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Artwork by Erin O'Halloran

Special Issue

Decolonial Human Rights and Peace Education:
Recognizing and Re-envisioning Radical Praxes

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A Decolonial Imperative: Pluriversal Rights Education

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A Decolonial Imperative: Pluriversal Rights Education

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Abstract

This editorial introduction invites a decolonial dialogue between peace education and human rights education so as to recognize and re-envision radical praxes. It begins by framing the similarities between the two subfields and discussing the effects of the critical turn, with special emphasis on critiques of the colonial entanglements of West-enforced peace and hegemonic rights discourses. Underscoring the imperative of decolonization, it concludes

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with a call for pluriversal rights education as a decolonial successor to peace and human rights education. It also offers a brief overview of the articles included in this special issue and how they each contribute to an ongoing decolonial dialogue.

Keywords: Peace Education, Human Rights Education, Decolonization, Pluriversality

*“decolonization is not simply one more option or approach among others.
...Rather, it is a fundamental imperative”
(Abdulla et al, 2019, p. 130).*

Anthropocentrism and colonialism have been a toxic admixture for our planet. Centering White¹ human beings as the universal template has led to the denigration and erasure of inferiorized systems of knowing and being, as well as the decimation of the natural world. An automatic corollary, decolonization emerges as a fundamental imperative in the form of ongoing resistances, revolts, and emancipatory efforts. Part of that rich liberatory heritage has been the creation and evolution of peace education (PE) and human rights education (HRE).

These two interrelated strands of pedagogical reflection and practice aim to center human dignity and global peace as the core tenets of education. They have each—through their respective trajectories and particularities—promoted pedagogies that examine and counteract the root causes of violence and social injustice. Yet, they are also incomplete and imperfect projects, ever under construction. Both have been criticized for engaging in universal normative prescriptions with insufficient analysis of

¹ The term ‘White’ refers to a socially and politically constructed identity category, usually based on perceptions of skin color, that accrues social dominance through contraposition with non-White Others (i.e. indigenous, black and non-European identities). Rooted in coloniality, specific racialization processes differ across location and time, yet share an underlying foundation of anti-black and anti-indigenous violence, wherein privilege is accrued through distancing from blackness/indigeneity, even where this is ignored (Mills, 2007) or denied (Viatori, 2016).

the Eurocentric, colonial inheritance on which predominant notions of “peace” and “human rights” have been constructed, and the ways they are each co-opted to serve and sustain patterns of societal oppression and dominance (Bajaj, 2008b, 2011; Keet, 2015; Yang, 2015; Zembylas, 2017a).

In this introduction, and special issue, we contend that there is a gratuitous chasm between PE and HRE. We call instead for efforts to collectively reflect on the histories and futures of these shared endeavors. As a result, we attempt to place PE and HRE into a decolonial dialogue so as to recognize and re-envision radical praxes. This dialogue necessarily induces an interrogation of the colonially-circumscribed instantiations of peace, rights, human being-ness, and of course education itself, leading us to interpolate a paradigm shift toward pluriversal rights education.

This editorial introduction will briefly traverse the similarities between PE and HRE, document the impact of the critical turn on both subfields, then trouble the colonial entanglements of West-enforced peace, hegemonic rights discourses, and the reification of human being-ness as the highest form of life and arbiter of value in this complex Earthly ecosystem. We conclude with a call for pluriversal rights education as a decolonial successor to PE and HRE. Finally, we also offer a brief overview of the articles included in this special issue and how they each contribute to an ongoing decolonial dialogue.

Peace education vs human rights education?

Peace education has been conceptualized as an umbrella term for anti-nuclear education, environmental education, conflict resolution education, and even human rights education (Harris, 2013; Zembylas, 2011); as a result, it is being constantly redefined (Verma, 2017). PE is focused on equipping all kinds of learners with the knowledges, skills, dispositions, and values to foster a culture of peace (Bajaj, 2008a; Reardon, 1988). HRE’s *raison d’être* is the same but more specifically focused on human rights (Bajaj, 2017; OHCHR, 1996).

Despite their differences in literature and operationalization, HRE and PE are both avowedly geared to building positive peace.² Reardon is reluctant to atomize these and interrelated fields (Al-Daraweesh, 2009); she states that:

human rights education is not only a corrective complement to education for peace but that it is essential to the development of peace making capacities and should be integrated into all forms of peace education. It is through human rights education that learners are provided with the knowledge and opportunities for specific corrective action that can fulfill the prescriptive requirements of education for peace. (1997, p. 22)

International organizations and declarations have also conceptualized this synergy between education, peace, and human rights (Baxi, 1997; UNESCO, 1974, 1995, 2000), and propelled PE's and HRE's popularity over the past forty years.

However, there is a schism between the two camps, and perhaps, understandably so. Peace is a polysemous and far more amorphous, and thus politically-rife, term. Human rights, as codified by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the host of subsequent covenants and conventions, has a specific legibility, and are thus more alluring to those agendas underwritten by the donor-driven dictates of accountability, monitoring, and evaluation. Also, while 'peace' has often been employed to foreclose deeper social transformation, human rights proffer a semblance of neutrality that can be applied strategically in contentious situations.

It is perhaps due to this intimate proximity with positivistic and Western geopolitically-motivated and donor-influenced interventions, that a proliferation of critical scholarship in PE and HRE was spawned.

² See Galtung (1969) for his seminal elucidation of negative and positive peace.

Critical turn in PE and HRE

Both PE and HRE have been impacted by the critical turn (Zembylas, 2011). Scholars have pushed PE to examine power more meticulously, and to foreground learners' agency and locally-grounded praxes (Bajaj, 2008b; Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Diaz-Soto, 2005; Hantzopoulos & Bajaj 2016; Snauwaert, 2011; Zakharia, 2017). As for HRE, scholars assert that hegemonic notions of HRE reify a particular brand of universality which ends up blunting its transformative and emancipatory potential (Canlas et al, 2015; Coysh, 2014; Keet 2015; Tibbitts, 2002; Zembylas & Keet, 2018, 2019).

Part of this critical turn in PE and HRE has been the pointed impugment of Eurocentric/occidental ideologies, their dissonance in postcolonial sites, and their long-standing negation of subaltern epistemes (Osler, 2015; Shirazi, 2011; Williams, 2017). Emergent from this critique have been calls for and sketches of decolonial iterations of PE and HRE (Aldawood, 2018; Golding, 2017; Hajir & Kester, 2020; Zembylas 2017a; Zembylas 2018a; Zembylas & Keet, 2019). Here, and through the special issue, we join this emergent dialogue, calling for coalesced reflection on the decolonial futures of peace and human rights education praxes.

Decolonization is a fundamental imperative

Although decoloniality is the analytic fulcrum of this special issue, we must first register an observation: that the academic knowledge production-scape is overgrown with the 'metaphorization' of decolonization, something against which Tuck & Yang admonished (2012). They note that

[t]he easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to "decolonize our schools," or use "decolonizing methods," or, "decolonize student thinking", turns decolonization into a metaphor. ...The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions (p. 21).

Here, evasions refer to the academic utilization of decolonization without the concomitant repatriation of Indigenous lands, reparations for the harms of

slavery, and structural transformations of society to address the legacies of colonial violence. Academe's co-optation of the language of decoloniality risks hollowing out its authentic meaning and its charge.

While we concur with Tuck and Yang's critique of the discursive abuses and impotent usages of decoloniality, we contend that decolonization remains an imperative shared by all. It is everyone's responsibility (Sanchez, 2019) because, although colonialism warped the epistemologies, cosmologies, ontologies, spiritualities, bodies, and minds of the dispossessed (Williams, 2016a), the dialectical constitution of colonizer-colonized injured (to varying degrees) everyone involved (Memmi, 1965) and continues to fuel ongoing harm and destruction. This injury was/is not singularly human-to-human, but also human-to-other-entities on the Earth, which is too often a praxical lacuna that decolonial PE and HRE must address.

Colonizing 'being'...

“We live our lives of human passions,
cruelties, dreams, concepts,
crimes and the exercise of virtue
in and beside a world devoid
of our preoccupations, free
from apprehension—though affected,
certainly, by our actions. A world
parallel to our own though overlapping.
We call it "Nature"; only reluctantly
admitting ourselves to be "Nature" too....”

(Excerpt from *Sojourns in the Parallel World*, Levertov, 1996)

Enlightenment rationality entrenched and coercively projected certain schisms: mind/body/spirit, natural/supernatural, human/non-human (Wynter, 2003). These divides were cemented and disseminated as certainties, invalidating any alternative cosmovision. They were further compounded by the deeply wounding violence of colonialism where non-White humans (and we would add non-human entities) were ‘thingified’ (Cesaire, 2000), treated as disposable objects, subservient to the colonizers. Maldonado-Torres (2007) avers that prior to the Cartesian dictum ‘ego cogito’ (I think), was ‘ego conquiro’ (I conquer). Interwoven and determinant

in these processes of colonial subjugation and dominance, gender power was also central to the making of colonial social relations. It deepened the rendering and naturalization of hierarchized binaries and subjectivities—constitutive elements of the coloniality of power (Schiwy, 2007)—and added gender-specific forms of subalternization that further truncated the wholeness, fluidity and complementarity of being. Particular power relations therefore emerged from this imperialistic, disembodied self-construction.

This overlapping anthropocentrism, patriarchy and Eurocentrism in colonial expansion (Val Plumwood, 2001, as cited in Tiffin, 2015; Haraway, 1992) birthed a modernity with the lingering colonialities (Williams, 2013, 2016b) of hierarchization, stark asymmetries and rank exploitation. Analyzing this axis as coloniality-modernity³ (Mignolo 2009, 2011; Quijano 2007) perturbs misperceived historical discontinuities and reveals enduring violences and atomized ontologies that have led human beings to be estranged from each other and from the planet, precipitating a possible earth-systems collapse (Taylor, 2020). In essence, too many of us no longer know how to be with the Earth and each other.

This corrupted colonization of being has perpetuated intergenerational injuries and traumas⁴ (Brown, 2020; Fanon 1967) that require not just human re-subjectification (Fanon 1963), but also the decolonization of being and relationality. We thus need an education that can facilitate and engender this shift, a shift that must involve an ongoing decolonization of the dominant constructions of relationality and (human)being-ness, peace, (human) rights, and of course PE and HRE.

³ See Williams (1994) for a detailed explication of how slavery was the engine that drove inchoate capitalism and helped usher in the Industrial Revolution, laying fertile ground for the modern economic era.

⁴ See van der Kolk (2014) for more on the intricate and sprawling effects of trauma on the body; from this, one could extrapolate to the implications of unattended trauma in individuals and communities.

Reimagining being, relationality, rights, peace, and education

Decolonizing being and relationality

Since the logic of coloniality (Mignolo, 2011) is a trammel to sustainable inter-relationality—that is, a relationality among humans and with other earth beings that is not characterized by ruinous human dominance—we will need to reconceptualize certain forms of relationality, which, in the colonial-modernist imaginary, have become “hierarchical, anthropocentric, capitalocentric, and hetero- and homonormative” (Tallbear and Willy, 2019, p.5). This task compels us to “rethink...the human as the only important unit for relational ethics, and the white supremacist settler and other colonial scripts as ethical measures of belonging” (TallBear and Willy, 2019, p. 2), by pursuing myriad “embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality”; in other words a ‘pluriversal decoloniality’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 1). Such a pluriversal decoloniality recognizes the spectrum of all sentient entities/earth beings (including mountains, waters, animals, plants, etc.) (Costa et al, 2017; de la Cadena, 2015). By decentering Western-constructed universality and moving toward a “nonhierarchical coexistence of different worlds” (Silova, 2020, p. 139; Escobar, 2020; Mignolo, 2011, 2018), we can pluriversalize the very notions of sentience and being. This shift to relational and communal logics (Escobar, 2018) affirms manifold sovereignties and interdependencies, and is integral to the envisioning of radically alternative and sustainable futurities.

Decolonizing human rights

Re-configured inter-relationality presupposes a decolonization of human rights, because human exceptionalism itself threatens life and balance on Earth. In this Western/capitalist-dominated polity, we have a global human rights regime largely demarcated by “false hope and unaccountable intervention”, exposing its outmoded “one-size-fits-all universalism” (Hopgood, 2013, p. 2). The decolonization of human rights does not efface the validity of preventing violations of human dignity, instead it

acknowledges the colonial barriers imposed on rights discourse and expands concepts of being-ness and human rights (Barretto, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Zembylas 2018b), so as to accommodate pluriversal praxes, and multispecism (Haraway, 2016).

Part of decolonizing human rights is reckoning with its colonial entanglements and confronting and transgressing both its Eurocentrism (Mutua, 2002; see Ibhawoh 2007) and anthropocentrism. In embracing non-cartesian epistemologies and relational ontologies (Fregoso, 2014, p. 593), we affirm

the agential capabilities of the living earth, a universal kinship with land as sacred and rights bearing, together with other (nonhuman) species/beings in the material world and ancestors in the spirit world. ...An interbeing understanding of the human ("no you without mountains, without sun, without sky") disrupts the human-centric and living-oriented understanding of human rights discourse. The orientation to the interconnectedness of beings, to the nonhuman and nonliving in a pluriverse, similarly affirms the distribution of agency beyond the human. (Fregoso, 2014, pp. 599 & 604)

This decolonial reorientation does not, however, turn away from the vast resistance that has been waged for basic rights through bottom-up processes of local and transnational activism, referred to by Hopgood (2013) as "lower-case human rights." The notion of 'rights', with its assumption of collective entitlement, has been at the core of many struggles for a world where each being has equal claim to dignity. Such struggles have been rooted in diverse cultural meanings and visions, and have served to generate accountability and societal change. They highlight the transformative and dynamic potential of rights work. The legal dimension of rights has also entailed efforts to build and codify consensus at local, national and international scales. While the outcomes of these efforts have been fraught by the persistence of colonial relations, they also suggest an aspiration to dialogue and collectivity.

This thus begets a pluriversal rights regime, one that includes humans but also the vast array of other earth beings/sentient entities, where the comprehensive enactment of pluriversal rights is the embodiment of a more

authentic, living global peace: pluriversal equilibrium⁵ as it were. A living global peace that could be characterized as pluriversal equilibrium that may perhaps be dismissed as chimera because of the impoverished delimitations of realpolitik constructions of peace.

Decolonizing 'peace'

Pluriversal equilibrium advances a reappraisal of the concept of 'peace'—a central aspiration of PE and HRE. Peace “remains an openly contested abstract notion” (Verma, 2017, p. 16). As a testament to this, there are many denotations of peace, with little consensus on a clear definition (Anderson, 2004); different disciplines and regions of the world conceptualize peace in their own way (see Richmond et al, 2016 for examples). While avoiding specific definitional canonization responds to a cosmopolitan ethic and resists the imposition of universal concepts (Golding, 2017), it also risks a troublesome dissipation that may diminish conceptual relevance. Still, there are perhaps “as many peaces as there are peoples, cultures, and contexts” (Rodriguez Iglesias, 2019, p. 205), so perhaps conceptual unity is not as integral as having some shared values across pluriverses.

Currently, the universalized model of peace that is enforced by the colonial-modernist apparatuses of international development, economic neoliberalism, and global security, turns peace education into a potentially neocolonial enterprise (Wessells, 2013). Horner (2013) offers an affirming critique:

Liberal peace is synonymous with state building, extolling democracy, free markets and human rights as the, apparently, tried and tested solutions for peace. However, while liberal peace appears to have become embedded as the self-evident answer to conflict and fragile states... it can actually be detrimental for peace (p. 367).

⁵ Not equilibrium in the sense of preserving an unjust status quo, but pluriversal cross-dialogues and co-enactments that foster maximal sustainable benefit for Earth and its inhabitants.

As Abu Moghli (in this issue) shows in the Palestinian case, the concept of peace has been coopted to serve the interests of the occupier, rather than to ensure justice and dignity for all parties. Similar co-optations can be observed in conflict settings around the world, turning ‘peace’ into a dirty word for many peoples.

Decolonizing the construct of West-enforced peace reveals the continuities between global governance and the repressions, expropriations, and impositions of the colonial era (Tucker, 2018). It underscores the extent to which hegemonic peace and human rights discourses can serve as disciplinary and exclusionary technologies that attempt to corral us into a universally-governable, but core-peripheralized, body politic; they evoke an image of the current world order as *naturalized* or *immutable*. A disposition of decolonial pluriversality destabilizes such naturalization and instead surfaces the multiple perspectives, experiences, effects and options that the pursuit of planetary justice and dignity convenes.

We therefore need a decolonial education that helps us reimagine discourses and praxes of being and relationality, peace, and rights. And it is to a rich historiography of resistances that we turn in finding conceptual shape for pluriversal rights education.

Delinking & Radical Politico-Epistemological Marronage

Wheresoever oppression exists, so too do resistance and endeavors toward freedom. Freedom dreaming (Love, 2019)—conjuring pathways to emancipation—is central to some education projects, such as critical PE and HRE. However, we must ask if our efforts toward a pluriversal inter-relationality are malnourished by using the very tools of coloniality-modernity, because if we do ‘use the master’s tools to attempt to dismantle the master’s house’, it means that “only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable” (Lorde, 2007, pp. 110-111).

To circumvent being hemmed in by a colonially-informed politics of permissibility, Mignolo (2009) suggests political and epistemic de-linking to

facilitate new imaginaries. For inspiration, we look to maroons: enslaved persons who fled plantations and formed their own communities elsewhere:

For more than four centuries, the communities formed by such runaways dotted the fringes of plantation America, from Brazil to the southwestern United States, from Peru to the American Southwest. Known variously as palenques, quilombos, mocambos, cumbes, ladeiras, or mambises, these new societies ranged from tiny bands that survived less than a year to powerful states encompassing thousands of members and surviving for generations or even centuries. ...Living with the ever-present fear of sudden attack, they nevertheless succeeded in developing a wide range of innovative techniques that allowed them to carry on the business of daily life...Marronage was not a unitary phenomenon from the point of view of the slaves, and it cannot be given a single locus along a continuum of 'forms of resistance' (Price, 1996, pp. 1, 10, 23, original emphasis).

