

# **GLOBAL COLONIALITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CREATING AFRICAN FUTURES**

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## **Abstract**

Can Africans create African futures within a modern world system structured by global coloniality? Global coloniality is a modern global power structure that has been in place since the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity. This modernity is genealogically and figuratively traceable to 1492 when Christopher Columbus claimed to have discovered a 'New World'. It commenced with enslavement of black people and culminated in global coloniality. Today global coloniality operates as an invisible power matrix that is shaping and sustaining asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the Global South. Even the current global power transformations which have enabled the re-emergence of a Sinocentric economic power and de-Westernisation processes including the rise of South-South power blocs such as BRICS, do not mean that the modern world system has now undergone genuine decolonisation and deimperialisation to the extent of being amenable to the creation of other futures. Global coloniality continues to frustrate decolonial initiatives aimed at creating postcolonial futures free from coloniality. The article posits that global coloniality remains one of the most important modern power structures that constrain and limit African agency. To support this proposition, the article delves deeper into an analysis of the architecture and configuration of current asymmetrical global power structures; unmasks imperial/colonial reason embedded in Euro-North American-centric epistemology as well as the problem of Eurocentrism; and unpacks the Cartesian notions of being and its relegation of African subjectivity to a perpetual

state of becoming. Within this context, Africans have emerged as fighting subjects for a new world order that is decolonised, deimperialised, open to the emergence of new humanism and African futures.

## 1. Introduction

This article grapples with the interconnected and intertwined issues of coloniality of power, knowledge and being as constitutive elements of global coloniality as a power structure which makes it difficult for Africans to create their own futures. The central arguments are articulated in five sections. The first section sets the scene on how global coloniality tried to disable African agency, how Africans were deliberately colonised mentally so as to make them reproduce coloniality as they tried to make history, and how Africans have been portrayed as 'bystanders' in the making of history. All this has direct and indirect implications on present day African struggles to create African futures. The second section unpacks and explains what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) posed as the 'political constitution of the present' and what Noam Chomsky (2011) rendered as 'how the world works'. An analysis of both the constitution and workings of modern global power is an important intellectual task because global coloniality has direct implications on African initiatives aimed at creating African futures. The concept of coloniality of power is deployed in section two to assist in critical examination of the construction, constitution, architecture, configuration and workings/practices of the current asymmetrical global power structures.

The third section focuses on the pertinent issues of what Claude Ake (1979) described as knowledge for equilibrium that sustains the present *status quo* through colonisation of African imaginations of the future. The concept of coloniality of knowledge is mobilised and utilised to systematically interrogate epistemicides that enabled the dominance of imperial/colonial reason and explaining how these processes culminated in colonisation of African minds and destabilisation of African imaginations of the future.

The fourth section deals with the fundamental issue of racialisation of notions of being that make it hard for Africans to realise their full potential as active subjects capable of shaping their futures. The concept of coloniality of being is used to reveal the complex processes of subjection and subjectivity that play a role as Africans try to create African futures. The last section is the conclusion and it underscores the need

to intensify the 'incomplete' struggles for decolonisation of the modern world system and deimperialisation of the current global orders so as to open the way for African people to create their futures unencumbered by global coloniality and its resilient racism ideologies.

## **2. The present as the future**

The African Union's (AU) Agenda 2063 envisions an African future of pan-African unity, integration, prosperity, and peace. This vision is placed in the hands of African people as drivers and dynamic forces operating within the global arena. Pan-Africanism is identified as the overarching ideological framework for unity, self-reliance, integration, and solidarity (African Union 2013). This future will not be a game of chance. It will be a product of present day struggles ranged against coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of being as constitutive elements of global coloniality.

Thus thinking deeper about the possibility of Africans creating their own futures, taking charge of their own destiny, and mapping their own autonomous development trajectory reminds one of Karl Marx's arguments about people making history but under circumstances they have not chosen. This is the situation within which Africans are struggling to create African futures. They are doing so within the context of global coloniality. This means that for the AU to realise its Agenda 2063 it has to struggle ceaselessly against global coloniality. Only after defeating global coloniality can the AU then lead Africans in creating African futures.

