories and the aspirations of local people? How are community members coming to learn and use multiple lenses of critical inquiry to understand the processes of colonization and the impact on social development? As Dei (2000) has enthused, 'colonial' means more than anything 'foreign' or 'alien' – it has the added meaning of something that is 'imposed' and 'dominating.' In our contemporary society, it is critical to continue to acknowledge how colonial history has shaped present life and recognize that colonial experiences are not necessarily "neo-colonial". Rather, they emanate from 're-organized colonial' relations between indigenous communities and embedded in social institutions and laws. In so doing, these re-organized colonial relations in society influences mindsets, social structures and dominate the social relations of knowledge production, ruling, and social practice (see Andreotti and de Souza, 2012; Grosfuguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2007; Shultz, 2015).

The anti-colonial lens is also about viewing decolonization as both a process and set of practices aligned with the body/mind/spirit interface and a politics of healing ourselves from the psychological scars, physical and cultural dislocation, and wounds of colonial mimicry (Anzaldúa, 1987; Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1981; Dei, 2014). Colonizing tendencies in knowledge are revealed in the imposition of Western knowledge hierarchies of particular ideas, power relations, interactions, and the disciplining of bodies. In this context, conventional development is a colonizing practice that needs subversion. Moreover, conventional development approaches haven't succeeded. Recent reports of slavery and human trade in Libya capture this. A combination of deplorable political leadership across Africa, imposed neoliberal social policies/mandates dating back from the 1980's and the enduring colonial policy structures Africans are governed by have turned the continent into a living hell. In the area of education, neoliberal policies/programs from the World Bank and bilateral agencies like Department of International Development (DFID), United Kingdom negate indigenous ways of knowing, and local discussions about students being educated to provide culturally relevant leadership. Instead, their programming imposes a Eurocentric knowledge structure that is dependent on colonially educated Africans and European consultants. Instead of boosting public education, these World Bank and DFID programs actively encourage and incentivize the expansion of substandard private schools. Africans who have turned education into an entrepreneurship project are complicit in this social destruction. Students that graduate from these neglected public schools and substandard private schools are caught up in a vicious cycle of poverty and underemployment that entails precarious work, slavery and hopelessness. In search for hope, youth endanger their lives and begin a journey across the Mediterranean towards Europe. The result of this crisis is what the CNN documentary on human slavery revealed (Elbagir, 2017). It is critically important to analyze the ongoing objectification of Africa by western researchers, charities and European leaders such as Emmanuel Macron from a historical and anti-colonial lens. Africa and African leadership may be implicated and complicit in recent deplorable trends on the continent. But these in no way makes a justifiable case for a return to colonization, unless in the mind of the intellectual living in a fantasy world.

During French president, Emmanuel Macron's recent visit to various African countries, he all but asked Africans to be thankful for their colonization. We need to be wary about glorifying colonization when the legacies of colonialism are still being felt across the globe. We must speak loudly and push back when Western countries and its leaders, including academic researchers insist on maintaining global supremacy and try to discount the violent global colonial history and the numerous ways citizens of the global south continue to resist. Real development for the global south and progress for the world hinges on our ability to mentally "delink" (Mignolo, 2007; Amin, 1990) from Eurocentric development as the 'true', universal and only pathway to global development. We must disrupt and restructure the current global socio-political-economic structures that is informed by a "uni", Eurocentric knowledge system. We must transition to a global structure that is informed by "plural" knowledge systems. This involves decentering European knowledge system/conception of development from the global mental framework of development. European knowledge system/conception of development needs to be brought down from its high global pedestal and put alongside other sidelined, non-European knowledge systems that are Indigenous to a critical mass of the world's population (Asante, 2007; Muiu & Martin, 2009). Instead of a "universal" world as we have now, we must transition to a "pluriversal" world (Mignolo, 2007). It is important that discussions about development, decolonization and justice occurs in from an interconnected and inter-geographical perspective. Inclusive and relevant development must be seen as a project of reconfiguration. This is truly the only way to pursue an inclusive and holistic global development project. As Mignolo (2007) muses:

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

...there are many 'beginnings' beyond Adam and Eve and Greek civilization and many other foundational languages beyond Greek and Latin. With and in each language comes different concepts of economy that of course Adam Smith was unable to think, and other political theories beyond Niccolo Machiavelli or Thomas Hobbes; and different conceptions of life which leads to philosophical practices that cannot be dependent from Greek canonical dictums in matters of thoughts! (p.456)".