Roberts (2015) details “modes of marronage as an economy of survival, state of being, and condition of becoming, from fugitive acts...and attempts at liberation to the constructive constitution of freedom” (p. 144). In this sense, marronage entails both a fugitive movement away from subjugation and the simultaneous enactment of an alternative world (Wright, 2020; Roberts, 2015), a present futurity.

To recognize and re-envision liberatory praxes, we need an iterative, radical, politico-epistemological marronage, one that allows us to continually disrupt and de-link from oppressive ways of thinking and being, to “open up space for different epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies that have been suppressed by the global spread of Western modernity-coloniality” (Takayama, 2020, p. 51; Baker, 2012). This affords us a platform to sustainably innovate and re-imagine.

Reimagining education: Pluriversal Rights Education

A radical, politico-epistemological marronage as a framework means that “to reimagine the world, we need to reimagine education” (Silova, 2020,

p. 141). To empower learners to co-craft and honor pluriversal equilibrium, we need spaces “where [they] are put in relationship with the material, ecological, cultural, and social world around them” (Perry, 2020, p. 13), and where epistemic reflexivities (Takayama et al, 2016), decolonial pedagogies of global solidarities (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012), and principles of kindredness can be radically actualized (De Lissovoy, 2010).

Building on Zembylas’ (2017b) decolonizing and pluriversalizing HRE, we invite educators to de-center the human in co-postulating a pluriversal rights education (PRE). It is part nomenclatural adjustment for what some communities have been practicing and envisioning for millennia, and part, a parsimoniously sketched expansion of the broad conceptual tent that houses critical PE and HRE.

We conceptualize PRE as an embodied, prefigurative⁶ ontology of trans-cartesian wholeness.⁷ It is an education that equips learners with the knowledges, skills, dispositions and values to recognize and respect the pluriverse, the rights of all earth beings/sentient entities and the fostering of peace as planetary and sustainable equilibrium. It is not overly prescriptive because that would be re-inscribing coloniality by foreclosing vastly differential possibilities. However, we offer a few guiding fundamentals drawn from critical PE and HRE, and elsewhere, with which to motivate further dialogue. In this, we include dispositions, modes, and actions.

The dispositions we identify include: pluriversal sentience; pluriversal equilibrium; abolitionism and decoloniality; and radical hope. **Pluriversal sentience** recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings. As such, it confronts the imposition of Eurocentric epistemes and decenters humans as the grounding construct of being-ness. It accepts and respects pluriversal rights as axiomatic. Based on a consciousness of our

⁶ Prefigurative, according to Boggs (1977, p. 100) is “the embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal.” That is, we wish to enact an educational praxis now for a world that we are envisioning.

⁷ See the latter chapters of Bohm (2005) for a post-cartesian elaboration of undivided wholeness, which contends that everything is dynamically interconnected and always in a state of becoming.

planetary interdependence, inter-relationality and solidarity become core values, and transnational solidarities and kindredness as core practices. As a corollary, a disposition toward **pluriversal equilibrium** emerges as peace reconceived. Pluriversal equilibrium is dialogical; it recognizes the Earth as a dynamic, vibrant, living eco-system, and thus equilibrium is also a living entity, a permanently dynamic condition of growth, evolution and complementarity. Pluriversality is not cultural relativism but cosmologies entangled in a power differential (Mignolo, 2018, p. x). The task then is to propose and sustain “cross-cultural dialogues across isomorphic concerns” (Santos, 2002, p. 46). Conflict and difference are welcomed as keys to revelatory contributors to growth and change.

Alongside these dynamic reciprocities, a third disposition emerges in response to historical disequilibrium—that of **abolitionism and decoloniality**, wherein de-linking from oppressive epistemological and ontological regimes is understood as a cornerstone for pluriversal equilibrium. Abolitionism and decoloniality affirm that pluriversality requires active dismantling of prior systems of colonial, patriarchal, heteronormative, ableist and extractive violences. Abolition here is “a radically imaginative, generative, and socially productive communal (and community-building) practice” (Rodríguez, 2019 p. 1576). As such, abolitionism and decoloniality are necessarily action-oriented, which connotes constant unlearning and freedom fighting. They also encompass processes of communal restoration and healing.

Finally, a disposition of **radical hope** is an integrative and proactive buttress to the orientations of pluriversal sentience, pluriversal equilibrium and abolitionism and decoloniality. Radical hope values futurity without losing site of the past. It is active, in enacting now the world desired, even while we are ever in a process of transformation; “it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is” (Lear, 2006, p. 103). Such hope is courageous, proactive and indefatigable. It heeds the marginal practices that emerge from devastation (Dreyfus, 2009); it recognizes the resources embedded in each of us; it sees and treats communities as **possibilities** and not as things or problems to be fixed (Block, 2008).

These dispositions require paradigmatic shifts in our modes of thinking/feeling/experiencing. Here we identify these modes as including: border-thinking; spatial, temporal, and socio-politico-economic conscientization; and systems thinking. Pluriversality recognizes the constant need for decoloniality because of long-established power differentials. Therefore, there is an ongoing need to resuscitate subaltern ways of knowing and being. Learners therefore should be acclimated to **border thinking** (Anzaldúa, 2012), navigating worlds that are not indigenous to them and in so doing, honoring (not co-opting or superficially mimicking) emergent mestiza consciousnesses. Learners also engage in processes of **conscientization**. Freire (1990) articulated conscientization as consciousness-raising, and especially focused on the socio-politico-economic. We add spatial and temporal conscientization. Spatial conscientization is the grounding of a critical awareness of self in and with community with other earth beings and how those localized geographies affect and are affected by the other eco-systems⁸. It is about respecting locally-informed wisdoms without enshrining myopic parochialism. Temporal conscientization is a critical awareness of varying temporalities. It is about reconnecting with the past and bridging that to one's present, and disrupting the colonial hegemony of linear thinking/processing⁹. Finally, learners need 'transformative competencies' to be able to embrace complex challenges (OECD, 2018). This entails capacities to read the world as a complex, interrelated and dynamic ecology – for which **systems thinking** is a relevant mode. Systems thinking promotes a holistic approach to analysis that engages in circular and relational understandings, examining systems along different scales and temporalities.

In closing, these dispositions and modes produce a set of actions, among which we identify: Freirean praxis; systemic restorative praxis; pedagogies of innovation; pluriversal design; and decolonial research ethics and justice-oriented data analytics.

⁸ See Soja (2010) for more on spatial consciousness and spatial justice.

⁹ See Ramos (2005) who explores temporal conscientization in relation to futures education.

- **Freirean praxis** (1990): Critical reflection and critical action as a feedback loop remains central to radical educational praxes. Learning should be scaffolded on this foundation. Action is core to PRE so that, similarly to academe's usurpation of decoloniality, it doesn't become an empty metaphor. Truth telling about (Romano & Ragland, 2018) and reparations for enduring colonialities is a critical action of abolition, decoloniality and justice.
- **Systemic restorative praxis**: Williams (2016a) posited Systemic Restorative Praxis, which is a model for social change, premised on three Rs: Reflect, Repair, Re-envision. We must foster the skills and capacities to critically disinter and appraise our past, to celebrate that which has been denigrated and to re-acclimate ourselves and others with the previously misplaced but rich heritages. Learners engage in contrapuntal readings of the present with the past. In tandem with this reflection is critical healing and repairing of generational hurts, wounds and traumas. This provides the clarity and realignment to re-envision bold alternative, sustainable futures. It is an impossibly difficult task to envision radical tomorrows with the repressive, violently-assimilative tools of today. The goal is to build capacities to perceive more of the 'whole', within ourselves, and in community with other sentient beings.
- **Pluriversal design**: In efforts to transform education into a truly inclusive process, proponents of universal design have emphasized the need to incorporate flexibility and variety in education design in order to generate equity for students (Rose & Meyer, 2002; Coppola et al, 2019). To these calls, we add the perspective of pluriversality, nudging such efforts to integrate decolonial modes and embrace perpetual self-reflection and innovation as key practices with which to best engage the diversity of learners and respond to a changing world.
- **Pedagogies of innovation**: We need pedagogies and knowledges to help learners think and act innovatively. We should pivot away from innovation frameworks and incentive structures that reinforce 'competitive individualism' (Suchman & Bishop, 2000) toward

innovation that is non-hierarchical, participatory, collaborative and sustainable (Fabian & Fabricant, 2014). Design theory and practice can be very complementary to this in fostering capacities that are Earth-centered and justice-oriented, rather than centering modernizing aims (Escobar, 2018).

- **Decolonial research ethics and justice-oriented data work:** A range of scholars have offered critical reflection on the role of research and data in decolonization processes, with special attention to the histories of violence and exploitation that have oriented these practices (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Tuhiwai Smith, Tuck and Yang, 2018). A justice-oriented, decolonial orientation to research situates research in service of decolonization and calls for the centering of indigenous and marginalized epistemologies and peoples. Alongside these priorities, special attention is needed in engaging data analytics. In an increasingly digital world, we have emerging ethical dilemmas (including biases and discrimination) around the collection and uses of big data (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2020). We should equip learners with the know-how to navigate and re-appropriate new technologies, but also justice-oriented ethics and skills in data analytics (see Herodotou et al., 2019 for more on formative analytics, and Taylor, 2017, for more on data justice).

The afore-mentioned lists are not exhaustive or definitive, for that would be antithetical to decoloniality. They are meant to be generative, and in that spirit, PRE is thus not only prefigurative, but also rhizomatic¹⁰: we wish for others to build on this and/or proffer constructive refutations. Our collective task is to continually challenge, in and with community, because freedom dreaming and liberatory enactments demand that.

¹⁰ See Deleuze & Guattari (1987) for their philosophical conception of the rhizome, and Cormier (2008) for rhizomatic learning and his characterization of 'community as curriculum'.

Aims of the special issue: An offering to decolonial dialogue

In this special issue, we invited authors to participate in a decolonial dialogue about the present and future of peace education and human rights education. The contributors to the issue engaged this invitation through different modes: philosophical, hermeneutic interpretive, content analysis, ethnography, and artistic. They collectively shed light on the complexities and potentialities of decolonial rights pedagogies.

In “*Toward a Decolonial Ethics in Human Rights and Peace Education*”, Michalinos Zembylas argues that a fundamental aspect of decolonization in HRE and PE is the task of developing a decolonial ethics. In his article, Zembylas discusses how coloniality’s ethics imbues PE and HRE thought and practice. He then moves on to analysis of the contributions of decolonial scholars Enrique Dussel, Sylvia Wynter and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, offering critique of the Eurocentric paradigm of war and the ethical subjectivity found in European epistemes, and posing reflection on an ethics of materiality, positionality and corporeality. Drawing on this analysis, he closes by sketching an alternate path for HRE and PE contoured by border thinking, being human as praxis, and pluriversality. The three directions outlined by Zembylas offer an orientation regarding how scholars and practitioners of HRE and PE might engage in the disruptive decolonial praxes that strive toward epistemic justice.

In their article, “*The Relevance of Unmasking Neoliberal Narratives for a Decolonized Human Rights and Peace Education*”, Bettina Gruber and Josefine Scherling draw our attention toward the coloniality of the neoliberal paradigm, which positions education as a site of human capital formation, subordinating people to the logic of the market. After a discussion of the interrelations between colonialism, neoliberalism and education, Gruber and Scherling engage in a close reading of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, to examine how assumptions are applied to HRE and PE. Their analysis shows that HRE and PE are framed in ways that serve neoliberal interpretation and reveals how the setting of global goals becomes an avenue for interpretive dominance. In this study, Gruber and Scherling emphasize the critical importance of examining the

neoliberal paradigm in decolonization efforts. They show a pathway toward resisting neoliberal narratives and engaging in transformative learning.

The remaining two articles examine pedagogical and curricular enactments, offering critical decolonial analysis of the limitations and potentialities of contemporary HRE. Drawing on interviews and content analysis of syllabi, Danielle Aldawood conducted a study on decolonization in higher education human rights curricula and presents the implications for PE and HRE. Her article, "*Decolonizing Approaches to Human Rights and Peace Education Higher Education Curriculum*", analyses the contemporary practices of U.S. human rights professors and reveals the extent to which they incorporate decolonial theory. Aldawood begins her article with a discussion of the decolonial critiques of human rights and peace, and their implications for PE and HRE. She proposes four tenets of a decolonial approach to academic curriculum, and then explores how these emerge in the participants' narratives and syllabi. Her findings demonstrate a nascent decolonial curricular approach, wherein decolonial theory has gained currency among human rights professors but is not yet fully reflected in their pedagogical and curricular decisions. This study is a clarion call to those of us that aim to integrate decolonial praxis with our work in university settings.

Through ethnographic engagement, Mai Abu Moghli offers insights from HRE and PE practice in the Palestinian context. Her article, "*Re-conceptualizing Human Rights Education: from the Global to the Occupied*", offers a critical reading of HRE in a context of colonial occupation and an authoritarian national ruling structure. After situating her work in relation to a critical reading of HRE and describing her research methodology, Moghli presents rich description of the political context for HRE in the Occupied West Bank and the perceptions and experiences of teachers and students. The critique offered by participants highlights how HRE has become commodified and subservient to donor agendas, rendering it decontextualized, depoliticized and, ultimately, meaningless. They also show the irrelevance and violence of a PE framework in a setting where the language of peace has been coopted to normalize oppression. This rich ethnographic account also offers insights into alternative practices,

highlighting how teachers and students have shaped and enacted their own liberatory pedagogies. Moghli closes with a call to critical educators to engage in situated analyses of the implications of their frameworks, practices and relationships. This study unsettles the foundations of HRE, emphasizes the importance of indigenous knowledges and strategies, and underscores the need to develop alternative forms of education.

Finally, the special issue also includes an artistic contribution from Erin O'Halloran. In her piece, "*Toward a global common*," O-Halloran offers an opportunity to step into a 'third space' found at the intersection of HRE and PE, where learning and creating is a reciprocal praxis, and is extended to embrace nature and its 'other-than-human inhabitants.' O-Halloran rooted her painting in the Earth Charter, posing it in contrast to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and as a resource for decolonial, inclusive, rights-based, peaceable education. Her piece pulls the viewer into futurity, toward imagining a world beyond this one, a world where systemic injustices and injuries are healed and transformed, where relationality is plural and responsive, where a global commons flourishes.

We hope these offerings nurture the ongoing growth of new and varied pedagogical iterations towards inclusionary, rights-based, peaceable education that transcends the overrepresentation of human beings and the destructive coloniality that currently grips our world.

El mundo que queremos es uno donde quepan muchos mundos. / The world we want is one in which many worlds fit.

(Zapatista 4th Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle Jan. 1, 1996)

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Toward a Decolonial Ethics in Human Rights and Peace Education

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Abstract

This article argues that interventions in HRE and PE that aim to decolonize understandings and praxes of peace and human rights will inevitably have to address the issue of decolonial ethics. Decolonial ethics imagines a set of ethical orientations that confront conventional assumptions about culture and history and challenge the normally uninterrogated consequences of coloniality (which is an enduring process that is still very much with us today, as opposed to colonialism which is understood as a temporal period of oppression that has come and gone) and Eurocentrism in disciplinary discourses and practices. Although both HRE and PE have historically

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claimed an ethical mission that has attempted in the past to articulate responses to the ethical problem of how to struggle against violations of rights and to reinstate respect and protection of rights and positive peace in the world, both conventional and progressive approaches have been generally unreflective about the ethical implications of coloniality and Eurocentrism in these fields. The article explores how decolonial reflections on ethics sketch a different path in HRE and PE from the familiar ethical theories along three directions: border thinking, being human as praxis, and pluriversality.

Keywords: Decolonial; Ethics; Human Rights Education; Peace Education; Pedagogy

Recent work in Human Rights Education (HRE) and Peace Education (PE) has begun to critique coloniality and Eurocentrism, unmasking how these maladies are implicated in un-critical, monolithic, depoliticized and largely de-contextualized manifestations of HRE and PE (e.g. see Bajaj, 2015; Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Keet, 2015; Kester, 2019; Shirazi, 2011; Williams, 2013, 2016, 2017; Yang, 2015; Zakharia 2017; Zembylas, 2017a, 2017b, 2018). This work has drawn attention to a range of exclusions, epistemic injustices and other violences in HRE and PE, and to a failure to fully address issues of power, race, and coloniality. Some of the critiques and counter-projects that have been raised against coloniality and Eurocentrism draw inspiration from decolonial thinking, highlighting how a ‘colonial matrix of power’ systematically reproduces colonial patterns of racial domination, epistemic hierarchization, and marginalization of non-Western knowledges and lifeworlds in wide-ranging academic fields. Scholars such as Enrique Dussel (1985, 2013), Walter Mignolo (2000, 2011), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007, 2008), Sylvia Wynter (2003; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015), and others, have turned our attention to the deep influence of taken-for-granted epistemological, ontological, methodological, and ethical assumptions embedded within academic disciplines, and particularly the determining force of historical and contemporary relations of colonialism and coloniality to the most basic understandings and praxes of knowledge production (Fregoso Bailón & De Lissovoy, 2018).

This article argues that a fundamental part of the ongoing project of decolonization in academia is the task of developing decolonial ethics (Dussel, 1985, 2013; Maldonado-Torres, 2007, 2008). Decolonial ethics does not simply recognize the values of intercultural dialogue and cultural differences, as liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan orientations emphasize. Rather, decolonial ethics imagines a set of ethical orientations that confront conventional assumptions about culture and history and challenge the normally uninterrogated consequences of coloniality and Eurocentrism in disciplinary discourses and practices. In this sense, the task of developing a decolonial ethics is essentially a project of unworking the ethics of coloniality and Eurocentrism within disciplines (Odysseos, 2017). Therefore, decolonial ethics is distinct from, and critical of, the ethics implied in liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan orientations that circulate in many fields, including HRE and PE. Decolonial ethics may share with these orientations a refusal to circumscribe normative commitments to knowledge, politics and culture, yet it differs from them by virtue of rejecting fundamental principles of Western notions such as ‘individualism’ and ‘universality’ in favor of other values such as ‘border thinking’ and ‘pluriversality’ (Dunford, 2017). Border thinking highlights the contributions of subaltern knowledge producers, who are in the ‘borders’ or ‘margins,’ whereas pluriversality emphasizes that there are pluriversal values, that is, values which emerge from dialogue across multiple places, cultures and visions about the world.