This is important precisely because, in a historical sense, the modern world system and its shifting global orders is largely a creation of Europeans and North Americans. This is why the British historian-cum journalist John Keegan could write that:

Four times in the modern age men have sat down to reorder the world—at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 after the Thirty Years War, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars, in Paris in 1919 after World War 1, and in San Francisco in 1945 after World War II (Keegan 2002: 1).

What is missing in Keegan's 'sittings' to reorder the world which has direct implications for African futures is the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 at which leading European powers met to partition Africa among

themselves. The Berlin Consensus which Adekeye Adebajo correctly articulated as created 'the Curse of Berlin' is a major component of global coloniality as a modern power structure. Adebajo added that:

Berlin represented an avaricious banquet at which gluttonous, corpulent European imperialists feasted on territories that clearly did not belong to them. They sought in the process to cloak the fraudulent scheme under patronizing and paternalistic moral principles of a *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission) that Africa's 'noble savages' had never agreed to. Berlin and its aftermath were akin to robbers forcibly breaking into a house and sharing out its possessions while the owners of the house — who had been tied up with thick ropes — were wide awake, but were powerless to prevent the burglary (Adebajo 2010: 16).

But Keegan by highlighting those 'sittings' in which European men sat to reorder the world, he was in a way also highlighting what John M Headley (2008) celebrated as "the Europeanization of the world". This Europeanisation of the world entailed reducing African people to bystanders in the making of history. This was achieved through such processes racialisation of human population, enslavement, and colonisation of Africans. These processes practically colonised African imagination and disabled African agency. To take note of these processes is important because only a free people politically, socially, economically, ideologically, and epistemologically are more able create their own futures and take charge of their destiny. As colonial subjects for over 300 years, Africans were forced to reproduce a colonial future that was inimical to their aspirations. Cognisant of the debilitating effects of colonialism, Africans had to embark on anti-colonial nationalist-inspired decolonial struggles as part of their drive to create African futures. This is why Kwame Nimako has written that:

Five times in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century men have set down to reorder Africa — at the First Pan-African Conference in London in 1900, at the Second Pan-African Conference in 1921 in London, Paris and Brussels, at the Third Pan-African Conference in 1923 in London and Lisbon, at the Fourth Pan-African Conference in 1927 in New York, and at the Fifth Pan-African Conference in Manchester in 1945 (Nimako 2012).

Indeed these were initiatives taken by African people including those

from the Diaspora to try and create another future free from direct colonialism and indirect global coloniality. Pan-Africanism as discursive terrain within which African imaginations of the future crystallised stood as a major counter-worldview informed by decoloniality as a 'family' of diverse positions that share a view of coloniality as the fundamental problem in the modern age (Maldonado-Torres 2011; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013d, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014c). But colonialism had already imposed colonial mindsets on the psyche of African people, which meant that they continued to reproduce coloniality as their future even after direct juridical colonialism has been dismantled (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1986, Chinweizu 1987). This reproduction of coloniality amounted to what Frantz Fanon (1968) termed "repetition without change" that was itself a product of pitfalls of consciousness. This was possible because colonialism was not simply a process of conquest, annexation, occupation, settlement, domination, and exploitation. It entailed emptying "the native's brain of all form and content" on top of committing epistemicides such as distorting, disfiguring and eventually destroying the history of the colonised (Fanon 1968).

It is therefore not surprising that one of the long-term consequences of these types of colonial interventions has been to make some Africans to simply capitulate to the idea that what they can only do as part of making history is to adapt to a present and a future made for them by others. This is why it is very common to hear some African scholars arguing that globalisation and neo-liberalism are a reality to which Africans must adapt to rather than resisting. Such arguments are not only a reincarnation of the defeatist discourse of "There is No Alternative" (TINA) that was introduced by Margaret Thatcher but is also born out of succumbing to the seductive aspects of Euro-North American-centric modernity, particularly its rhetoric of emancipation that hides its reality of coloniality. The modernist artefacts of Euro-North American-centric modernity such as capitalism, globalisation, and neo-liberalism are articulated from Europe and North America as natural processes that must not be contested. They are packaged as universal norms and values that every human being has to live by and practice.