References

- Albagir, N. (November, 2017) People for Sale. *CNN* Retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html>
- Amin, S. (1990). *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World*, trans. *M. Wolfers*. London: Zed.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987). *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria and Cherríe Moraga (1981) [eds.]. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. New York: Kitchen Table.
- Asante, M. K. (2007). *An afrocentric manifesto: Toward an African renaissance*. Polity.
- Bird, M. (2004). Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 19 (2), 33-48. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/stable/1409497>
- Cesaire, A. 1972. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Dei, G. J. S. 2000. "Rethinking the Role of Indigenous Knowledges in the Academy." *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. 4(2): 111-132.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2014). Indigenizing the School Curriculum: The Case of the African University" In. Gloria Emeagwali and George J. Sefa Dei (eds.) *African Indigenous Knowledge and the Disciplines* (pp. 165-180).
- Dei, G. J. S. and A. Asgharzadeh. 2000. "The Power of Social Theory: Towards An Anti-Colonial Discursive Framework". *Journal of Educational Thought* 35(3): 297-323.
- Dei, G. J. S. and A. Kempf. 2006 (eds.). *Anti-Colonialism and Education: The Politics of Resistance*. Sense Publishers, Netherlands.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2006). *Schooling and difference in Africa: Democratic challenges in a contemporary context*. University of Toronto Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Grosfuguel, R. 2007. The Epistemic Colonial Turn: Beyond Political Economy Paradigms. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2), 211-223.
- Imoka, C. (2014). *The Case for an African Centered Education System in Africa: A Case Study on African Leadership Academy, South Africa* (Masters dissertation).
- Imoka, C. (2017). Social Injustices in Nigerian Secondary Schools and the Implication for Education Reform. *Vanguard Newspaper*. [online] Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/hausa-students-not-smart-igbos-deemed-smart/> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2017].

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka

- Maldonado-Torres, N. (2004). The Topology of Being and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: Modernity, empire, coloniality. *City*, 8(1), 29-34.
- Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural studies*, 21(2-3), 449-514.
- Muiu, M., & Martin, G. (2009). A new paradigm of the African state. In *A New Paradigm of the African State* (pp. 191-210). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
- Quijano, A. (2007). "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality". *Cultural Studies*, 21(2/3), 168-178.
- Shujaa, M. J. (1994). *Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education: A Paradox of Black Life in White Societies*. Africa World Press, Inc., PO Box 1892, Trenton, NJ 08607.
- Serequeberhan, T. (2003). The African anti-colonial struggle: an effort at reclaiming history. *Philosophia Africana*, 6(1), 47-58.
- Shultz, Lynette (2015). Decolonizing Unesco's Post-2015 Education Agenda: Global Social Justice And A View From Undrip. *Postcolonial Directions in Education*, 4(2), 96-115.
- Smith, A. (2010). Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism & White Supremacy". *Global Dialogue*, 12[2]. <http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=488>.
- Toure, S., & Sloan, J. (1972). The African Elite in the Anti-Colonial Struggle. *The Black Scholar*, 3(5), 2-11.
- Vanguard Newspaper (2017). El-Rufai and the Dismissed Kaduna Teachers. *Vanguard Newspaper*. [online] Available at: <http://punchng.com/el-rufai-and-the-dismissed-kaduna-teachers/> [Accessed 7 Dec. 2017].

About the author:

George Sefa Dei is Professor of Social Justice Education and Director of the Centre for Integrative Anti-Racism Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Professor Dei is the 2015 and 2016 Carnegie African Diasporan Fellow. He received the 2016 *Whitworth Award for Educational Research* from the Canadian Education Association (CEA) awarded to the Canadian scholar whose research and scholarship have helped shape Canadian national educational policy and practice. In November 2017 was inducted into as Fellow, Royal Society of Canada.

Chizoba Imoka is a PhD Candidate at the University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Her doctoral research explores student experiences in Nigerian secondary schools and seeks to make policy/practice recommendations for decolonial education reform in Nigeria. Within the community, Chizoba is an acclaimed advocate for public education reform in Africa, social justice and transformative youth engagement. In 2016, Chizoba received the Adel Sedra Distinguished Graduate Student Award and the Adrienne Clarkson Public Service Laureateship for her excellence in academia and public leadership.

Colonialism: Why Write Back?

Written by George Sefa Dei and Chizoba Imoka