I argue, then, that interventions in HRE and PE that aim to decolonize understandings and praxes of peace and human rights will inevitably have to address the question of decolonial ethics. However, as Odysseos (2017) emphasizes, this task will not be accomplished by “incorporating elements of decolonial critique or ‘translating’ these important attempts at decolonial ethics into our familiar ethical theories” (p. 449). Rather, if we want to retain “decolonial thought’s disruption of prevalent figurations, languages and ways of thinking about ‘ethics” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 449), we would need to create a new language of ethics—a language that moves beyond Eurocentric ethical theories and emerges from within the experience of the ‘colonial wound’ (Mignolo, 2005), a language that enables envisioning new social and political

imaginaries to the ethical problem of how to struggle against violations of rights and to reinstate respect and protection of rights and positive peace in the world, while coloniality still persists. Although both HRE and PE have historically claimed an ethical mission that has attempted in the past to articulate responses to the ethical problem of togetherness in the world, both conventional and even more progressive approaches that fall within critical HRE and critical PE, have been generally unreflective about the ethical implications of coloniality and Eurocentrism in these fields.

This article seeks to outline some elements of a future decolonial ethics in HRE and PE, while showing the limits of familiar ethical theories, namely, liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan orientations. The aim is not to provide a comprehensive description of decolonial ethics in HRE and PE, as this would not only be impossible, but it would risk repeating the same colonizing moves that are driven by currently dominant ontological, epistemological and ethical investments in universality, certainty, and mastery (Stein, 2019). As Dunford (2017) emphasizes, “an exhaustive and definitive statement of decolonial ethics [...] would be impossible, for decolonial ethics has emerged from, and must remain open to being shaped by, dialogues amongst millions of grassroots actors and activists” (p. 381). When understood in this form, decolonial ethics provides an ethical lens for HRE and PE to continually challenge the enduring legacies of coloniality and Eurocentrism in these fields.

The article is divided into four sections. In the first section, I outline some general contours of decolonial critiques that highlight the distinctiveness of coloniality’s ethics. The second section shows how the ethics of coloniality is reflected in the engagement with understandings of peace and human rights theories and pedagogies. The third section turns to the work of decolonial scholars Enrique Dussel, Sylvia Wynter and Nelson Maldonado-Torres and critically engages with their ideas on decolonial ethics; in particular, my analysis addresses the idea of ethics of materiality, positionality and corporality, the critique of ethical subjectivity found in European epistemes, and the critique of the Eurocentric paradigm of war, since I find these issues to be pertinent in the fields of HRE and PE. The final section explores how these decolonial reflections on ethics sketch a different

path in HRE and PE from the familiar ethical theories along three important directions: border thinking, being human as praxis, and pluriversality. This section also discusses the tensions and possibilities emerging from attempts to develop a decolonial ethics in HRE and PE, arguing that the project of renewing HRE and PE is inextricably linked to the ethical dimensions of decolonization.

The Ethics of Coloniality

Decolonial thinking consists of a diverse set of critiques of colonialism and its aftermath—the coloniality of power and knowledge, land appropriation, racial hierarchization and exclusion, liberal individualism, and claims of universality (e.g. Dussel, 2013; Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007; Wynter, 2003).¹ Key to this ‘colonial matrix of power’ (Quijano, 2007) are particular Western values such as civilization, development and liberalism, “that have been imposed on others as universal and globally applicable designs” (Dunford, 2017, p. 382). As various decolonial scholars argued, the colonial matrix of power rested on the racial classification of the world, capitalism as a violent mode of production, the exploitation of colonized populations, and the expropriation of non-Western religions, knowledges and cultures. As mentioned earlier, it would be

¹ It is important to clarify from the beginning that there are distinctive features that distinguish decolonial theories from postcolonialism and other critical theories (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). A similar argument has been made in the field of education, namely, it has been argued that decolonial and postcolonial perspectives are not necessarily equivalent, complementary or even supplementary to critical theory and pedagogy projects (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Discussing these theoretical differences lies beyond the scope of this article. It is sufficient to say here that the decolonial turn encourages re-thinking the world from the perspective of the marginalized, that is, from Latin America, from Africa, from Indigenous places and from the global South. While postcolonial theory—as it is exemplified, for example, in the work of Said and Spivak—has exposed Eurocentrism, decolonial theory presents a much more radical position that critiques the epistemological, ontological and ethical roots of coloniality. I come back to this issue, when I discuss the distinction between postcolonial manifestations of HRE or PE and a decolonial ethics in these fields.

impossible to capture in this section the diversity and complexity of decolonial thinking, therefore, I will focus on outlining three general contours of decolonial critiques that, in my view, highlight the distinctiveness of coloniality's ethics: coloniality as an enduring process that claims the superiority of colonialism's achievements; coloniality as constitutive of liberal values; and, coloniality as bound up with Eurocentric knowledge and the epistemicide of colonized subjects' knowledge. This discussion provides vital background for understanding decolonial ethics.

First, it is important to clarify that coloniality in general refers to "the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 219). In other words, coloniality is a political, economic, racial and ethical system of classification and domination. As Maldonado-Torres (2007) emphasizes, there is an important distinction between coloniality and colonialism:

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 breathe coloniality all the time and every day. (p. 243)

The main point here is that coloniality is an enduring process that claims the superiority of colonialism's achievements and the inferiority of conquered populations—hence, the colonial matrix of power invokes a particular system of ethics. For example, the coloniality of power—manifested through the concentration in Europe of capital, the dispossession of lands, enslavement

and gendered violence—naturalizes Europe’s politics and culture through its “non-ethics of war” (Maldonado-Torres, p. 247). As Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains, the non-ethics of war refers to the idea that war is exempt from the ethics that regulate normal conduct in majority Christian countries, in favor of naturalizing violence and slavery justified by virtue of the conquered populations’ ‘race.’

Second, coloniality is constitutive of liberal values and Western democratic political institutions (Dunford, 2017). As Maldonado-Torres (2007) writes about Mignolo’s (2003) notion of coloniality as ‘the darker side of modernity’:

Modernity, usually considered to be a product of the European Renaissance or the European Enlightenment, has a darker side, which is constitutive of it. Modernity as a discourse and as a practice would not be possible without coloniality, and coloniality continues to be an inevitable outcome of modern discourses. (p. 244)

Modern discourses of liberal rights, in particular rights to private property, can be traced in the politics of colonialism and the economic growth of Europe enabled by colonialism that has led to a wider distribution of property (Jahn, 2013). As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) explains:

The darker or underside of modernity included the slave trade, fratricidal colonial wars of conquest, negative development, violent civilizing missions, forcible Christianization, material dispossessions and other forms of violence. The brighter side of modernity included the flowering of individual liberties, universal suffrage, mass democracy, secularization and emancipation of the masses from the tyranny of tradition and religion, rationality and scientific spirit, popular education, technology and many other accomplishments (Boron, 2005, p. 32). But for one to experience the darker or brighter aspects of modernity depended on which side of the abyssal lines one was located as well as the racial category into which one was classified. (p. 25)

Needless to say, the so-called ‘brighter side of modernity’ is not without caveats. Individual liberties come sometimes at the cost of collective struggles; mass democracy is turning into the tyranny of the majority; the

assumed emancipation of tradition and religion is leading to Islamophobia; popular education assumes that other types of education are not relevant.² In short, coloniality is inextricably linked to liberal-democratic values and institutions in Europe, hence the ethico-political foundations of European values—e.g. private property, tolerance, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, individual rights, human rights and so on—were borne out of the colonial experience. As De Lissovoy (2010) points out, the principle of coexistence is a fundamental ethical value of coloniality “in which the radical differences between hegemonic and indigenous standpoints are not suppressed” (p. 282). However, the hypocrisy is that coexistence is manifested through “the appropriation of indigenous lands, resources, knowledge and culture within a colonial dynamic” (De Lissovoy, p. 282). For example, the ideals of peace, democracy and human rights that are dominant in the twenty-first century, have all been imposed by violence under the rhetoric of modernity’s superiority over non-Europeans’ inferiority (Grosfoguel, 2007).

Third, coloniality is bound up with Eurocentric knowledge and the epistemicide of colonized subjects’ knowledge. The concept of ‘coloniality of knowledge’ (Quijano, 2007) refers to how Eurocentric knowledge was made globally hegemonic through the workings of colonialism and capitalism. In this manner, Western knowledge was considered universally salient—hence, the idea of ‘universality’ of Eurocentric knowledge—while indigenous and other colonized subjects’ knowledge was deemed to be provincial.³ This epistemological model, explains Quijano, works through establishing binary, hierarchical relations such as primitive versus civilized, irrational versus rational, and traditional versus modern such that everything that is ‘non-European’ is identified with inferiority. The challenge for decoloniality is how

² I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this clarification.

³ The word ‘indigenous’ here is used to describe a variety of Aboriginal peoples; hence, the assumption is that the indigenous is not homogenous. By ‘indigenous knowledge’, then, I do not mean to refer to a homogenous body of knowledge that is the antidote to the Eurocentric. Rather, indigenous knowledge entails a variety of worldviews, skills, practices, and rituals developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their surroundings (Bruchac, 2014).

to ‘delink’ knowledge production from the colonial matrix of power towards different ways of knowing and being in the world (Mignolo, 2007). As Mignolo explains:

Decoloniality, then, means working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what modernity/coloniality does and, hence, where decolonization of the mind should begin. The struggle is for changing the terms in addition to the content of the conversation. (p. 459)

Recognizing the consequences of coloniality of knowledge and the need to delink knowledge production from the colonial matrix of power highlights that epistemic hierarchies are entangled with political, economic, *and* ethical hierarchies. Therefore, a decolonial conceptualization of ethics constitutes an inextricable part of decolonization, because it “offers more than an alternative to Eurocentric ones” (De Lissovoy, 2010, p. 282). As De Lissovoy argues, a decolonial ethics “exposes the several dimensions of a constitutive contradiction and hypocrisy in the Western traditions of political and ethical philosophy, and in the concrete projects of democracy-building that have been informed by them” (p. 282). For example, the universalism that was proclaimed for humanity was distorted, as it was imposed through deeply racist and colonial discourses and practices such as the imposition of ‘civilizing missions’ and ‘developmentalist projects’ justified on the basis of claims that these interventions would save the other from its own barbarism (Grosfoguel, 2007).

To sum up, acknowledging the ethics of coloniality—as constitutive of values about the superiority and universalization of Eurocentric knowledge, the imposition of liberal values and the epistemicide of colonized subjects’ knowledge—raises questions about the extent to which this sort of ethics is embedded in various academic disciplines and fields. In the next part of the article, I will discuss how recent contributions in HRE and PE have begun to problematize Eurocentric understandings of peace and human rights theories and pedagogies. My goal is not to provide a comprehensive review of this work, but rather to highlight the importance of paying attention to how coloniality has had an influence on the ethical theories that have become

dominant in HRE and PE, namely, liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan orientations. I will argue that if the reproduction of Western values and Eurocentric knowledge production is going to be interrupted, then an alternative, namely, a ‘decolonial ethics’ is required to be developed through HRE and PE theories and pedagogies.

Eurocentric Understandings of Peace and Human Rights Theories and Pedagogies

Recent work in both HRE and PE shows that many concepts in these fields have been monopolized by Eurocentric scholarship. Take, for example, the concept of ‘human rights’ itself and its grounding in liberal views of modernity and specifically humanist notions of ‘the human’ as an autonomous, rational, and sovereign ‘individual’ (Donnelly, 2003; Douzinas, 2000; Mutua, 2002). The very constitution of ‘human’ in human rights discourses is predicated upon Eurocentric assumptions within which only particular kinds of ethical subjects are recognizable as ‘human,’ while all others are excluded through racialization and colonization (Mignolo, 2000; Wynter, 2003). Pointing to the Eurocentric character of today’s conceptualizations of human rights reveals their epistemological, ontological and ethical grounding, which “is the offspring of a particular perspective grounded in a historical and geographical context” (Barreto, 2012, p. 3). Today’s conceptualizations of human rights, then, have colonizing functions for those who have been, and still are, systematically excluded from its imaginary (Khoja-Moolji, 2017).

In particular, liberal theories of politics and ethics—which often take the form of moral cosmopolitan and multicultural views in human rights discourses—are based on the idea that all human beings belong to the same collectivity and should be treated equally regardless of their nationality, language or religion (López, 2010).⁴ The distinctive characteristics of

⁴ Needless to say, I do not reject *all* cosmopolitan and multicultural thought; my concern here is that which is grounded in universalistic and individualistic frames (López, 2010). As

cosmopolitanism, López points out, are individualism, universal equality, and the generality of application, while multiculturalism emphasizes the consideration and respect of difference. And yet, as the history of colonialism shows, the ethico-political grounding of liberal theories is tied to the project of coloniality and the reproduction of the colonial matrix of power. What seems to be missing from liberal theories is how modernity and coloniality have been responsible for the persistent coloniality and structural inequalities in the world today (Dunford, 2017).

A similar argument has been made about HRE, namely, how the field has been shaped within the epistemological, ontological and ethical conditions of coloniality that have delimited its own space, both theoretically and practically (Bajaj, Cislighi & Mackie, 2016; Keet, 2015; Osler, 2015; Yang, 2015, Zembylas, 2017a, 2017b; Zembylas & Keet, 2019). Although there is a range of perspectives in relation to HRE, it is generally understood as both a field of study and an area of social education that is concerned with the teaching and learning of human rights. The historical development of HRE itself as a field has been linked to liberal, cosmopolitan and multicultural perspectives that invoke the fundamental epistemological and ethical stance of the West—that it can unilaterally know and determine the right and the true for itself and all others through educational, political and cultural interventions (Fregoso Bailón & De Lissovoy, 2018). For example, the underlying assumption of many conventional HRE programs that primarily promote knowledge about universal human rights is that learning about or from universal human rights is a major way to secure ‘development’ and ‘emancipation’ in ‘developing’ countries; alternative conceptions from Africa or other indigenous populations of what it means to be ‘human’ to live a meaningful life —e.g. humanity in relational terms; the inclusion of nonhumans in systems of living—are systematically undermined or completely erased from these programs (Khoja-Moolji, 2017).

I show next in the article, the point is not to give up on cosmopolitan and multicultural thought as such, but rather to develop such thinking within a frame of decolonial ethics.

There is now growing evidence that conventional HRE projects in schools, universities, non-governmental organisations and communities seldom question the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the Eurocentric theory of human rights (Keet, 2014), perpetuating an uncritical advancement of human rights universals as an uncontested social good (Keet, 2015). Building on Keet's argument about the 'imprisonment' of human rights and HRE into colonial and neoliberal arrangements (see also Coysh, 2014; Zembylas & Keet, 2019), I would go a step further and suggest that it is time we questioned the ethical underpinnings of HRE as well, and specifically how its liberal framework has limited the ethical promise of HRE within a normative frame. But before I make an attempt to do so, it is important to show how PE has followed a similar trajectory when it comes to its embeddedness in Eurocentric ethical theories and pedagogies.

Similar to HRE, PE is defined as both a field of study and an area of social education that is concerned with war, conflict and violence, and with how to promote peace in the world (Burns & Aspeslagh, 1996; Harris & Morrison, 2003; Salomon & Nevo, 2002). There are clearly overlaps between HRE and PE in that the ideas of peace and human rights are often interconnected when it comes to teaching and learning; they differ though in terms of what they prioritize as their lens or focus of interest. Critiques of PE theory and practice in recent years have also acknowledged how Eurocentric ideas have influenced views on peacebuilding and peace education programs (Bajaj, 2015; Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Kester, 2019; Shirazi, 2011; Williams, 2013, 2016, 2017; Zakharia 2017; Zembylas, 2018). In particular, these critiques highlight the limitations of the Eurocentric modernist framework undergirding peace pedagogies and essentially the reproduction of peacebuilding practices and institutions grounded in whiteness, coloniality and liberalism. Similar to HRE, liberal theories in PE are reflected in the epistemological, political and ontological premises of peace and peace education (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2013, 2017).

Importantly, there are growing efforts in PE to utilize more explicitly ideas from decolonial theory to discuss and analyze understandings and practices of peace education. For example, Williams (2017) uses decolonial thinking to discuss how colonialism and slavery need to inform more critical

ways forward in the work of peace education; this may take, for instance, the form of questioning the colonial histories and iterations of structural violence found in specific teaching and learning contexts in which ‘peace’ is invoked. A similar argument has been put forward by Sumida Huaman (2011) who makes a link between ‘critical peace education’ and ‘Indigenous education’ by suggesting that it is important to recognize the legacies of colonization in Indigenous societies and the need to include Indigenous knowledges in nurturing transformative agencies toward critical peace education. In my own recent work, I have also brought into conversation ‘postcolonial peace education’ with ‘critical peace education’, making an attempt to theorize their convergences and divergences (Zembylas, 2018). Other scholars’ efforts in peace education (e.g. Shirazi, 2011; Zakharia, 2017) also explore the linkages between postcolonial theory and critical peace education to articulate what it means for peace education to be inspired by ‘postcolonial’ ideas.⁵

Although these efforts do move away from the influence of Eurocentric theorizing and engage explicitly with the ways in which philosophical understandings and pedagogical practices of peace education are implicated in modernity and coloniality, there is still considerable work to be done to specify and unpack the ethical contours of decolonizing efforts in PE. Clearly, work in ‘critical peace education’ has paid attention to issues of structural inequalities and aims at cultivating a sense of ‘transformative agency’ or ‘voice’ to create new social, epistemic and political structures that advance peace and human rights. Yet, concepts such as agency or voice are

⁵ It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the variety of understandings and definitions around ‘critical peace education,’ ‘postcolonial peace education’ and related notions. It is sufficient here to say that what differentiates ‘conventional’ PE from critical peace education is that the latter brings in theoretical frameworks and conceptual resources that draw from fields such as critical pedagogy, social justice education, critical race theory, and post-colonial and post-structural theory (e.g. see Bajaj, 2015; Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2016; Zembylas & Bekerman, 2013, 2017). Postcolonial peace education highlights, in particular, how larger structural, material and political realities of coloniality influence understandings and pedagogical practices of peace (Zakharia, 2017; Zembylas, 2018).

problematic as they feature strongly in colonial and universalist discourses. Hence, a decolonial conceptualization of ethics is not yet reflected in theorizations of critical peace education.