These realities provoke a number of pertinent questions: How free are Africans to create African futures? Why have African demands for a new economic order since the Bandung Conference of 1955 fallen on deaf ears? Why have such initiatives as the Lagos Plan of Action of 1980 failed? Posing these questions is important because there is no

way Africans can create African futures without a clear diagnosis of what has been frustrating and preventing them from doing so for the past 500 years. The answer comes from decolonial thinkers, theorists, and activists.

Such leading decolonial thinkers, theorists, and activists from the Global South as Cheikh Anta Diop, Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Anibal Quijano, Samir Amin, Kwame Nkrumah, Enrique Dussel, Walter D Mignolo, Ramon Grosfoguel, Steve Bantu Biko, Lewis R Gordon, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and many others, have identified racism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and coloniality as major challenges preventing the emergence of a genuinely post-colonial world. Racism, the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, *apartheid*, and neo-colonialism do not only constitute global coloniality as a modern power structure but are also manifestations of the 'dark side/underside' of modernity (Mignolo 1995; Mignolo 2000, Mignolo 2011).

But having identified global coloniality as a major challenge denying Africans space to create African futures, decolonial thinkers, theorists, and activists did not fall into despair. They remained committed to the possibilities of 'another world'. "Another World Is Possible" has actually become a slogan of the World Social Forum which is engaged in contesting and resisting capitalist driven globalisation that carries global coloniality. But when decolonial thinkers, theorists, and activists say that "Another World is Possible", they are not talking about merely forecasting on the supposedly 'mysterious' future. What they are talking about is that the present generation must mobilise itself and confront present structural and agential sources of social injustices, asymmetrical power structures, patriarchal ideologies, logics of capitalist exploitation, resilient imperial/colonial reason, and racist articulations and practices (McNally 2005; Santos 2008). What is underscored is that the African future will be a product of struggles for a decolonised new world system and a de-imperialised global order. Clearly, such an envisaged new world system and its new global orders cannot be realised without decolonisation of power, knowledge, and being. This is why it is pertinent for all those committed to fighting for better African futures has to fully understand the constitution of the present and at the same time comprehending how the modern world system works.

### **3. The constitution of the present and how the world works**

There is no way one can understand how the present 'global political' was constructed and constituted into the current asymmetrical modern power structure that is inherently Euro-North American-centric without a clear knowledge of coloniality of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, 2013b). This point is emphasised by Hardt and Negri:

The problematic of Empire is determined in the first place by simple fact: that there is world order. This order is expressed as a juridical formation. Our initial task, then is to grasp the constitution of the order being formed today (Hardt and Negri 2000: 3).

The world we live in today within which Africa is struggling to create African futures is made up of two core elements. The first is the modern world system which is traceable to the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity. The second element is global orders (Frank 1998; Nimako 2011). The modern world system is proving to be resistant to decolonisation. Whenever, it is confronted by anti-systemic forces, the world system responds in two ways. It either disciplines the anti-systemic forces violently or it accommodates them to its shifting global orders. The shifting global orders are resistant to deimperialisation. Shifting global orders operate to hide the world system. What links the modern world system and its global orders is called coloniality of power. Coloniality of power as a concept was coined by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000, 2007). It is "based upon racial social classification of the world population under Eurocentred world power" (Quijano 2007: 171). Quijano elaborated that:

Coloniality is one of the specific and constitutive elements of global model of capitalist power. It is based on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the global population as the cornerstone of that model of power, and it operates on every level, in every arena and dimension (both material and subjective) of everyday social existence, and does so on a societal scale (Quijano 2000, 342).

Coloniality of power gave birth to a particular modern world system that Ramon Grosfoguel (2007, 2011) has characterised as a racially hierarchised, patriarchal, sexist, hetero-normative, Christian-centric, Euro-North

American-centric, imperial, colonial, and capitalist. Within this modern world system, coloniality of power exists as an entanglement of multiple and heterogeneous global hierarchies and heterarchies of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic, aesthetic, and racial forms of domination and exploitation (Grosfoguel 2007; 217). Steve Martinot even explained the ubiquity of coloniality much better:

We all live within a multiplicity of colonialities; subjected in both body and mind. It is not only our labour, or our sexualities and genders that mark colonial relations; it is not only the wars, the mass murder and death squads organized by imperialist classes, nor the sub-colonies formed by women, African-American communities, or ethnic identities; it is also the hegemonic mind, the white, or masculinist, or heterosexist, or national chauvinist mind that constitutes and is constituted by coloniality. [...]. We thus face the question of who we are in this mirror. The power of coloniality, as a structure of control, is that it speaks for us so forcefully that we see no recourse but to represent it, to uphold its existence, to ratify its dispensing with ethics and with the sanctity of human life in everything we say and do as labour and resource (Martinot, nd: 1).

Practically, coloniality of power's success depended on what Jack Goody (2006:1) described as "theft of history", that is, "the take-over of history by the west" and the re-conceptualisation and representation of human history "according to what happened on the provincial scale of Europe" and "then imposed upon the rest of the world". This usurpation of human history by Europe and North America, unfolded in terms of colonisation of space (cartography, conquest, and settlement), colonisation of time (bifurcating it into ancient and modern epochs), colonisation of being (classification and racial hierarchisation of human population according to race) and colonisation of nature (subjecting it to the logic of capitalism and reducing it to a simple natural resource open for exploitation) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013c). The "theft of history" resulted in Hellenocentrism (Greece as the only centre of origin of human civilisation), Westernisation (making Europe the centre of the world and beacon of development), and Eurocentrism (ideological valorisation of Euro-American society as superior and progressive embodiment of the universal) (Blaut 1993, Amin 2009, Dussel 2011). Thus since the dawn of Euro-North American-centric modernity, a coloniser's model of the world prevailed. In this coloniser's model of the world, African history, African



agency and even the humanity of African people was not only questioned but denied. This is why Grosfoguel had to articulate the history of denial of black people's being in the following revealing words:

We went from the sixteenth century characterization of 'people without writing' to the eighteenth and nineteenth century characterization of 'people without history', to the twentieth century characterization of 'people without development' and more recently, to the early twenty-first century of characterization 'people without democracy' (Grosfoguel 2007: 214).

In short, the inscription of coloniality of power not only resulted in the "theft of history" but also in the theft of African future. African people became represented as bystanders in human history deserving to be civilised by Europeans and educated by Europeans within a world constructed and configured by Europeans. The present modern global power structure informed by coloniality has the United States of America (USA) and Europe at the apex. The emergence of new powers from the Global South such as China, Brazil and India has not yet deeply shaken the dominance of the USA and Europe. At the subaltern bottom is Africa and its people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014a) Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014b). Decolonisation only led to the incorporation of African states at the lowest echelons of the asymmetrical modern global power structure without destroying global coloniality. This point is well captured by Grosfoguel:

One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myths of a 'postcolonial' world. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix.' With juridical-political decolonization we moved from a period of 'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality' (Grosfoguel 2007: 219).

If indeed African people are still living under global coloniality, how feasible is the future they try to create under these conditions, to be free from coloniality? Global coloniality is there to make sure the powerful Euro-North American powers remain powerful. This is evident from the panic the USA is revealing regarding competition from China. China's rise is provoking tremors down the spine of the USA to the extent that it

is warning Africans to be aware of Chinese imperialism as though the USA is not an imperial power itself. The USA is trying hard to keep Africa as its theatre of economic operation free from Chinese influence. This is why President Barack Obama recently invited 47 African leaders to the US-Africa Summit (4-6 August 2014), which if one reads between the lines was meant to try and contain the influence of China through a deliberate articulation of the USA as a long-standing friend of Africa. This is evident from President Obama's remarks:

I do not see countries of Africa as a world apart. I see Africa as a fundamental part of our international world—partners with America on behalf of the future we want for all our children. That partnership must be grounded in mutual responsibility and mutual respect (Opening Remarks US-Africa Summit 2014).