In particular, I would argue that it is important to develop a *critical decolonial ethics* in both PE and HRE—that is, an ethics which is viewed as part of decolonizing projects (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014). A critical decolonial ethics in PE and HRE, then, would seek to develop decolonized accounts of peace and human rights in which a new humanity could be made possible, rather than being limited to a critique of modernity building on critical social theories that are not calling for the total dismantling of Eurocentric modernity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014). A decolonial PE, just as a decolonial HRE, would emphasize the ongoing process of resistance (De Lissovoy, 2010) to any colonial patterns of hierarchization and oppression in peacebuilding and human rights efforts.

All in all, a decolonial perspective on ethics in HRE and PE poses fundamental questions such as: How can the experience of the colonial wound be acknowledged in HRE and PE accounts? What alternatives to Eurocentric ethical theories may be developed in HRE and PE? How does a decolonial perspective on ethics in HRE and PE radicalize liberal, cosmopolitan, and multiculturalist considerations of difference? These questions do not have simple answers, but rather highlight the significance of explicit engagement with the ethical dimensions of coloniality in critiques of HRE and PE.

Decolonial Ethics: Insights from Dussel, Wynter and Maldonado-Torres

This section explores the insights on decolonial ethics of three prominent scholars who have addressed the issue of ethics more explicitly in their writings: Enrique Dussel, Sylvia Wynter and Nelson Maldonado-Torres. I focus on these scholars because they address issues that I find to be pertinent in the fields of HRE and PE, namely, the idea of ethics of materiality, positionality and corporality, the critique of ethical subjectivity found in European epistemes, and the critique of the Eurocentric paradigm

of war. All of these issues come up, one way or another, in theorizations of HRE and PE, although the sort of complexity invoked by these decolonial thinkers is not yet widely reflected in discussions of coloniality, hierarchization and marginalization in HRE and PE. My analysis here, then, draws attention to these issues to expose the importance of the *ethical* in attempts to decolonize HRE and PE.

In his long-standing work on the ethics of liberation, Dussel (1985, 2013) maintains that Western ethics are grounded in a disembodied and metaphysical humanity that disregards materiality, positionality and corporality. Therefore, he argues that corporality, positionality and materiality should be reinstated by taking into consideration the multidimensionality of life—e.g. cultural values, biological factors, material factors etc.—and how each of these dimensions implies ethical obligations. As López (2010) observes, Dussel develops a critique of Western ethics by departing from the abstract modern moralism of Kant and moving toward an ethics that takes seriously the materiality of human life: “He [Dussel] maintains that an ethics that attempts to deal with evidently factual matters such as misery and the conditions of those excluded from the global order necessarily requires the primacy of a material order” (p. 666).

In other words, confronting the materiality of coloniality demands a decolonial ethics that positions the others (e.g. the poor, the oppressed) in practical-material terms; that is, the ethical responsibility to confront the affective and material consequences of coloniality (e.g. see Pedwell, 2016) is foregrounded. As Dussel explains, the true ethical response is not an issue of applying an ideal ethical system that dictates how one ought to act, but rather it is formulated on the basis of the other’s affective and material experiences and assessments of political conditions:

Others reveal themselves as others in all the acuteness of their exteriority when they burst in upon us as something extremely distinct, as nonhabitual, nonroutine, as the extraordinary, the enormous (“apart from the norm”)—the poor, the oppressed. They are the ones who, by the side of the road, outside the system, show their suffering, challenging faces: “We’re hungry! We have the right to eat” (1985, p. 43).

The ethical moment is the cry that people *ought not* to be poor and oppressed; the materiality, positionality and corporality of this moment is precisely what disturbs the world and its colonial organization and reconceptualizes life on the basis of the gaze of the other. Importantly, the ethics of materiality, positionality and corporality extends well beyond particular persons encountering each other to encompass the social, historical and physical environment (De Lissovoy, 2018).

Like Dussel, Sylvia Wynter emerges as another unrelenting critic of the Eurocentric ethical foundations by focusing specifically on one figure—white European ‘Man’ as a rational, masterful and civilized being—and how he has monopolized the human (Odysseos, 2017). Wynter (2003; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015) highlights how the organization of colonial discourses and practices entailed the assumption of human as a single homogenized being based on the figure of the West’s liberal Man. For Wynter (2003), Man emerged through ‘genres’ that occurred through historical ruptures in European history—e.g. the *homo politicus* Man of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century or the *homo economicus* Man of capitalism in the nineteenth century. Her genealogy of genres of Man shows how knowledge systems, values and ethics are embodied and historically situated. However, these ethical principles (e.g. White rationality, Christian principles of spirituality, etc.) have become normalized, while other ethics (e.g. Indigenous populations) have been undermined or excluded from the prevailing genre of the human.⁶

For Wynter, challenging the overrepresented figure of Man is “central to ethical inquiry and subjectivity, *in situ* at the multiple sites of contemporary coloniality” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 458). In other words, Wynter’s interrogation of the ethics of Man is not an intellectual matter but rather “one of social, political and ethical-relational importance for ongoing projects

⁶ As noted earlier, Indigenous populations are not homogeneous in their religion or even value systems. It’s the imposition of this unified / universal values that is problematic. Once again, I am indebted to one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this clarification.

of decolonization” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 458) In her efforts to decenter Man and the grounding of his ethical subjectivity, Wynter invokes a new notion of humanness that is articulated as a collective body and praxis rather than an individual autonomous entity as found in European epistemes: As McKittrick (2015) explains: “Being human [for Wynter] signals not a noun but a verb. Being human is a praxis of humanness” (p. 3). It is important to show how human selves are multifarious and are enacted differently in various (colonized) contexts; therefore, an important part of developing decolonial ethics, Wynter tells us, ought to be the de-generalization of the Man and his universal ethics.

Finally, I turn to decolonial theorist Maldonado-Torres and his ground-breaking book *Against War: View from the Underside of Modernity* (2008) in which he articulates critical decolonial ethics in relation to the paradigm of war and racism that is inextricably tied to coloniality. A paradigm of war is defined by Maldonado-Torres as “a way of conceiving humanity, knowledge, and social relations that privileges conflict or *polemos*” (p. 3). This paradigm is genealogically traceable to the emergence of Eurocentric modernity in 1492, which is interpreted as paradigmatic of the birth of a world capitalist economy, the colonial exploitation by Europe, and the use of violence to impose a modern subjectivity based on race as an organizing principle. Decolonial ethics, then, is opposed to this world system and the ethics it invokes: racially hierarchized, capitalist, patriarchal, sexist, Eurocentric, Christian-centric, and colonial (Grosfoguel, 2007). The decolonial turn, according to Maldonado-Torres (2008),

posits the primacy of ethics as an antidote to problems with Western conceptions of freedom, autonomy and equality, as well as the necessity of politics to forge a world where ethical relations become the norm rather than the exception. The de-colonial turn highlights the epistemic relevance of the enslaved and colonized search for humanity. (p. 7)

According to Maldonado-Torres, the post-1492 modern world-system was driven by war, and at its center was Eurocentrism and coloniality. What critical decolonial ethics seeks is, therefore, a paradigm of peace, yet not one that superficially extols peace for the sake of it, but one “that is constitutive

of decolonial liberatory ethics [and] marks a radical humanistic-oriented departure from the paradigm of war” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2014, p. 910). If we are going to overcome what Maldonado-Torres (2008) calls the ‘master morality’ premised on the refusal to engage the colonized person as ethical being and defines non-white bodies as sub-human, then we clearly need to develop a decolonial ethics outside of Western ethics and politics.

To sum up, the elements that each decolonial thinker adds—i.e. an ethics of materiality, positionality and corporality, the critique of ethical subjectivity found in European epistemes, and the critique of the Eurocentric paradigm of war —contribute toward a decolonial ethics that aims at rehumanizing people who have been reduced by racism and colonialism to the ‘wretched of the earth’ (Fanon, 1963). Given that coloniality has been imposed on notions of universality, it might be tempting to think that decolonial ethics would reject any global design of ethics “on the basis that it will inevitably crush differences and reinforce coloniality” (Dunford, 2017, p. 387). Indeed, as De Lissovoy (2010) also points out, there are serious concerns, when claims are made about a global decolonial ethics. Such concerns emerge from the fact that notions of unity and commonality in ethical projects “have been infected by the assimilative impulse of Eurocentrism” and so it may be argued that “any truly global ethics [of decoloniality] will have to break with the epistemologically predatory determinations of [Eurocentrism]” (De Lissovoy, 2010, p. 283). However, argues De Lissovoy, to reject a global decolonial ethics altogether “is only to recoil into the obverse of a colonial universalism” (p. 283). Similarly, Dunford (2017) suggests that challenging the colonial matrix of power and developing a decolonial ethics constitutes a global project, in the sense “that decolonial ethics is and must be globally minded” (p. 387). The difference is that such a globally minded ethics has to be built outside of Western traditions and should be an ongoing and provisional product of dialogue and collaboration between differences rather than an *a priori* set of European ethical values (De Lissovoy, 2010), no matter how ‘noble’ they sound such as liberal, multicultural or cosmopolitan values.

Toward a Decolonial Ethics in HRE and PE

In this last section of the article, I explore how the decolonial reflections on ethics outlined so far may sketch a different trajectory in HRE and PE—one that moves beyond familiar ethical theories of liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan orientations. In particular, I will focus on three ideas that invoke new forms of HRE and PE as ethical and incessant decolonial projects: border thinking, being human as praxis, and pluriversality. These ideas are inspired by the insights discussed from the work of Dussel, Wynter and Maldonado-Torres. Once again, these ideas are not meant to be exhaustive or even exemplary of a decolonial global ethics in HRE and PE, but rather as illustrative of the ethical possibilities that are opened for scholarship in these fields.

Border Thinking

As noted earlier, liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan theories promote thinking in abstract universalist terms, while ignoring the positionality and contribution of the poor and the marginalized (Dunford, 2017). On the contrary, decolonial scholars invoke thinking from the border to highlight the contributions of subaltern knowledge producers, who are in the margins, yet whose positions are legitimate to be heard (Maldonado-Torres, 2008). As Maldonado-Torres writes, these positions must be taken into consideration not because they have equal value in the name of an abstract cosmopolitanism, “but because the centuries old experience of coloniality and dehumanization provides colonized subjects with important perspectives” (p. 250). Border thinking, then, does not assume that those positions will remain at the border and margins. It means that those positions are reacting to the dominant Eurocentric discourse, rather than being the core and leading the way forward to decoloniality. Also, it is not only the positions that are brought in, but also the experiences of struggle and praxis.

Thinking from the borders in HRE and PE involves giving up the supremacy of liberal, multicultural or cosmopolitan ethics embedded in these fields and taking an active stance against colonial patterns of

hierarchization and oppression in peacebuilding and human rights efforts. For example, to think from the borders implies decolonizing HRE and PE interventions so that the histories and experiences of colonized people are included and active engagement with subjugated knowledges is invoked—e.g. the recognition of colonized people’s experiences of peace and war (see Zakharia, 2017). Developing a decolonial ethics in HRE and PE means making subjugated knowledges key points at the levels of pedagogy, curriculum programs, and teacher education, while rejecting Eurocentric supremacy in determining what legitimate knowledge is.

Furthermore, to think from the borders is not only to acknowledge the experience of the colonial wound in HRE and PE accounts, but also to *think with* these experiences of coloniality and dehumanization when developing contextualized HRE and PE programs. This means that decolonial ethics radicalizes liberal, cosmopolitan, and multiculturalist considerations of difference embedded in HRE and PE programs, because it offers different understandings of what is of fundamental moral significance. There are for instance, indigenous cultures that do not prioritize the ‘rights’ and moral worth of human beings as compared to other beings. Some of the moral visions that operate at the borders, then, refuse to specify in advance that some beings are more worthy than others (Dunford, 2017). The recognition of indigenous’ understandings and experiences of ‘rights’ in HRE provides an alternative vision of ethics.

Being Human as Praxis

As noted earlier, Wynter’s (2013; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015) notion of ‘being human as praxis’ “renews the question of ethics and shows that the modern colonial stabilization of knowledge about who we are as human cannot function as a foundation for a revised humanism or for decolonial ethics” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 458). De-generalizing the figure of Man through the development of a decolonizing HRE and PE would entail efforts towards new forms of education that raise, much like decolonial ethics, fundamental questions anew such as “what do we ‘teach’, how do we educate, in what languages, and in what systemic conditions? Moreover, how politically do we

challenge knowledge orders that continue to do epistemic, and legitimate actual, violence?” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 466). In this sense, forms of education such as HRE and PE may be thought of as ‘unfinished’ projects that are “inextricably connected to specific struggles of epistemic justice” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 466).

In other words, struggles towards epistemic justice in HRE and PE are embedded in larger projects of decolonization; this implies that to promote global social justice, we will also need to begin interrogating the construction of epistemic injustice in all educational contexts, theories, policies and pedagogical practices (Zembylas, 2017b). If Wynter’s work on human as praxis teaches us anything, argues Odysseos (2017), it is that grasping the multiplicity of humanity, as manifested in different contexts, can only result in the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries and an obsolescence of the disciplines as narrowly conceived in Eurocentric domains of knowledge (p. 469). To put this simply: HRE and PE need to cease to exist as Eurocentric disciplines and dissolve the disciplinary boundaries, and begin to employ practices of knowledge and language that seek to develop radical and transgressive praxis, which sees the world as relation rather than in individualist terms.

The ‘renewal’ of HRE and PE, then, is inextricably linked to knowledge-production and cultivation as participation in practices that aim to make possible and viable the existence of new ethical relations with others (humans and non-humans alike) and engage in ongoing struggles for decolonization. HRE and PE as knowledge practices are not isolated from decolonization efforts; on the contrary, to insist on renewing these fields, academically, ethically, politically, and practically means radical institutional, epistemic and ethical reforms that erase existing colonial remnants of knowledge in all manifestations of what is called HRE and PE. To enable this radical renewal of HRE and PE, then, our conceptualizations of ‘human rights’ and ‘peace’ as Western conceptions need to abandon their claim to universality and should be replaced by pluriversality.

Pluriversality

Pluriversality means recognizing that there are pluriversal values, that is, values which emerge from dialogue across multiple places, cultures and visions about the world (Dussel, 2013; Mignolo, 2011). There are overlaps and distinctions between border thinking and pluriversality, however, they are complementary ideas. While the former focuses on the notion of taking seriously as producers of knowledge those shunned by coloniality, the latter turns our attention to a different process of knowledge production that overcomes epistemic coloniality. Both of these ideas though overlap when it comes to valuing “a world in which other worlds are possible [...] a world in which multiple cosmovisions, worldviews, practices and livelihoods co-exist” (Dunford, 2017, pp. 380-381). In particular, pluriversality’s focus on dialogue, explains Dunford, involves all forms of communication (e.g. argumentation, discussion, performance, ceremony) and if conducted with respect, then it can foster commonality and values that have global significance “not by virtue of an already-existing universality that can be articulated from one particular place, but on the basis of resonances amongst, translation across and the construction of common understandings amongst multiple positions” (p. 390). For example, Mignolo (2011) has talked about the need to pluriversalize human rights, namely, to recognize that there are plural principles of human rights across all cultures rather than only the Western ones. That Western epistemology appears universalistic compared to epistemologies of the South is because Western conceptions of human rights are part of the imperial and colonial project. Respectful intercultural translation across cultures that have different understandings and experiences of ‘human rights’ can be used as valuable tools to develop a critical and interpretative approach to HRE that could pluriversalise human rights (Zembylas, 2017b). To pluriversalize human rights, human rights need to be historicized, that is, the history of rights has to extend to other geographies and historical thinkers who approach rights from perspectives beyond Europe (i.e. Third World, South, indigenous).

Furthermore, pluriversalizing HRE and PE means turning the process of knowledge production in these fields open to epistemic diversity. A

pluriversal HRE or PE, therefore, is conceived as a process of advancing epistemic justice by delinking human rights teaching or peace pedagogies from Eurocentrism; similar to border thinking, pluriversalizing HRE and PE recognizes and includes forms of knowledge that have been subjugated by modernity and coloniality. To advance epistemic justice, HRE and PE need to excavate and surface the counter-histories of erasures and dehumanizations. Epistemic justice is advanced from contesting ethical theories in HRE and PE that are taken for granted, while acknowledging in the process the material and symbolic negations and losses as a result of colonialism and contemporary forms of dispossession, domination and epistemicide grounded in the daily life (cf. Dussel, 2013).

Needless to say, developing a decolonial ethics—in HRE, PE or elsewhere—that is grounded in pluriversality is not without its risks and tensions. For example, Dunford (2017) wonders whether ‘inter-cultural dialogue’ has limits and constraints⁷:

Are values justified solely by virtue of having emerged through inter-cultural dialogue, or is it possible for a value to be wrong, normatively speaking, despite emerging from this process? Are any and all views allowed to the table, or ought certain views be rejected? What about those views that reproduce colonial narratives or values that have done so much to silence, undermine and oppress those on the underside of the colonial matrix of power? (Dunford, 2017, p. 391)

As Dunford suggests, without any reflection on the emergence of pluriversality within specific contexts that examine the compatibility of practices, worldviews, values or policies, then there is a risk to turn pluriversality into another abstract, universal principle that would undermine all producers of knowledge, especially those who are marginalized.