The very fact that African leaders could be told to forget about the legacy of colonialism and its present global coloniality speaks volumes about how the powerful continue to try to define for Africans the sources of African problems. The emphasis on investment and security issues, speaks to the core interests of the USA.

But the concept of coloniality of power also enables us to understand deeply the structural *cul-de-sac* within which African leaders and their people try to create African futures. As noted by the Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake (1981: 93) "the nationalist movement which arose from the contradictions of the colonial political economy achieved independence, not economic independence". Both political and economic independence are essential pre-requisites for launching genuine African futures. It is not clear whether African leaders and their people have managed to rise above the "contradictions of the colonial political economy". What is clear is that global coloniality produced a particular form of leadership in Africa — a *petit-bourgeoisie* that could not invent or even transform political, economic and social institutions inherited from colonialism "into its own image" so as to "become socially hegemonic" (Nabudere 2011: 58; Taylor 2014: 5).

African leaders has only succeeded in staying in power through balancing internal and external forces, with interests of external forces often outweighing those of internal constituencies in African leaders' political calculations. Thus they preside over postcolonial states that are not entrenched in African society but exist as "a bureaucratic connivance" (Mafeje 1992: 31; Young 2012). Ralph Austen (1987: 271) clearly

understood that the major economic problem facing African people is that of asymmetrical relationship between the "role of the continent in the world and the degree to which that world ... has penetrated Africa". This is a perennial postcolonial problem that compromises any initiatives aimed at creating African futures particularly autonomous development. Ian Taylor is correct in concluding that:

The external domination of Africa's economies and the pathologies of dependency that this engenders, constructed during the colonial period, have proven markedly resilient. [...]. Indeed, African economies are integrated into the very economies of the developed economies in a way that is unfavorable to Africa and ensures structural dependence. [...]. This has not radically changed since independence and is overlooked in the excitement to both anoint Africa as the new frontier of opportunity for speculators and exaggerate the role of emerging economies as potential redeemers (Taylor 2014: 7).

What emerges poignantly from this analysis is the problem of structural dependence. The other is that of lack of state autonomy and "a stable hegemonic project that binds different levels of society together" for the purpose of forging African futures (Taylor 2014: 7). In countries like Zimbabwe that have spearheaded a radical land reform programme, there exist "intrinsically unstable personalized systems of domination" crystallising around President Robert Mugabe (Taylor 2014: 7; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009). All these realities which are fundamentally informed by global coloniality need to be taken seriously as we grapple with the pertinent question of the possibilities of Africans creating their own futures. This possibility is posed in the context of the discourse of an Africa that is rising economically. How sustainable is this discourse of Africa rising within a context of an un-decolonised world system and its imperial global order? Is Africa not reproducing a diversified form of dependency by extending it to the East?

Ian Taylor's recent book entitled *Africa Rising? BRICS-Diversifying Dependency* (2014) help in responding to some of these questions more effectively. In the first place, what is clear is that whenever some African leaders attempt to articulate a vision of the future of their countries and the continent, either as individuals or as a collective, they opt for "Westernization", that is, they push for "economic growth within the context of the existing neocolonial economic structure" (Ake 1981: 138; Taylor 2014: 7). The current celebrated economic growth of Africa

that has been hailed as 'Africa Rising' is not founded on any radical economic disobedience or questioning of the neo-liberal market ideology. It is based on increased sale of primary commodities and importation and consumption of finished products from elsewhere.

The entry of China, Russia, Brazil and India on the African market has boosted this sale of primary commodities. There is no change of the forms of integration of Africa into the ever evolving capitalist economy, making the notion of 'Africa Rising' to exist as slogan trumpeted by benefitting global corporations. Such blocs as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) are not about radical change of the world system and its global orders; they are about making neo-liberalism work more efficiently in accordance with the longstanding discourse of free trade. Taylor has a point when he argues that:

A major issue with this regard is that in most African countries there is a real lack of any serious ideological debate about the type of social system that will engender development and ensure broad improvements in the standard of living of the people. Intellectuals who might critically contribute to this debate are generally marginalized, whilst the popular sphere is dominated by opportunists — many sourcing their funding from the West — who promote the discourse that there is no alternative to neoliberal reform. In this milieu there is minimal critique or profound analyses of capitalism: it is assumed as a given (Taylor 2014: 156).

It would seem that African discourse on the African future remains haunted seriously by Francis Fukuyama's (1992) "end of history and the last man". This thinking informs the premature celebration of economic growth as development. Worse still, Africa is forced to celebrate an economic growth that is premised on a problematic "intensification of resource extraction through diversification of partners, while inequality and unemployment increase and deindustrialization continues apace" (Taylor 2014: 160). The narrative of 'Africa Rising' is blind to the problem of the new 'scramble' for African natural resources and the concomitant land grabbing that is articulated by advocates of neo-liberalism as investment on land (Cotula 2013). Emerging powers from the Global South have joined the traditional Euro-North American powers and multinational corporations in this new scramble for African natural resources. Global coloniality, deliberately create celebrations of these false-starts as it protects and divert attention of anti-systemic forces and formations

from targeting the asymmetrical modern world system and its imperial global orders.

Global coloniality is also sustained by a particular epistemology. African economic futures have remained trapped within the hegemonic Truman version of development which is backed up by what Adebayo Adedeji termed the 'development merchant system' (DMS). DMS is driven by the Breton Woods Institutions (BWI) which finances the implementation of exogenous development agenda (Adedeji 2002: 4). At the centre of the DMS is what David Slater termed "imperiality of knowledge" that is constituted by "interweaving of geopolitical power, knowledge and subordinating representation of the other" (Slater 2004: 223). DMS maintains coloniality long after the dismantlement of administrative colonialism. It still approaches Africa as a space inhabited by a people "shorn of the legitimate symbols of independent identity and authority" as well as a "space ready to be penetrated, worked over, restructured and transformed" from outside (Slater 2004: 223). DMS exist as a consortium of International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Non-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) and Multinational Corporations (MCs). They advance a 'Bretton Woods Paradigm' of African future that is amenable to global coloniality (Therien 1999: 723-742).

#### **4. Shifting the biography and geography of knowledge**

Is it possible to use the same knowledge system that created global coloniality to create African futures? This is a fundamental epistemological question which is often ignored in debates on the future of the continent. The AU Agenda 2063 articulates the need for a paradigm shift without necessarily elaborating on a clear epistemological and ideological foundation of such a change. The question of epistemology is very important because from the start the inscription of global coloniality commenced with "a systematic repression, not only of the specific beliefs, ideas, images, symbols or knowledges that were not useful to global colonial domination, while at the same time colonizers were expropriating from the colonized their knowledge, especially in mining, agriculture, engineering as well as their products and work" (Quijano 2007: 169).

Epistemological colonisation which amounts to colonisation of the mind and imagination affected African "modes of knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images and systems of images, symbols, modes of signification, over the resources, patterns, and instruments of formalized and objectivised expression" including intellectual and visual forms (Quijano 2007: 169). 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. But they also tried to consistently placed these Euro-North American-centric patterns "far out of reach of the dominated" (Quijano 2007: 169).

When the Europeans decided to impart this knowledge on the colonised, they did so "in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions" (Quijano 2007: 169). Consequently, they succeeded to a large extent in transforming "cultural Europeanization" into "an aspiration" of every African (Quijano 2007: 169). The long-term impact of this social engineering and epistemological process that was marked by epistemicides, displacements, expropriations, and impositions invaded the core imaginary of the African psyche and culture to the extent that Africans today reproduce "cultural Europeanization" without direct tutelage of Europeans. The leading decolonial thinker Aime Cesaire lamented the impact of these epistemicides in these moving but poetic words:

*I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out. [...]*

*I am talking about millions of men torn apart from their gods, their land, their habits, their life—from life, from dance, from wisdom.*

*I am talking about millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys. [...].*

*I am talking about natural economies that have been destroyed—harmonious and viable economies—adapted to indigenous population—about food crops destroyed, malnutrition permanently introduced, agricultural development oriented solely towards the benefit of the metropolitan countries, about the looting of products, the looting*

of raw material (Cesaire 2000: 43 emphasis is in the original text).