⁷ ‘Intercultural dialogue’ is a concept championed by the Council of Europe and other intergovernmental organizations and many programs are created around this concept for young people and different communities; however, all of these initiatives often fail to tackle issues of coloniality, oppression, race, power and so on. This is similar to coexistence, peace and other concepts that often gloss over all the colonial manifestations.

A major tension emerging from attempts to develop a decolonial ethics in HRE and PE, then, according to Dunford (2017) is whether decoloniality is an option or an imperative. For Mignolo (2011), decoloniality is an option, otherwise it would be incompatible with decolonial ethics, as it would amount to replacing one hegemonic discourse (Western values) with another. As he explains: “The decolonial option is not aiming to be the one. It is just an option that, beyond asserting itself as such, makes clear that all the rest are also options” (p. 21). This implies that liberal, multicultural and cosmopolitan ethical theories are not rejected, as long as they are also presented as options rather than imperatives.

On the other hand, if decolonial ethics is to provide an alternative that truly dismantles the colonial matrix of power, then it is argued that it must be an imperative (Dunford, 2017). Far from settling the issue here, my point is that this tension needs to be seriously considered, especially its repercussions, whenever an argument is made about decolonizing HRE and PE. Reflecting on the ethos of decolonizing HRE and PE requires addressing the vital question of how scholars in these fields might actually practice the disruptive, decolonial HRE and PE in ways that align with decolonial ethics. Advocating for the pluriversalisation of HRE and PE, then, has important implications for disciplinary formations and knowledge production, including the production of ethical and decolonial theorizing in these fields (cf. Odysseos, 2017, p. 471). As calls for decolonization grow in various academic fields, “we may choose to refuse these; or we might decide to strategically engage in the sort of pluralization of knowledge” (Odysseos, 2017, p. 471) discussed above, as part of a broader attempt to elaborate a decolonial HRE or PE on the basis of decolonial ethics or decolonial approaches to race, power, and knowledge.

Conclusion

Decolonial thinking is increasingly serving as a resource for HRE and PE scholars seeking ways to interrogate and disrupt Eurocentric knowledge production in these fields. This article has suggested that an important task in these efforts is the development of decolonial ethics. In particular, the

article has discussed some elements of a future decolonial ethics in HRE and PE, while showing the limits of familiar ethical theories, namely, liberal, multiculturalist, and cosmopolitan ones. In light of the work of Dussel, Wynter and Maldonado-Torres on decolonial ethics, the analysis has attempted to sketch a different path in HRE and PE from the familiar ethical theories along three important directions: border thinking, being human as praxis, and pluriversality.

Taking decolonial ethics seriously creates openings for further work in HRE and PE to continue ongoing attempts that challenge and transform the coloniality of academic, institutions, disciplines and structures. The three directions outlined here help raise questions about whether, how and why policies, practices, programs, curricula, and theories in HRE and PE truly promote epistemic justice. Insisting, then, on questions of decolonial ethics illuminates not only the ethico-political elements of HRE and PE, but also the prospects of invoking transformative praxis in these fields.

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The Relevance of Unmasking Neoliberal Narratives for a Decolonized Human Rights and Peace Education

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Abstract

Education plays an important role in the dissemination of neoliberal narratives. The neoliberal approach to education focuses on human capital and subordinates people to the pure logic of the market. It shapes educational processes in a considerable way, including Human Rights Education (HRE) and Peace Education (PE). The conscious perception and unmasking of the

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prevailing neoliberal paradigm should therefore be a high priority in a critical approach to HRE and PE. On the basis of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in which HRE and PE are considered vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the authors show that it is essential to combine the question of a genuine decolonization of HRE and PE with a critical examination of the neoliberal paradigm.

Keywords: Neoliberal, decolonized, Human Rights Education, Peace

Wendy Brown (2015) examines the significance of a critical debate about neoliberal developments in a globalized world where socio-economic and profit-oriented paradigms dominate societies and have a crucial impact on education. Her hypothesis is that neoliberalism is much more than an accumulation of politico-economic principles/processes or a reconfiguration of the relation between state and society. All parts of life are being measured in economic terms and metrics. Within this 'neoliberal rationality' individuals are only exemplars of the homo oeconomicus (Brown, 2015) and productive human capital becomes the only legitimate goal of education and educational programs.

Aiming at a comprehensive decolonization of education, this paper emphasizes that neoliberalism is a form of colonialism and discusses how neoliberal developments influence Human Rights Education (HRE) and Peace Education (PE). The authors propose that in many current educational approaches, such as HRE and PE, the debate about the necessary decolonization in knowledge, teaching and everyday practices is neglected; dealing with this issue is often marginalized because the continuous neoliberalization of all parts of human life to a certain extent prevents decolonial thinking and critique. Using a hermeneutic interpretative approach, a theoretical reflection is employed to take a critical look at the goals and self-conception of the HRE and PE disciplines in an increasingly globalized and neoliberalized world.

After a short introduction to the concepts of colonialism and neoliberalism and their interrelations in the context of a perspective of decolonization, this article outlines the connection between neoliberalism,

education and colonialism. This connection becomes evident through an analysis of global education goals and ideals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which ostensibly promote HRE and PE and at the same time reintroduce a colonial mindset. Taking the example of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) as a global, transnational document, it will be shown that HRE and PE are often framed in a way that leaves them open to neoliberal interpretation.

There is, clearly, a need to unmask the neoliberal paradigm present in education. This article does so by starting a dialogue between HRE and PE on the critical understandings of education needed in a global society in order to show ways in which a contribution to comprehensive decolonization could be made. To this end, the authors refer to international scholars from interdisciplinary fields that have this in their focus, i.e. political scientists, social scientists, historians, etc. Interdisciplinary dialogue between different academic disciplines holds potential for stepping out of a neoliberal and neocolonial framework, allowing for a more holistic view to emerge. In their critical analysis of the neoliberal paradigm within HRE and PE, the authors strongly rely on Zembylas and Keet who have dealt intensively with neoliberalism and colonialism within HRE and PE and thus provide a good basis for discussion.

The “imperial way of life” and perspectives of decolonization

In order to deal with the socio-political framework in which a decolonization of HRE and PE must be located, one needs to consider a number of phenomena and outline their connections with education. We need to take into account colonialism and postcolonial developments, capitalism with its inherent market radicalism, neoliberalism, and the increasing neoliberalization of all areas of life. This article will employ Zembylas and Keet’s (2019) conceptualization of colonization and decolonization. Referring to Mignolo (2003) and Brayboy (2006), Zembylas and Keet (2019) describe colonialism as “the exploitation of human beings and non-human worlds in order to build the wealth and the privilege of the colonizers” (p. 131). While colonization “goes hand in hand with geo-politics

of knowledge, and specifically the domination of Eurocentric thought that classifies regions and people around the world as underdeveloped economically and mentally, [d]ecolonization refers to the interrogation of how Eurocentric thought, knowledge and power structures dominate present societies [...]” (p. 131).

In very general terms, neoliberalism can be understood as a practical ideology of the actors of capital that organizes the transformation of social relations on a societal level under capitalist conditions. Neoliberalism is based on the assumption that capitalism, the market, competition and the performance principle are the solution to close “justice gaps” within societies (Schäfer, 2019, p. 49). The interplay of capitalist modes of production, technological development and innovation, and economic growth is inherent. Without a growth imperative, capitalism does not work (Schäfer, 2019, p. 32). Capitalist societies are always growth societies, since the compulsion to accumulate capital is inextricably linked to economic growth (Schäfer, 2019, p. 45). The “imperial way of life” connects the structures of historical colonialism, the present post-colonial-capitalist-neoliberal globalization and the everyday actions of the people in the Global North (Brand & Wissen, 2018, p. 120).

The exploitation of the “periphery by the center” – within the framework of an increasingly globalized world – is woven into this capitalist, neoliberal system and its developments as a matter of course, as they have always belonged together. Brand and Wissen (2018) put it this way: “Colonial logics have run through the entire development history of capitalism” (p. 122, our translation). The “imperial way of life” is an essential factor in the reproduction of capitalist societies, and Western modernity is closely linked to and co-responsible for developments in the Global South, which is instrumental to the progress and wealth of the Western world. In the so-called “externalization society” (Lessenich, 2016, our translation). Western modernity can live well by anchoring the structures and mechanisms of colonial rule; producing wealth in the global North and enjoying prosperity at the expense of others (Lessenich, 2016). And it is about outsourcing the costs and burdens of progress, and it is above all about keeping this knowledge small and not spreading it (Lessenich, 2016).

This system seems to work well, because, according to Bün­ger (2016, p. 107), these considerations are rarely at the center of current everyday discourses. They are also insufficiently dealt with in traditional educational science, where there is hardly any systematic discussion of capitalist theories. For example, the reference to social and socio-economic inequalities in the field of educational research in German-speaking countries often contents itself with social-structural constructions along statistical lines such as income, educational titles or the concept of relative poverty. This research then does not establish a connection between the increase in social inequality and the inherent logic of capitalism in the 21st century (Bün­ger, 2016, p. 107).

Neoliberalism: Colonialism in the context of education

‘Neoliberal globalization’ entails more than changes in economy and politics. It is deeply rooted in minds, everyday practices and educational institutions such as schools and universities (Brand, 2010, p. 4). The entire field of education is being economized and educational institutions are competing with one another (Schroer, 2012, p. 165). Only a few monographs or anthologies from the disciplinary field of educational science in German-speaking countries, for example, provide an explicit link between pedagogical concerns and neoliberalization in their title (Bün­ger, 2016, p. 111). Education deals even less with neoliberalism, thus unmasking the latter as a form of continuing colonialism.

Neoliberalism is hardly discussed or problematized in HRE and PE. In this respect, Zembylas and Keet, especially through their book *Critical Human Rights Education* (2019), make a valuable contribution to furthering the development of a critical HRE by reflecting on the concepts of neoliberalism and colonialism and their effects on HRE. What remains somewhat under-considered in their work, however, is the clear emphasis on neoliberalism as a form of colonialism and, as a consequence, the urgent demand to integrate a critical neoliberalism debate into the decolonization debate on HRE, for capitalism and neoliberalization are deeply connected to

the aforementioned postcolonial discourses and developments as well as their corresponding narratives.

The linking of postcolonial theory, decolonization perspectives and neoliberal critique form an essential basis for looking at hegemonic knowledge production and epistemic violence. According to Castro Varela (2016), it is vital that pedagogy establishes a connection between education and power with regard to the permanently failing decolonization processes. There is an urgent need for a de-colonialist view to examine neoliberal narratives and developments in order to show “how contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural practices continue to be located within the processes of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power” (Rizvi, 2007, p. 256). Gyamera and Burke (2017) state that in neoliberal discourses a white Anglo-European standpoint is represented which, through a one-sided economic interpretation of globalization, is not only encroaching into all areas of life, but is also becoming the dominant ideology worldwide. It penetrates individuals, groups and institutions in order to occupy all thought and action as the dominant narrative.

In order to spread neoliberalism in the best possible way, education is an important instrument. It plays a significant role in achieving global colonization through the neoliberal ideology. As Dawson (2019) points out, neoliberalism is understood not only “as an economic policy agenda” and “an extension of authoritarian capital”, but also “as a form of neo-colonial domination” (p. 3). The focus on the neoliberal paradigm with regard to education is a rather neglected perspective in the scientific debate on decolonization, but, as will be shown here, a particularly necessary one. Enslin and Horsthemke (2015) aptly address the problem of a lack of criticism of neoliberalism within the scientific discourse on decolonization and education:

Particularly in education, resistance to the lingering effects of colonialism that focuses too strongly on cultural marginalization distracts critical attention from the destruction primarily wrought by neo-liberalism, ineffectually fought by reversion to epistemic and moral traditionalism. Addressing human needs through education—

including by widening policy, curricula and pedagogy with ways of knowing beyond the worst of the historical West—requires critical attention to the power and influence of global capital, the ongoing destruction wrought by industrial technology, the harnessing of education to the production of labor power to serve the interests of capital and the attendant subversion of education through the imposition of business-inspired models of management of education on its organization. (Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015, p. 1172)

The predominant reduction of colonization to the area of cultural exclusion in the decolonization debate is certainly one reason why the connection between neoliberalism and colonialism is only marginally dealt with in scientific discourse. However, a closer critical look at education in the global context clearly reveals the colonizing effect of a neoliberal paradigm. For example, Gyamera and Burke (2017) show the consequences in the field of higher education, especially with regard to internationalization and higher education curricula in Ghana which are infused with hegemonic discourses aimed at the “acquisition of skills and employability”. The study reveals “the ways neo-colonization, through discourses of internationalization, neoliberalism and globalization, legitimates particular forms of curriculum and marginalizes indigenous forms of knowledge in higher education” (p. 455).

A critical examination of this topic should therefore be taken up in the context of a decolonization of HRE and PE; otherwise a large gap remains that limits decolonization efforts because they do not sufficiently represent the complexity of colonization or decolonization. Assuming that, “a decolonizing approach in HRE needs to examine human rights issues through a critical lens that interrogates the Eurocentric grounding of human rights universals and advances the project of re-contextualizing human rights in the historical horizon of modernity/coloniality” (Zembylas & Keet, 2019, p. 13), it is also imperative to include neoliberal discourses, since they represent an Anglo-European standpoint.

Education itself plays an important role in the dissemination of ideas and neoliberal narratives. This can be observed, for example, in the internationalization strategies of universities, which are mainly concerned

with competition and preparing the workforce, as some authors problematize (Gyamera & Burke, 2017; Dawson, 2019). As Rizvi (2017) emphasizes, in neoliberalism it is relevant to question

how educational purposes might now be conceptualized to drive communities into socially productive directions, reconciling the competing demands of the economy and the society [...]. Equally important is the question of how educational reform might simultaneously respond to global, national and local pressures and priorities” (p. 3).

The (global) market needs well-educated workers. This discourse is very visible in Vocational Education and Training programs, for example, which are focused on market conformity and which, as the study by Chadderton and Edmonds (2015) reveals, also protect white people's privileges. A radical restructuring of society, as Lösch (2008) calls it, urgently needs educational institutions to anchor their knowledge in people's minds and to preach an alleged lack of alternatives. The human capital approach, through which people are subordinated to a pure logic of exploitation, serves as an important case in point when it comes to shaping educational processes. This approach is based on the World Bank's definition of human capital:

Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society. We can end extreme poverty and create more inclusive societies by developing human capital. This requires investing in people through nutrition, health care, quality education, jobs and skills. (World Bank, n.d., para. 1)

This suggests that the value of people is seen to a large extent as resulting from their contributions to the market or economic growth. The homo oeconomicus thus represents the leading figure as well as the human image of neoliberalism, namely: the “entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings” (Foucault, 2008, p. 226). Block (2018) maintains that “[i]ndividuals are, in other words, free, calculating and rational agents

who are out to better themselves by making themselves more saleable in the job market” (p. 577).

By linking the World Bank to international organizations such as UNESCO or UNICEF, whose agendas include education, the spreading and establishing the neoliberal paradigm internationally is facilitated. One of the World Bank's most recent co-operations with UNICEF in the field of education projects, for example, will promote education whose objectives are geared exclusively to market conformity. This is shown in a press release by the World Bank on a newly concluded agreement with UNICEF on the promotion of education in developing countries dated 8 April 2019:

The World Bank's financial commitment is expected to focus amongst other things on:

- Accelerating curriculum changes in formal education so that skills and knowledge align with workplace demands; (...)
- Stepping up efforts to match job-seekers with employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; and
- Equipping young people with the flexibility and problem-solving skills they will need to succeed as engaged citizens in the new world of work. (World Bank, 2019, para. 8)

The World Bank (2019) is investing \$1 billion in this project, which, as it states, is also part of its Human Capital Project. According to the World Bank, this project is also an important contribution to achieving the SDGs. The core of this approach is the Human Capital Index: “The Human Capital Index (HCI) measures the human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18, given the risks to poor health and poor education that prevail in the country where she lives” (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 34). In another passage, it says:

These individual returns to human capital add up to large benefits for economies—countries become richer as more human capital accumulates. Human capital complements physical capital in the production process and is an important input to technological innovation and long-run growth (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 15).

UNICEF's project with the World Bank must also be seen in the context of this neoliberal paradigm. The objectives clearly reveal: it is largely

market-oriented and leads to a one-sided (neoliberal/market-oriented) knowledge production with a colonizing effect, especially if the target countries of this project are countries of the global South. Zapp (2017) notes: “Today the [World Bank] is, by far, the largest funding institution in education in the world covering all educational sectors from early childhood care and education to tertiary education and lifelong learning” (p. 1). Zapp (2017) argues that the World Bank not only has an enormous normative influence in the field of agenda setting and policy design in education but also – as his research results clearly show – in its cognitive and epistemic role, applying “its knowledge in the field through a drastically growing number of projects with explicit focus on education around the globe” (pp. 1-2). In this regard Zapp speaks of “Governing (through) knowledge” (p. 2).

In order to spread the ideas of neoliberalism globally, it is precisely such global educational policies that require education systems worldwide to adapt to global market requirements. In this context, Rizvi (2017) criticizes a one-sided concept of globalization that interprets globalization only as an economic phenomenon where market-economic premises rethink social relations. For him, the Agenda 2030 represents an important corrective, since this initiative advocates a new form of globalization, one “that combines economic, social, and environmental objectives” (Sachs, 2016, para. 2). As we will see later, however, Rizvi's argumentation needs refining, because although this affirmative attitude towards a different form of globalization is taken up in the preamble of the Agenda 2030, the Agenda as a whole requires critical examination. Doing so makes clear that the private sector, among others, “is widely acknowledged as a key driver of the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) across countries and regions” (UNDP, 2020, para. 1). As Langan (2018) critically indicates, “[o]ne of the most striking elements of the SDGs is their renewed focus upon economic growth and business flourishing” (p. 179).

Already the Education for All (EFA) initiative (2000-2015) – the predecessor of the Global Education Agenda, which plays an important role in Agenda 2030 – has shown its entanglement in neoliberalism with its colonizing effects, as impressively demonstrated in the documentary *Schooling the World* by director Carol Black (2010). EFA has been subjected

to harsh criticism. It has been accused of excluding alternative approaches to education or of considering them inferior; of seeking to make people fit for the market with its purely capitalist-oriented education; and of continuing a kind of colonization with an assumption of superiority. In this documentary Manish Jain, for example, criticizes the hidden agenda of EFA as follows:

It's a program which is sanctioned by every government in the world, it's a program which the World Bank and the UN agencies support; it's a program that corporations are also now [...] behind. And the agenda of the program is to get every child into school. The claim is that again by going to school, communities will be able to develop and they will be able to become part of the mainstream society. Now I think we need to question what does it mean to become part of the mainstream today. And that for me is very much tied to a very clear agenda of becoming part of the global economy. And shifting one's own local economy, one's own local culture, one's own local resources both personal as well as collective into the service of the global economy. (Jain in Black, 2010, 20:56)

In the same documentary, Helena Norberg-Hodge criticizes along similar lines and combines the neoliberal paradigm with a form of colonialism:

Ninety-nine percent of all the activities that go under the label of education come from this very specific agenda that grew out of a colonial expansion across the world by Europeans. And now in different countries in the so called Third World the basic fundamental agenda is the same; is to pull people into dependence on a modern centralized economy; is to pull them away from their independence and from their own culture and self-respect. (Norberg-Hodge in Black, 2010, 19:04)

A critical approach to HRE and PE should confront the problem of neoliberally oriented global educational initiatives in order to critically examine their own positioning therein and to track down possible blind spots in their own theory and practice that could make them complicit in the reproduction of neoliberal, and at the same time colonialist, systems. To what extent do HRE and PE contribute to the spread of neoliberalism through unreflected pedagogy? In this context, what are the challenges for a

decolonization of HRE and PE? According to Zembylas and Keet (2019), referring to Slaughter (2007), “(de/re)disciplining of HRE will bring into view its incorporation into neoliberalism and multinational consumer capitalism” (p. 9). This can only be dealt with by a critical self-analysis of HRE as well as by critically analyzing human rights themselves, as otherwise they threaten to become an instrument of neoliberalism, which will be explained in more detail in the following section. Critical thinking is, as a starting dialogue on the decolonization of HRE and PE will show, an essential component of unmasking the neoliberal paradigm.

A dialogue for decolonization: Unmasking the neoliberal paradigm

HRE and PE operate in a globalized environment shaped by neoliberalism. Both pedagogies share a global dimension through the development and global dissemination of HRE and PE via international conferences/documents/NGOs/institutions. Through a global process of mainstreaming, HRE and PE are also inevitably integrated into the hegemonic neoliberal discourse. Thus Keet (2017) writes with reference to HRE:

I later on came to realize, as I participated in the complex processes of the United Nations agencies and their programs on HRE, that the global ‘wave’ of democratization of the 1980s and 1990s and the affirmation of human rights as a world-wide moral language, were closely knitted into the fabric of neo-liberal and capitalist expansion within which HRE was and is located. (p. 3)

In many international documents, peace/HR or PE and HRE are translated into a global language, which is characterized by a certain level of abstraction or a minimum consensus that must take individual state interests into account. An in-depth examination of this global language and what it includes and omits should be dealt with accordingly in a critical HRE and PE in order to conceive decolonization perspectives.

Based on a neoliberal peace concept and the instrumentalization of HR for neoliberal agendas, this section will attempt to initiate a dialectic relationship between HRE and PE, particularly with regard to Agenda 2030.

As Whyte (2019) maintains, “For the neoliberals, the competitive market was not simply a more efficient technology for the distribution of goods and services; it was the guarantor of individual freedom and rights, and the necessary condition of social peace” (p. 17). But which concepts of peace or human rights are fostered through neoliberalism? Exploring this is an important prerequisite for the further development of a critical HRE and PE, which offer resistance to the hegemonic and colonial structures and goals of neoliberalism, in terms of decolonization.

Perez and Salter (2019) analyze the concept of peace promoted by neoliberalism, which they describe as a “one-sided, oppressive viewpoint of peace” (p. 268). They examine its effects especially in the US on the perception and handling of people of color (POC). According to them, neoliberalism obscures the problem of “racial conflict, perpetuates an ineffective, colorblind peace, and reinforces a structurally violent, discriminatory justice” (Perez & Salter, 2019, p. 269). They further state that peace and justice from the neoliberal point of view are regarded as two opposing concepts, in the sense that the responsibility for peace lies with the respective individuals and not with state institutions, as the latter aim “to maintain an oppressive status quo” (Perez & Salter, 2019, p. 269). To regard peace only as an absence of violence/conflict, excluding the equal distribution of resources, leads to political action that discriminates against POC in particular. However, social justice is an important component of peace, but it is precisely this area that is predominantly excluded from the neoliberal paradigm as state intervention would be needed to achieve it (Perez & Salter, 2019). If socio-economic inequalities are seen as unconnected to social conflict, that is if they “purposely ignor[e] racial history,” they are not attributed to a discriminatory system that favors whiteness; rather, they are the result of individual failure, “hold[ing] everyone accountable to the rules of a history-neutral, fair playing ground” (Perez & Salter, 2019, p. 277).

The concept of social justice, which is an important goal of decolonization, is excluded from a neoliberal concept of peace. And it is this concept of peace, which agrees with the morals of the market, or supports the market, that in turn promises society a global (universal) peace order, as Whyte (2019) quotes Hayek as saying: “Only the widespread morals of the

market, Hayek argued, offered ‘the distant hope of a universal order of peace’ (p. 14).

Just as peace is instrumentalized as a concept for the neoliberal paradigm and thus serves to maintain its power, HR are also used as an important factor for the legitimization and expansion of the neoliberal paradigm. Through reinterpretation, they offer neoliberalism “a moral framework for a market society” (Whyte, 2019), which is expressed in particular in the right to education. Rizvi (2017) also problematizes the re-articulation of HR concepts such as freedom and justice by neoliberals, claiming that “[t]he idea of freedom has become tied to a negative view of freedom as ‘freedom from’ as opposed to a positive view of freedom as ‘freedom to’, as articulated by Amartya Sen (1997); she interprets freedom in terms of the capabilities that people have to exercise choices and live decent lives, free from poverty and exploitation” (Rizvi, 2017, p. 9). Freedom is interpreted from a neoliberal point of view as freedom of the market and thus as freedom of individuals as economic actors. In this respect, neoliberals, as Freeman (2015) argues, see a free market in front of them, in which free individuals make decisions for themselves and are therefore also responsible for the consequences of their decisions. However, this point of view completely excludes the “inequalities of political and economic power that determine the nature of markets and the inequalities that are the outcomes of market transactions” (Freeman, 2015, p. 152). That is why neoliberals distinguish between freedom and ability (Freeman, 2015, p. 154): “For the neoliberal an individual locked in prison is not free, but a poor individual is free to become rich even if that individual is unable to become rich through lack of the necessary psychological or material resources.” Freeman (2015) draws the conclusion: “The ‘freedom’ of the poor does not enable them to enjoy good lives, and this fact casts doubt on the value of the freedom that is the basis of neoliberalism” (p. 152).

Authors such as Moyn (2018) and Whyte (2019) have discussed the intertwining of HR with (the rise of) neoliberalism, a history that is deeply linked to colonial imperialism, a history that perpetuates inequalities. Moyn (2018) explains the link between HR and neoliberalism as follows:

Precisely because the human rights revolution has focused so intently on state abuses and has [...] dedicated itself to establishing a guarantee of sufficient provision, it has failed to respond to – or even recognize – neoliberalism’s obliteration of any constraints on inequality. Human rights have been the signature morality of a neoliberal age because they merely call for it to be more humane. (pp. 216-217)

This makes even clearer the relevance of a critical HRE, which focuses on recognizing and analyzing correlations and critical self-reflection. Only with this critical and analytical ability will it be possible to expose the colonizing effect of neoliberalism and the complicity of HRE in this process and to rethink HRE in a new and decolonial way. Mainstream HRE and PE have no resources for unmasking and subsequent decolonization, as Zembylas and Keet (2019) emphasize for HRE in particular. For critical PE, Zembylas (2018) therefore formulates the task:

[...] to recognize and take an active stance against multiple ways in which knowledge production in the neoliberal order is implicated in the material conditions of coloniality and its persisting effects [...] on understandings of peace and enactments of peace education in different settings. (p. 16)

Hence, it is necessary for a critical HRE and PE to reflect the (global) programs in which HRE and PE are included with a decolonial view in order to make visible and counteract its own entanglement in colonialism, especially in terms of neoliberal narratives and corresponding colonial practices “to challenge Eurocentric narratives of progress spread by liberal understandings of democracy, peace and human rights” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 10).

Agenda 2030 as a matrix for unmasking neoliberal and postcolonial narratives for a decolonized HRE and PE

As already mentioned at the beginning of the paper the Agenda 2030 may serve as an illustration of unmasking neoliberalism and its relevance for a decolonial HRE and PE. It is an important document for HRE and PE in so

far as it focuses both on peace (Goal 16) as well as on education (Goal 4), which serves as a cross-sectional concept and connection to the other goals. In addition, HRE and PE are considered as vital to achieving the Agenda, together with other pedagogical approaches, in target 4.7:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. (United Nations, 2015)

This initiative, which is important for the future of global society, arguably needs critical voices that uncover possible colonizing/neoliberal orientations and thus create a basis on which a critical HRE and PE can use this global initiative for a decolonization process of their concepts.

The very title of this document already requires a decolonial view, because the term 'sustainable development' is not a neutral term, as Carrasco-Miró (2017) explains, but builds on its dominant narratives, which include ecological, economic and social aspects, on a basis that is "deeply modernist, extractivist, and capitalogenic" (p. 90). Carrasco-Miró (2017) describes this approach as follows:

The assumption in 'sustainable development' that everything we encounter is a resource for human consumption and production must be challenged, as this capitalogenic vision has led directly to countless environmental and social disasters. (p. 90)

Carrasco-Miró (2017) takes a critical look at a concept of sustainable development that on the one hand wants to 'reconcile' economy and ecology in order to be able to respond well to global environmental challenges and on the other aims at striving for economic growth "that was – and still is – considered a condition for general happiness and development" (p. 91). And the author deliberates: "Why must the sole measure of progress be growth and measured in price? Who benefits from this single story? There are plenty of non-growth options and stories to be told, all of which have been ignored in the SDGs and Agenda 2030" (Carrasco-Miró, 2017, p. 94).

In this respect, it is interesting to see that some stakeholders, in their feedback on the Agenda 2030 zero draft (2015), do indeed criticize a growth-oriented, neo-liberal orientation of the Agenda or the failure to mention the neo-liberal framework conditions as causing global inequalities. In its statement on this draft version, the Center for Research and Advocacy Manipur emphasizes very clearly:

The Earth's sustainable development will not be possible if we set problematic objectives; where multinational corporations, private sectors are let loose without accountability and where indigenous peoples land and territories are targeted with militaristic development aggression.

The zero draft insisted on neo-liberal and economic growth oriented [sic] model of sustainable development, which will only lead to corporatization of sustainable development and which has worked against sustainable development. (UN-NGLS & UN DESA, 2015, p. 498)

AP-RCEM (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism) criticizes the lack of analysis of the causes for global inequalities from a neoliberalism-critical perspective.

It [the introduction] fails to provide analysis of globalisation and neoliberal framework as the root causes of inequality of wealth, power, resources and opportunities. No recognition of the persistent and entrenched problems of patriarchy, gender inequality, sexual and gender based violence and violations of women's human rights, ecological crisis is a historic crisis of the relationship between humanity and its environment and its primary cause is overproduction, which leads to overconsumption on the one hand, and growing poverty and under-consumption on the other. It should also articulate the historical inequalities between states has led to inequitable finance, trade and investment architecture that has diminished the capacity of States to meet their economic, social obligations. (UN-NGLS & UN DESA, 2015, p. 90)

These two critical comments can also be applied to the current Agenda 2030, because they were not taken into account in the revised

version. Martens (2016) criticizes this in his report on behalf of the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which he describes “obstacles to the implementation” (p. 12):

For too long, economic policies have been shaped by acceptance of neoliberal policies ‘without alternatives’. But taking the title of the 2030 Agenda, ‘Transforming our World’, seriously implies that its implementation should lead to structural transformations instead of being led by the interests and advice of those governments, elite class sectors, corporate interest groups and institutions which have taken us down paths that are unsustainable and continue to create global obstacles to the implementation of the agenda.

Thus, it is irritating that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) as coordinator of the Global Business Alliance for 2030 [...] can claim to play a key role in implementing the 2030 Agenda, offering ‘comprehensive engagement with the full diversity of business expertise’.

Corporate lobby groups such as the ICC have been advocating for exactly those trade, investment and financial rules that have destabilized the global economy and exacerbated inequalities in both the global North and the global South. (Martens, 2016, p. 12)

Zein (2019) also criticizes the Western discourse on sustainability, in which the West prominently presents itself as leading the world into a sustainable future, “after almost worldwide adoption of a Western economic model that thrives on overconsumption has resulted in the pillaging of the earth” (para. 28). Zein is very critical of the “world of sustainability” and sees it as the continuation of colonialism. In her argumentation she refers to Chandran Nair's book *The Sustainable State* (2018), which, as Zein (2019) notes, sees the problem of “today's sustainable development narrative” in “that it is understood from the perspective of advanced economies rather than developing ones” (para. 24). This is especially evident in the Agenda's introduction part, point three: “We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.” (United Nations, 2015, point 3) This emphasis

on economic growth is mentioned together in one paragraph with peace and human rights.

The preamble to Agenda 2030 states: The Agenda “seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom” (United Nations, 2015, para. 1). And the preamble continues: “We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.” (United Nations, 2015, para. 8) Under the decolonial perspective just discussed, the question inevitably arises: What universal concept of peace and what human rights concept frames this claim? What kind of justice will be promoted if no explicit criticism of colonialism/neoliberalism and its consequences is addressed, and if indigenous forms of knowledge with their alternatives, e.g. to the growth paradigm, do not have a place in the Agenda or are excluded?

Given that target 4.7. explicitly says, “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, [...]” (United Nations, 2015, target 4.7), then, from the point of view of what has just been said, a critical HRE and PE that unmasks the neoliberal paradigm is needed, otherwise HRE and PE run the risk of perpetuating colonial structures created and spread by a hegemonic neoliberal discourse.

Another area on which HRE and PE should take a decolonial view is the indicators which ultimately determine what is important in achieving the global goals, what should be measured and finally also what HRE and PE should focus on. The indicators prove to be an important neoliberal element, not only within the agenda. Giannone (2015) questions the functions of measurements and indicators, especially for HR purposes as “measurement is a formidable source of power, acting as the scientific lens through which political and economic powers have the capacity to define frameworks and adjudicate facts, to include and exclude, to impose a system of thought and a set of values” (p. 180). And in this, Giannone (2015) also sees the danger that HR are not sufficiently understood in their indivisibility, a problem that he clearly emphasizes and analyzes with regard to social HR. In particular, however, this can also be applied to the visibility of indigenous populations

in the Agenda 2030, which in turn seems to confirm the thesis of the interaction of neoliberalism and colonialism formulated in this article. As Madden and Coleman (2018) emphasize “[t]he development of SDG indicators, and the work to date on their implementation, include little mention of Indigenous peoples” (p. 6). This has far-reaching consequences, however, if one follows the remarks of Madden and Coleman (2018): “Without reliable information on the economic and social condition of Indigenous peoples, they can easily be ignored in national policy making, their substantial resourcing needs overlooked and discrimination disregarded” (p. 6). The attention of a critical approach to HRE and PE should be focused on these blanks in order to make them visible through their work and to counteract this current invisibility. In addition, the indicators point to a predominantly technocratic, quantitative empirical approach – a strategy used by neoliberalism to manage uncertainties and “to bring all human action into the domain of the market” (Giannone, 2015, p. 182), which backgrounds or omits qualitative elements and inequalities, the visualization of which is essential for a human rights-based approach to the vision set out in detail in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, a critical view is required with regard to the (sole) indicator for target 4.7 (the target that refers to HRE and PE):

Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment. (United Nations, 2017)

Apart from the fact that peace or PE is not included in this indicator, a critical approach to HRE and PE is urgently needed to foster a mainstreaming process which not only focuses on measurability, but also opens up a decolonial debate.

The problem that Esquivel (2016) sees in this quantification effort is that “the interconnected character of gender, class, political, and other dimensions of inequalities will again be missed in the implementation phase” (p. 18). In this context, the exclusion of the power aspect, which leads to blatant inequalities, must also be mentioned: This is why Dearden (2015)

states: “[...] power doesn’t exist in the SDGs. The chapter on inequality nowhere mentions that the problem of poverty is inseparable from the problem of super-wealth; that exploitation and the monopolization of resources by the few is the cause of poverty” (para. 9).

By ignoring research critical of power and domination in order to approach the vision of the Agenda 2030, the demand for a transformation of the world as formulated in its title cannot take place, since root causes are not taken into account. For this reason, Esquivel (2016) makes the claim, referring to Kvangraven: “Yet, ‘when global goals are perceived to be achievable through technical fixes, the fact that development requires fundamental changes in society is lost’ [...]” (p. 18).

All of this needs to be considered if you want to achieve a decolonization of HRE and PE. Decolonization, according to Zembylas (2018),

evokes a historical narrative that resists Eurocentrism and acknowledges the contributions of colonized populations across the globe; it emphasizes a moral imperative for righting the wrongs of colonial domination, and an ethical stance in relation to social justice for those peoples enslaved and disempowered by persistent forms of coloniality. (p. 10)

In this respect, an uncritical approach to the Agenda 2030, which is important for the future of a peaceful and more just society, could lead to the continuation of colonial practices that are driven by neoliberalism and its hegemonic discourses and narratives. An essential component of critical HRE and PE is advancing social and cognitive justice. This requires, as Zembylas and Keet (2019) emphasize, delinking HRE and – as we have argued – also PE “from Eurocentrism, capitalism and coloniality” (p. 152) in order not to be “complicit in the construction of everyday injustices” (p. 149).