The challenge facing Africans is how to undo this imperial/colonial epistemological damage as part of their drive to create decolonial futures. The Portuguese sociologist and decolonial thinker Boaventura de Sousa Santos posed the foundational epistemological questions this way:

In search for alternatives to domination and oppression, how can we distinguish between alternatives to the system of oppression and domination and alternatives within the system or, more specifically, how do we distinguish between alternatives to capitalism and alternatives within capitalism? In sum, how do we fight against the abyssal lines using conceptual and political instruments that don't reproduce them? (Santos 2007: 78).

At the epistemological realm, Africans are still stuck in Euro-North American-centric thought. They somehow breathe it on a daily basis because it is a major technology of domination. This is why the leading Egyptian economist and Marxist-decolonial thinker Samir Amin (1985) not only motivated for 'delinking' as part of enabling the Global South to escape from the constraints imposed by the world's economic system, but also highlighted the ubiquity and dominance of Euro-North American-centric conventional classical economic thought in all the African attempts to chart an autonomous economic trajectory for the continent. Even the Lagos Plan of Action was informed by this thought. This is how he put it:

The genuine implementation of the principle of autocentric development implies very different reasoning that has the nerve to challenge the criteria of economic rationality observed by conventional economics (Amin 1990: 58).

The African epistemological predicament is further compounded by the fact that there is increasing realisation that Euro-North American-centric thought that has dominated the world for over five hundred years has now reached an epistemic crisis — a form of exhaustion and irrelevance. The crisis was well-captured by Immanuel Wallerstein in these revealing words:

I believe we need to 'unthink' nineteenth-century social science, because many of its presumptions—which, in my view, are misleading and constrictive—still have far too strong a hold on our mentalities. These presumptions, once considered liberating of the spirit, serve

today as the central intellectual barrier to useful analysis of the social world (Wallerstein 1999: 4).

Indeed the promise of Euro-North American-centric epistemology to overcome all obstacles to human progress is today not taken serious because it has mainly succeeded in creating such modern problems as pollution of which it has no modern solutions (Escobar 2004: 230). This means that Africans can no longer rely solely on this epistemology in their endeavour to create African futures. Even European scholars like Patrick Chabal in his last book entitled *The End of Conceit: Western Rationality after Postcolonialism* (2012) made it clear that "the social sciences we employ to explain what is happening domestically and overseas — are both historically and conceptually out of date" and he elaborated that the Euro-North American-centric "theories are now obstacles to the understanding of what is going on in our societies and what we can do about it" (Chabal 2012: viii). His conclusion was that "(t)he end of conceit is upon us. Western rationality must be rethought" (Chabal 2012: 335). The global financial crisis that hit Europe and North America from 2007 added to the questioning of the suitability of Euro-North American thought and epistemology in offering solutions to modern problems.

For Africa in particular and the Global South in general that experienced epistemicides, the crisis in Euro-North American-centric thought is both a challenge and an opportunity. It means that they must take advantage and leverage their thought and theory from the Global South. They need to turn to such works as *Afrikology, Philosophy and Wholeness: An Epistemology* by Dani W. Nabudere (2011); *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas* by Madina V Tlostanova and Walter D Mignolo (2012); *Theory from the South Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Towards Africa* by Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff (2012); *Epistemologies from the South: Justice against Epistemicide* by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) and many others. These works are engaged in what Walter D Mignolo (2000, 2011) termed the shifting of biography and geography of knowledge to embrace subjugated knowledges. For Africa to create genuinely African futures, they have to be predicated on another reason, logic, thought and epistemology capable of enabling economic disobedience to traditional Euro-North American-centric thought and epistemology that enabled global coloniality. Only a decolonised being can appreciate the value of indigenous and endogenous knowledge as ideal for the



creation of African futures.