Concluding Remarks and Perspectives

If one considers the appropriation of the concepts of HR and peace for neoliberal ideologies, dealing with HRE and PE in a critical way becomes an urgent and primary task for a decolonization of their pedagogies. This holds

true in particular after an analysis of the Agenda 2030. The dominant narrative of neoliberalism, which is deeply rooted in Western thinking, asserts its hegemonic knowledge production on a global scale through a purely economically interpreted globalization – oriented solely towards market conformity and economic growth. In order to promote a decolonization of HRE and PE, the narrative of neoliberalism must be exposed, since its discourses, as Gyamera and Burke (2017) show, referring to Bhabba (1994) and Rizvi (2007), “perpetuate unequal relations of colonialism” (p. 454).

Unmasking the neoliberal paradigm means critically reflecting on (universalized) global norms and values incorporated in global initiatives especially in the field of education, as education is a powerful instrument for spreading the neoliberal narrative. In particular, HRE and PE ought to be unmasking this hegemonic discourse; otherwise they run the risk of reinforcing and continuing colonial structures and practices without being aware of it.

The real trouble about human rights, when historically correlated with market fundamentalism, is not that they promote it but that they are unambitious in theory and ineffectual in practice in the face of market fundamentalism’s success. Neoliberalism has changed the world, while the human rights movement has posed no threat to it. [...] And the critical reason that human rights have been a powerless companion of market fundamentalism is that they simply have nothing to say about material inequality. (Moyn, 2018, p. 216)

As this article has shown, the concepts of peace and HR are instrumentalized for the neoliberal paradigm and misused for the continuation of colonialism. Therefore it is necessary that HRE and PE, each as their own pedagogy, but especially by considering them together, reevaluate their core concepts with regard to a postcolonial critique, reflect critically on themselves, so that they do not, in good faith, reinforce conditions of inequality and support (neoliberally shaped) power structures that maintain and strengthen colonial practices.

International documents on which HRE and PE rely must not be interpreted as “neutral or purely positive,” as exemplified by the analysis of

Agenda 2030 in this paper. Not only the elaboration process, but also the implementation phase of these documents is a struggle for interpretive dominance. The Agenda 2030 makes this very clear. Here, the private sector, business, industry, corporations and thus also the World Bank are given an outstanding role in achieving the global goals. If, however, one considers the underlying agenda of a neoliberal paradigm, it becomes clear that it should be the task of HRE and PE, as part of a decolonization process, to unmask this agenda. Among other things this means pointing out its concepts and their implications for HR and peace; this needs to be done in a way that both take a position critical of power in the sense of critical pedagogies and, through their synergies, uncover colonizing practices and transform them accordingly.

For this purpose, however, it is necessary to recognize the connections of global capitalism including neoliberalism with the imperial way of life of the Global North and to make them the content of a critical HRE and PE. The colonial patterns of thought and action have inscribed themselves into everyday cultural practices and have solidified themselves in institutions. They are based on inequality, power and domination and often on violence, which they also generate (Brand & Wissen, 2018, p. 121). HRE and PE should have the central task of placing these patterns of power and domination in a center of discourse and reflective analysis.

In this context, existing counter-narratives from the fields of economy for the common good or anti-racism should be deliberated along with questions regarding environmental and energy issues and equal participation (of all people involved) in decision-making in the global framework, among others, and options should be jointly considered to arrive at concrete actions through a framework of learning processes. HRE and PE should stress support for counter-hegemonic developments within a critical debate through intensive integration of past historical processes, so that “subaltern” voices are included. This means putting oneself in relation to current and historical processes and developing a consciousness for social conditions so as to recognize these conditions as man-made (Schäfer, 2019, p. 219). It also means exposing the grand narrative of neoliberalism and developing

counter-narratives that counteract its central tenets of “growth,” “acceleration,” “consumption,” “universalism,” and “we and the others.”

If we consider the debates on neoliberal and postcolonial developments in the context of different pedagogies, we can identify extensive critical approaches in the discourses of HRE and PE, but also in approaches to postcolonial pedagogy, critical civic education, anti-racist education, in the contexts of migration pedagogy research as well as in education for sustainable development. Looking for interdisciplinary synergies in the theoretical foundations as well as a systematic overview of their respective practices and perspectives within the framework of research workshops and laboratories would be of central importance.

Such critical thinking and reflection on one's own discipline requires new approaches to learning. In this context, transformative learning aims at reflecting and expanding one's own ways of thinking and assumptions (Schneidewind, 2018, p. 474) and goes together with decolonial thinking that “feeds from a multitude of sources and is far from forming a system or a uniform reservoir of methods or practice” (Kastner & Waibel, 2016, p. 30, our translation). Transformative education focuses on an understanding of options for action and approaches to solutions and thus strengthens the competences of “pioneers of change” (Schneidewind, 2018, our translation). The focus is on the exploration and internalization of new perspectives of meaning (Singer-Bodrowski, 2016, p. 16). It aims at collective discourses on becoming aware of “mental infrastructures” (Welzer, 2011, our translation) and the possibility of breaking free from them through participative and dialogue-oriented educational work. HRE and PE would be well advised to deal strongly with the theoretical prerequisites and possible links.

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Decolonizing Approaches to Human Rights and Peace Education Higher Education Curriculum

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Abstract

While the project of decolonization within higher education has become important in recent years (Kester et al., 2019), human rights and peace education specifically have undergone critique (Coysh, 2014; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013; Barreto, 2013; Zembylas, 2018; Williams, 2017; Cruz and Fontan, 2014). This critique has focused on the delegitimization of non-Western epistemologies around peace and human rights and the reliance on Eurocentric structures of thought and power within curricular and pedagogical practices (Kester et al., 2019). The decolonization of academic human rights curricula is the primary focus of this research; through interviews and content analysis with U.S. human rights professors,

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professors' curricular approaches were analyzed to understand how and to what extent they aligned with, incorporated, or utilized decolonial theory. The findings demonstrate that a decolonial curricular approach is only just emerging; these findings, which have significant implications for both human rights and peace education programs, indicate the need for further research into decolonial approaches to higher education curriculum.

Keywords: decolonization, peace education, human rights education, higher education, curriculum

Introduction

Decolonial theory, as developed by Latin American theorists including Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Walter D Mignolo, and Anibal Quijano, views colonialism as an ongoing process that did not end when colonies around the world successfully struggled for the right of self-determination. Instead, decolonial theorists contend that another form of colonialism continued – that of Eurocentric domination of culture and knowledge, ways of thinking and organizing that knowledge, which needs, creates, and reproduces hierarchies of race, gender, sex, ethnicity, and economy that result in subjugation and exploitation (De Lissovoy, 2010; Grosfoguel, 2000; Maldonado-Torres, 2011). In recent years, researchers and theorists such as Zembylas (2017, 2018), Barreto (2018), and Kester et al. (2019) have extended the critique of Eurocentric domination to human rights education (HRE) and peace education (PE). These critiques have called for the decolonization of HRE and PE: recognizing and interrogating the Eurocentric epistemologies and power structures that dominate these fields and limit new imaginaries and transformative possibilities.

Within academia, the study of HRE and PE often falls under programs such as Peace Studies, Peace and Conflict Resolution, International Human Rights, and Social Justice and Human Rights. These programs become spaces where research and theorization on human rights and peace is both disseminated and carried out. As such, the decolonization

of HRE and PE must involve decolonization of such academic programs. While the project of decolonization within higher education has become important in recent years (Kester et al., 2019), HRE and PE specifically have undergone critique (Coysh, 2014; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013; Zembylas, 2018; Williams, 2017; Cruz and Fontan, 2014). This critique has focused on the delegitimization of non-Western epistemologies around PE and HRE and the reliance on Eurocentric structures of thought and power within curricular and pedagogical practices (Kester et al., 2019).

Borne out of my experiences studying human rights and encounters with critiques of human rights, including decolonial critiques, this study contributes to the decolonization project by offering insight to decolonization efforts within higher education human rights programs and the work still to be done. This research sought to understand the extent to which calls from decolonial theorists to decolonize HRE have impacted U.S. human rights professors' curricular design and selection of teaching material. This was accomplished by examining the curricular decisions of human rights professors through content analysis of semi-structured interviews and syllabi. I utilized four key criteria of a decolonial approach to pedagogy, applicable to any of the aforementioned academic fields, to understand how and to what extent the professors' curricular decisions are aligned with, informed by, incorporate, or utilize decolonial theory. These four criteria are: educators' recognition of the absence of and need for engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies within their field; curricular consideration of which social identities are deemed authoritative and why; avoidance of a sole emphasis on hegemonic Eurocentric discourse within curricular choices; and inclusion of subaltern knowledge. Analysis of the professors' praxis and pedagogical methods revealed that a decolonial approach to curriculum is only just emerging, and there is a need to address the barriers that impede further implementation.

In this article, I discuss the relevance of these findings and implications for the advancement of HRE and PE decolonization within academia. While the studied focused on HRE programs, it has implications for other programs and disciplines in the social sciences and humanities – particularly peace studies – which have also faced critique from decolonial

theorists (Koobak and Marling, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2012; Azarmandi, 2018; Spurlin, 2001). The link between HRE and PE is rich. Betty Reardon (2009), a pre-eminent scholar of both, has argued that world peace is directly tied to the global actualization of human dignity through human rights. Though HRE and PE cannot substitute for each other, she argues that “human rights are integral to peace education” and “put flesh on the bones of the abstraction of peace and provide the details of how to bring the flesh to life” (p. 47). In turn, Michalinos Zembylas (2011) explains that the protection of human rights is a primary concern addressed by PE (p. 568). Thus, though often designated as separate fields, they intersect with inherent links between them (Hantzopoulos and Williams, 2017).

I begin by briefly discussing the decolonial critiques of human rights, peace, and their implications for PE and HRE. After sharing decolonial theorists’ criticisms, I outline the tenets of a decolonial approach to academic curriculum before delving into the research study’s methods. Finally, I present the findings and discuss their relevance for both HRE and PE before offering concluding thoughts.

Decolonial Critique of Theories of Human Rights and Human Rights Education

The decolonial critique centers colonization and coloniality as the basis for the Eurocentric liberal tradition of human rights. According to Barreto (2013), current forms of human rights result from the Eurocentric belief that the West is the fiduciary of human rights knowledge and that the Eurocentric theory of human rights is objective and universal. Eurocentric human rights discourses, policies, and processes are presumed valid and legitimate without consideration of the influence of hierarchies of power. Little room is left for contributions outside of the western liberal tradition; as such, local cultural traditions with non-Eurocentric ways of understanding human rights are often disregarded or excluded. Historical and subjugated knowledges are buried as they are considered simplistic or substandard to Eurocentric knowledge (Foucault, 2003; Coysh, 2014).

The colonization of human rights has limited its possibilities as a tool for social transformation (Coysh, 2014). This current paradigm has resulted in a lack of legitimacy of the human rights paradigm, particularly among “Third World mass populations” (Okafor & Agbakwa, 2001, as cited in Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2013). Additionally, it has led to a rights-wariness that comes from colonial approaches to human rights which fail to afford equal dignity to all traditions and perpetuate colonialist/imperialist conceptualizations of rights and justice (Baxi, 1994). Eurocentric conceptualizations of human rights that do not reflect lived experiences and the elevation of international treaties and conventions over cultural knowledge have contributed to a lack of buy-in and sense of ownership as there is little relevance to lived experiences (Zook, 2006; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013).

Construction of a non-Eurocentric theory of human rights requires epistemological decolonization of human rights. New theories and strategies of human rights can emerge when Eurocentric theories are decentered and dialogue between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric conceptualizations of human rights takes place (Barreto, 2013), allowing for an “authentic cosmopolitan consensus” on human rights (Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013, p. 392).

There is also a need to contextualize and recontextualize theories of human rights by acknowledging the historical and geographical context in which they were created. Barreto (2013) explains

Contextualising theories of human rights means showing the genealogical connection that ties the Eurocentric theory of rights to the historical setting in which it was elaborated. Unveiling the linkage to the site of emergence of knowledge weakens or destroys the legitimacy of claims to universality. [In this way,] the dominant theory is no longer ‘the’ theory of human rights; it is just ‘a’ theory born in the background of the history of Europe and, as a consequence, has no claim to be universally valid. (p. 9-10).

Contextualizing and re-contextualizing theories of human rights enables the “redrawing and re-writing the geography and history of human rights” (Barreto, 2012, p. 6) to develop “a genealogy for human rights that differs

from the usual one (Gilroy, 2010, as cited in Zembylas, 2017, p. 496), opening the door to a pluriversal¹ theory of human rights that addresses issues of effectiveness, legitimacy, and social transformation.

Critiques of human rights are similarly made in reference to HRE as projects within “schools, universities, non-governmental organizations and communities seldom question the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the Eurocentric theory of human rights” (Keet 2014, as cited in Zembylas, 2017, p. 491). There has been a failure to examine the lack of diverse epistemologies or to engage in counter-hegemonic discourses (Woldeyes and Offord, 2018). The canon of HRE, which has been dominated by human rights treaties and conventions (Woldeyes & Offord, 2018; Coysh, 2014) also faces critique. Woldeyes and Offord (2018) contend they are insufficient as a means of upholding human dignity. Moreover, Coysh (2014) contends that HRE has been overtaken by United Nations (UN)-originated discourse and much of its dissemination operationalized by the UN. The UN’s extensive involvement in the creation and dissemination of HRE discourse has allowed it to “regulate and direct how human rights [are] understood and adopted in the language and action of individuals and communities” often at the expense of subjugating particular types knowledge (p. 94). Though the field of HRE is not homogenous and variation in HRE projects and programs exists, these critiques point to the need for decolonization of HRE to extend to curriculum. Decolonizing curriculum requires engagement with different epistemologies of human rights, challenging hegemonic theories and discourse, and tools for engaging in contextualization and re-contextualization of human rights theories.

Decolonial Critique of Theories of Peace and Peace Education

Decolonial critiques of peace have, as with human rights, centered on the failure to interrogate Eurocentric assumptions about peace (Gur-

¹ Pluriversal can be understood as embracing a mosaic of epistemologies (Reiter, 2018).

Ze'ev, 2005; Zembylas, 2018). These critiques address the ways in which the “colonizing practice of the global North, the voices, contexts, and idiosyncrasies from below [have] become invisible, omitting that there can be a type of peace that emerges from the local” (Cruz and Fontan, 2014, p. 136). Coloniality has produced Eurocentric “universal” conceptions of peace that have not been problematized for their politically imperialistic and hegemonizing interests (Zakharia, 2017; Zembylas, 2018). Decolonization seeks to challenge and dismantle these hegemonic “universal” concepts of peace and the practices and pedagogies that emerge from them within PE.

Hokowhitu and Page (2011) have emphasized that these universal concepts have often promoted the idea that peace is the absence of war and violence, which is “premised on the illusion of an original peace which itself is based on the ethico-theoretical frame of Western metaphysics” (p. 17). Zembylas (2018) adds that peace is “implicated within an ongoing economy of violence in which coloniality still persists in various forms that might be invisible” (p. 12), such as the Eurocentric belief that the absence of violence equates to peace. One such hegemonic concept stems from the Eurocentric belief that there is only “one peace, one justice, one truth” (Cremin, 2016, p. 3), despite the identification of different categories of peace (Dietrich, 2012) that extend beyond the western conception of peace to those of the global east and south (Cremin, 2016). Peacebuilding is another hegemonic concept rooted in the Eurocentric theory that “democracy, capitalism, individual human rights and international law alone [are] the universal foundations of a just world peace” (Kester et al., 2019, p. 10); though important aspects of peacebuilding, they are not all-inclusive nor adequate to accomplish global peacebuilding.

The hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies of peace have silenced subaltern² epistemologies, reinforced universal conceptions of peace, and

² Spivak (1988) writes of the subaltern as “everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism” (p. 45); it is not just a “classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie” (p. 45). In this paper, “subaltern” is defined as groups of people whose voices have been silenced and do not adhere to Eurocentric and colonial epistemologies. Subaltern epistemic perspectives are knowledge coming from

limited new knowledge and practices (Cruz and Fontan, 2014). Decolonization of PE must entail not only recognition of and reflexivity about silenced epistemologies and ontologies but also their inclusion within PE. Williams (2017) asserts the need for PE to incorporate “alternative epistemologies and ontologies” and a “praxis that is iterative and reflexive” (p. 85). Likewise, Kester et al. (2019) call for the re-contextualization of the hegemonic epistemology of PE. Re-contextualization would require “redrawing and rewriting [their] geography and history” and “recognizing the historical setting within which different traditions of peace and PE have emerged outside the borders of Europe” (p. 12). Therefore, decolonization must involve “[interrogating] the Eurocentric grounding of unified or universal understandings of peace and [advancing] the project of re-contextualizing peace in the historical horizon of modernity and coloniality” (Zembylas, 2018, p. 13).

Decolonization of PE also calls for the examination of historical accounts (Byrne, Clarke, and Rahman, 2018) and the widening of global inequalities (Bajaj, 2015) that consider not only dominant power structures but absent epistemologies. Dominant Eurocentric narratives have not given adequate consideration to how coloniality has mediated global conflict and peace-making efforts (Zakharia, 2017). Scrutiny of the impact of coloniality on historical events and responses is needed in order to impede the replication of hegemonic understandings of peace. Likewise, PE must consider the interconnectedness of global inequalities and the geo-and body-politics of coloniality. Generative conceptualizations and epistemologies of peace must come from the interrogation of past failures to achieve peace in order to address the epistemicide—or “murder of knowledge” (de Santos, 2016, p. 148)—of peace. PE must engage subjugated knowledges so as to expose Other epistemologies and advance new imaginaries of peace. As a Western canon is well-established within PE (Standish, 2019), decolonization requires prioritization of engagement with

below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved.

subjugated knowledges, histories, and experiences with regard to decisions of pedagogy and curriculum (Zembylas, 2018; Kester, 2017).