## 5. Decolonising African being and releasing African genius

The Euro-North American-centric modernity inaugurated the colonisation of being through its social classification of human population according to race. While the processes of racialisation took different forms and assumed different terms across different colonial spaces, the logic and purpose remained the same. This was followed by racial hierarchisation of being according to race. White races claimed complete *being* for themselves and pushed African people into a perpetual state of *becoming* — a state of incompleteness (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b). This imperial reason was then used to consistently question the very humanity of African people in order to consign them to the status of inferiority. The overarching purpose of racial classification and racial hierarchisation was to construct a system of social differentiation of those who could own slaves and those who would be enslaved, between those who could claim and own land and those who would be forced to work on it, a distinction in social category between those who could define others and those would always be subjects and objects of definition (Martinot nd: 3).

African subjectivity that emerged from these processes of racialisation and inferiorisation of blackness, is one that has a diminished ontological density. It became a subjectivity that was said to be characterised by a catalogue of deficits and a series of lacks. Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a) listed the deficits and lacks that were attributed to the African subject as ranging from lack of souls, writing, history, civilisation, development, democracy, human rights, and ethics. This gave birth to the colonial idea of Africans as the condemned people of the earth, the anthropos of the planet, and the wretched of the earth that Frantz Fanon wrote about in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). Such a people became victims of what Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007: 245) depicted as the racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic scepticism. He elaborated that:

Manichean misanthropic skepticism is not skepticism about the existence of the world or the normative status of logics and mathematics. It is rather a form of questioning the very humanity of colonized

peoples [...]. Misanthropic skepticism is like a worm at the very heart of modernity. [...]. Through it colonial and racial subjects are marked as dispensable (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 245-246).

Race and colonial experience continues to define the interrelated conceptions the African subject, its subjection and subjectivity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013a, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013b). It is the racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic scepticism that was used to authorise such mistreatments of African people as enslavement where black people were reduced to commodities that could be sold and bought and to the status of animals that could be forced to work for others. This is a central element of coloniality of being which according to Maldonado-Torres (2007: 255) "refers to the normalization of extraordinary events that take place in war". By this he meant that African people whose very being was colonised became exposed to violence, murder, rape, exploitation, displacement, dispossession and other brutalities including death. With regards to treatment of African people, ethics were suspended.

What has compounded the phenomenon of coloniality of being is that the postcolonial state in Africa as an inherited institution continues to exert colonial-like brutalities on African people. The shooting of 34 black miners at Marikana by the South Africa police in 2012 confirmed Maldonado-Torres' (2007: 255) argument that black people endure 'hellish existence' in which 'killability' and 'rapeability' are normal state of life. Across the world, the life of a black person is the cheapest (dispensable). This dispensability of black life is well-articulated in Bernard M Magubane's book *Race and the Construction of the Dispensable Other* (2007). All this indicates that the problem of coloniality of being has a negative and disempowering bearing on the possibilities of African people creating their African futures. They cannot effectively create African futures if they have not regained their denied ontological density born out of imposed inferiority complex.

## 6. Conclusion

Taken together, coloniality of power, coloniality of being and coloniality of knowledge constitute a formidable global coloniality that stands as a bulwark on the path of African people's struggles and initiatives to create African futures. While coloniality of power is mainly about modern forms of domination, control and exploitation (power), coloniality of knowledge

is about epistemological colonisation of the mind and imagination, coloniality of being is about denial of the very humanity of African people, their inferiorisation and dehumanisation. In short, coloniality of power, being and knowledge reinforce each other in the production and sustenance of global coloniality. In combination, they inhibit the release of African genius which is needed as they fight and strive to create African futures. To release, the African genius requires intensification of simultaneous processes of decolonisation of the modern world system that are not limited to the political realm, but extend to the epistemological and ontological realms in which coloniality is also causing havoc, as well as deimperialisation of the modern global order. There is need for genuine socialisation of global power structures in the direction of de-structuring the asymmetrical power relations inscribed on the modern world through imperial/colonial designs. The spirit and language of liberation informing socialisation of modern global power should be uncompromisingly anti-Eurocentrism, anti-subject-object paradigm, anti-imperial, anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-fundamentalism and anti-hegemonic. Only after this genuinely decolonial struggle has been won can African people be able to create African futures within a pluriversal future in which diverse but common futures are possible.

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