Decolonial Approach to Curriculum

In order to disrupt the Eurocentric understanding of HRE and PE and the epistemologies that contribute to their colonization, a new decolonial approach to curriculum is required. The tenets of decolonial theory provide the criteria for a decolonial approach that aims to aid in the decolonization of HRE and PE.

For this study, I selected for analysis the writings of decolonial theorists from Latin America, as well as seminal works by other scholars on decolonial theory, to determine the tenets of decolonial theory (Tejeda and Espinoza, 2003; Grosfoguel, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2012; Richardson, 2012; Escobar, 2011, Escobar, 2004; Baxi, 2007; De Lissovoy, 2010; Sykes, 2006; Doxtater, 2004; Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2006; Alcoff, 2018; Andreotti et al., 2015). Synthesis of these tenets produced four key criteria for the development of a decolonial approach within education. These criteria were operationalized and used to explore the extent to which a decolonial approach emerges within the curricular decisions of human rights professors.

The first criterion is educators' recognition of the absence of and need for engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies within their field thus avoiding approaches that enact an epistemicidal logic (de Santos, 2016). Grosfoguel (2012), Richardson (2012), and Escobar (2004, 2011) have written of the need to recognize the absence of and engage non-Eurocentric epistemologies—specific forms of knowledge that have been “othered” through Eurocentrism,³ such as traditional, folkloric, religious, and emotional forms of knowledge (Escobar, 2011)—in order to silence them.

³ The perspective and concrete mode of producing knowledge that provides a very narrow understanding of the characteristics of the global model of power which is colonial, capitalist and Eurocentered. It does not refer to the knowledge of all of Europe but to a perspective of knowledge that became hegemonic and replaced other ways of knowing (Quijano, 2000, p. 549).

They argue that colonization has resulted in the dismissal of non-Eurocentric epistemologies allowing for the continuance of an epistemicidal logic.

The second criterion is curricular consideration of which social identities are deemed authoritative and why. This criterion differs from the first as the focus centers on power relations associated with personhood, law, political and economic systems. Baxi (2007), De Lissovoy (2010), and Sykes (2006) emphasize the need for discussion regarding which social identities are given a voice and authority. They encourage critical reflection on the geo- and body-politics of those in authority and who is excluded from having authority.

The third criterion focuses on avoiding a sole emphasis on hegemonic Eurocentric discourse within curricular choices; though similar to the criterion of consideration of which identities are authoritative, the third criterion focuses on the types of materials educators use and the critiques that are included within the curriculum rather than whether power relations is a topical component of the course. Doxtater (2004), Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert (2013), and Coysh (2014) stress avoiding a sole emphasis on hegemonic discourses. They argue that discourses are often accepted without recognition of their privileging due to their origination in Eurocentric thought. Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert (2013) and Coysh (2014) have contended that HRE suffers from an over-reliance on international treaties and conventions as well as UN-originated discourse. Human rights discourse as well as UN documents are genealogically tied to a Eurocentric theory of rights (Barreto, 2012). As a result, within HRE, decolonization requires decentralization of UN documents and the inclusion of subaltern critiques.

The fourth criterion is this inclusion of subaltern knowledge, which refers to knowledge that emerges from a subaltern epistemic geo-political location . According to Escobar (2004), Grosfoguel (2006, 2007), Alcoff (2018), and Andreotti et al. (2015), hegemonic discourses require tempering and mitigation through the inclusion of discourses and knowledge that emerge from subaltern positions. Yet, care must be taken to ensure that

these discourses are not tokenized by the dominant paradigms through fastidious inclusionary procedures involving subaltern voices.

Methods

I conducted an online search of human rights programs in the U.S. to recruit participants for this study. I identified human rights programs as those offering an undergraduate major or minor in human rights, graduate programs offering a Master's degree, and law schools offering a Master of Laws (LLM) in Human Rights. This criterion identified instructors with a specialty in human rights and actively engaged in teaching the subject. I used purposive sampling, in which participants are selected according to pre-determined criteria, as well as convenience sampling, as these professors were easily contactable through e-mail addresses available on their universities' websites, and they expressed a willingness to be interviewed when contacted. E-mail recruitment resulted in interviews with twenty-two professors of the seventy-four contacted.

These twenty-two professors represent sixteen different programs out of a total of forty-seven identified through online research of higher education human rights programs in the U.S. (Aldawood, 2018). Six professors were women and sixteen were men⁴; of which, at the time of interview, eight were full Professors, five were Associate Professors, four were Assistant Professors, three were Directors, one was a Clinical Professor of Law and another a Professor of Law⁵. Interviewees included professors with graduate degrees in Political Science (4), History (1), Law (8), International Human Rights Law (1), Cultural Studies (1), Anthropology (1), Sociology (2), Social Work (1), International Studies (1), Social Science (1), Education (1), and International Relations (1). Five of the professors had under ten years of teaching experience in human rights, twelve had

⁴ Of the 74 professors identified and contacted to interview, 34 were women. However, only 6 were willing to participate in the research.

⁵ These titles were determined by reviewing the faculty page for each professor interviewed. Law titles differ from titles used in other academic departments.

between ten and twenty years of experience, and five had more than twenty years of experience. Professors came from sixteen different colleges and universities within the U.S., of which one is a private liberal arts college and fifteen are private and public universities.

I conducted twenty-two semi-structured interviews via phone and Skype from 2015 to 2017. Interview lengths varied from forty-five minutes to one-hour dependent upon the amount of information the interviewees had to share and the amount of time available. I designed the interview questions to collect data on three issues: (1) the methodology and pedagogy used in their human rights courses, (2) their educational background and how they perceived its influence on course and program development, and (3) a detailed description of their use of decolonial pedagogy in their courses. Each interview consisted of three sets of questions pertaining to the educational and professional background of the interviewee, the content of the human rights courses taught, and the pedagogy utilized in the classroom. Following the interviews, participants were asked to share sample syllabi via e-mail for later analysis and triangulation. Not all interviewees provided their syllabi. In those cases where they did not, I attempted to acquire the syllabi through the university websites. In total, I obtained at least one syllabus from thirteen of the twenty-two professors interviewed. Both interview transcripts and syllabi underwent content analysis to determine whether decolonial approaches were applied by the participants. The previously established criteria for a decolonial pedagogy were operationalized and used as coding categories for the analysis of the interviews and syllabi. I used a direct approach for both sets of data. For the interviews, the responses provided to each interview question was coded. For the syllabi, the categories were used to code the content. Specifically, I analyzed four components of each syllabus when found present: the course description, the course objectives, the required texts, and the course schedule – in particular which course materials would be required and which topics would be covered. The data provided a useful means of comparison for the self-reported description of course content and pedagogy by professors. Throughout the coding, I remained open to the development of additional codes through the analysis. Following the

coding, I compared and interpreted the data to identify the extent to which the human rights professors implemented decolonial measures in their courses. I classified the data into themes which I discuss in the findings section below.

Findings

The human rights professors interviewed for this research reflected a diverse understanding of human rights epistemology and the need for decolonial approaches to human rights discourse. Analysis of the data revealed substantial complexity to professors' engagement with decolonial approaches. Engagement with all of the four criteria of a decolonial approach was ultimately low overall: each was addressed by half or fewer of the professors. In addition, the extent to which the operationalization of each criterion was met proved inconsistent, as some professors may have operationalized one aspect but not another. These findings point to the need for further engagement with and operationalization of decolonial theory in human rights courses.

Engagement with Non-Eurocentric Epistemologies

The first criterion is the recognition of the absence of and the need for engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies, thus avoiding approaches that enact an epistemicidal logic; in other words, the process by which non-Eurocentric epistemologies have been dismissed resulting in their absence within human rights discourse. In operationalizing this criterion, I considered whether a pluriversal epistemology of human rights was presented, if the absence of non-Eurocentric epistemologies in human rights discourse was addressed, and whether the hierarchical categorization of human rights was discussed.

The research revealed that only four of the professors presented a pluriversal epistemology of human rights in their courses, and the rest either did not subscribe to this epistemology themselves or only presented a universal epistemology in their courses. The four professors who explicitly stated that they presented a pluriversal epistemology of human rights in

their courses provided explanations centered on a disbelief in any universals, the way in which the conceptualization of rights have been overtaken by some states, and a lack of global consensus. For example, Professor Kramer⁶ reasoned that human rights have not been achieved by consensus, explaining: “I engage students with literature that challenges that it is not universal...it has been co-opted skillfully by states, and therefore, has been de-radicalized and is not as critical of power as it could be” (personal communication, July 1, 2014).

Though these four professors readily and explicitly confirmed their belief in pluriversal epistemology, the majority did not. Rather they fell into one of three positions: they chose not to label their epistemology; they presented a universal and pluriversal epistemologies in their courses or emphasized neither, meaning that they either chose to present some concepts of human rights as universal and others from a pluriversal position or they did not discuss universal or pluriversal epistemologies; or they presented a solely universal epistemology of human rights. All but two of the professors believed that hierarchies exist within human rights and confirmed that they address those hierarchies in their courses. They asserted that the hierarchies embedded within human rights include personhood, knowledge production, human rights interpretation, and human rights implementation. Professor Evans provided her position explaining: it takes “vast amount of privilege to think that hierarchies don’t exist” and that these hierarchies “reflect the values of society” and create “vast amounts of human suffering and create division” (personal communication, January 31, 2017). Many others agreed that the West has been overwhelmingly influential in what is prioritized within HRE.

Authoritative Social Identities

The second criterion of a decolonial approach is consideration of which social identities are deemed authoritative. In operationalizing this

⁶ Pseudonyms are used for all professors who participated in this research.

criterion, I consider whether power relations and their impact on human rights is a course topic. This criterion differs from the first in that the focus is on power relations related not only to personhood but also political, economic, and legal systems. All of the professors interviewed assigned readings that engaged issues of power relations to some extent but varied considerably in terms of the types of power relations they addressed. I specifically asked them how patriarchy, racism, sexism, and capitalism shape human rights discourse. Some professors addressed all of these aspects of power relations while others only addressed one or two. Overwhelmingly, professors most often introduced power relations within the frameworks of sexism, patriarchy, and racism. Some professors cited ageism, classism, capitalism, neoliberalism, and colonialism as topics they addressed but much less frequently than the aforementioned. Professor Von explained that he addresses power relations all the time by talking about UN human rights conventions, which he believes easily lend themselves to discussion of patriarchy, ageism, sexism, racism, and classism.

Twelve of the professors provided syllabi that reflected the inclusion of at least one reading addressing power relations. Also noteworthy is that although decolonial theory emphasizes the ways in which hierarchies of race, class, and gender have been maintained through the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), even in modern liberal societies, neoliberalism and colonialism were each addressed by just one professor. The absence of these topics perhaps reveals a disconnect between why the hierarchies of race, class, and gender exist; the extent to which they are embedded in other ideologies, like neoliberalism, colonialism, and coloniality; and how they are perpetuated. Their absence also implies that even within discussion of power relations, there is a de facto hierarchy reaffirming the impact of coloniality and the need for decolonization.

Additionally, of significance were the explanations that some professors gave for why they do not thoroughly discuss power relations. Both lack of time and the survey nature of their courses were factors, as was the understanding that power relations would be thoroughly addressed in other courses required in their human rights program. Professor Upton suggested that the incorporation of power relations “is somewhat limited by

the fact that it's a survey course." She explained: "My ability to drill down on any one of these issues is limited because we only do a day on whatever issue...but I do try to bring it out where I can" (personal communication, May 17, 2014). Professor Peterson highlighted the importance of including the topic of power relations in her department but explained that she relies on other courses to address particular power relation frameworks. Time constraints and a desire to avoid repetitiveness are common challenges in any course, yet is important to avoid an "add and mix" pedagogy in which some aspects of a theory are integrated but the pedagogy is not grounded in that theory. In the case of decolonial pedagogy, an "add and mix" approach is not ideal. In order to achieve a truly decolonial pedagogical approach, decolonization needs to be the underlying theme that influences all other pedagogical choices.

The effort made by all the professors to address how power relations impact human rights, albeit to different degrees, supports the aim of a decolonial approach; however, given the significance of this issue to decolonial theory, more purposeful incorporation of the impact of hierarchical power relations on human rights would facilitate further decolonization. Power relations are important to decolonization because the hierarchies established through them result in "situated" epistemologies that are Eurocentric but positioned as uncontested and universal (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2009). Thorough discussion of the impact of power relations on human rights is necessary; without it, we cannot begin to understand the extent to which voices have been silenced or construct a non-Eurocentric theory of human rights (Barreto, 2013).

Avoiding Eurocentric Discourses

The third criterion of a decolonial approach is avoidance of a sole emphasis on hegemonic Eurocentric discourses. Though similar to the second criterion, this criterion focused on the types of materials and critiques that are included rather than whether power relations is a topical component of the course. For this, I considered the extent to which the course materials were centered on documents created by the United

Nations and whether critiques of the human rights framework were included as course topics and materials.

Analysis of syllabi and interviews demonstrated that the content in many courses was either focused on UN documents or incorporated them extensively. Thirteen professors attested that these documents were a significant component of their course material citing the importance of these documents as the foundation of the international human rights system and the necessity of embedding them in their courses. For Professor Upton, for example, the inclusion of these documents stems from a desire for students to be knowledgeable about international law topics:

I cover the fundamentals. I want them to know some basic things like the fact that the UDHR isn't a treaty. I want them in some way to be intelligent consumers of news about international law. To be [intelligent consumers of news], they do need to know some of those fundamentals. (personal communication, May 17, 2014)

Several professors connected their inclusion of these documents to their objective of encouraging students to critically consider them. For example, Professor Peterson explained that she asks her students to critically examine human rights treaties and instruments in her classes:

We look at the limits of the human rights instruments, what they can accomplish, and what they can't do. So, I think we don't have this perspective that it's all about the treaties, that it's all magical, at all. So, we critique the framework and practice. (personal communication, May 4, 2015)

Only two professors stated they do not specifically teach or use UN documents in their courses much, if at all. Professor Faber, a law and political science professor, refrains from incorporating many UN documents explaining, "I don't use them much anymore because I reached the conclusion that ... with the treaties, there is not a lot of ground for the serious analytical work I do" (personal communication, February 6, 2017).

The professors took varied approaches to the incorporation and use of UN documents; as the foundation of the legal framework for human rights these documents are important; however, from a decolonial perspective, they should not be central to HRE. Instead, when presented,

they should be accompanied by course materials from non-Eurocentric and subaltern epistemologies or offer critiques.

The majority of the participating professors did bring critiques into their courses. Professor Faber explained his inclusion of critiques was rooted in consequences of exclusion:

Students will go off in the world of human rights and will frequently end up simply adopting relatively passively a variety of attitudes and conclusions about what human rights does and doesn't include, or how much pluralism can be tolerated in the system without ever really thinking through the problem. They take for granted certain answers that are not obvious. And I think that the second problem, which derives from the first, is that you often end up seeing what from the perspective from other parts of the world could be described loosely as imperialistic attitudes about human rights on the part of relatively wealthy privileged western elites without even an awareness that what they're asserting, in fact, may be sort of quite contentious and particular and not as universal as they assume it is (personal communication, February 6, 2017)

Critiques varied in number and type, but cultural relativism and feminism were cited most often by eight and seven professors, respectively. Other critiques cited by more than one professor included postcolonial, liberal imperial, and religious (Islamic) critiques. Critiques of colonialism were noticeably absent. Only four professors included a postcolonial critique and no professors explicitly mentioned including a decolonial critique. Although the inclusion of other critiques from subaltern spaces is important to decolonization, the absence of critique that specifically underscores the impact of coloniality and the subsequent marginalization of non-Eurocentric voices reveals space for the development of new approaches and implemented for curricular and pedagogical creativity.

Inclusion of Subaltern Knowledge

The final criterion of a decolonial approach is the inclusion of subaltern knowledge. Though subaltern knowledge does not assume a

critique, it is unclear how knowledge is subaltern without the inclusion of critique. Yet, subaltern knowledge is not simply critical knowledge or non-European knowledge; rather, it refers to knowledge that emerges from a subaltern epistemic geo-political location. However, this is not to say that anyone situated within a subaltern epistemic location will reflect *a priori* that location within their thinking much less thinking *from* a subaltern epistemic location. Grosfoguel (2008) clarifies, “Subaltern epistemic perspectives are knowledge coming from below that produces a critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge in the power relations involved” (para. 4). Likewise, it is not necessary that knowledge epistemically located must also be socially geopolitically located in subaltern power relations.

In operationalizing this criterion, I considered whether course materials by authors concerned with subaltern perspectives, such as Mignolo, Fanon, de Sousa Santos, Guha, Prashad, Mohanty and Césaire, or other subaltern voices, such as direct testimonies, are included in the course materials. To expose how Eurocentric epistemologies subjugate marginalized voices, decolonial theory proposes the inclusion of subalternized, non-Eurocentric epistemologies from different geopolitical contexts in HRE (Escobar, 2004). This inclusion allows subaltern epistemic projects to emerge and dialogue with the Eurocentric project thereby revealing the exclusionary hierarchy of knowledge. Overall, of the twenty-two professors, nineteen were able to cite or their syllabi incorporated at least one course material representative of Grosfoguel’s delineation of subaltern perspectives on human rights.

Similar to the data regarding the incorporation of issues related to power relations and critiques to their courses, twelve professors did include three or more of these course materials while eight included more than five representing a subaltern perspective. The course materials were wide ranging, and there was no overlap among them with the exception of Makau wa Mutua’s 2001 article “Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights,” which was incorporated into courses by six of the professors. Mutua’s article and has seemingly become, based on its inclusion in so many of professors’ courses, a very popular text representative of a critique of human rights. Furthermore, some professors

indicated that they showed videos and had guest speakers come to their courses that presented a subaltern epistemology.

Even though the course materials used by professors demonstrated contributions to human rights from outside the Western or liberal tradition, not all of the authors represent a subaltern voice. Rather, some of the authors write about subaltern experiences or epistemology though it is not their personal experience. Decolonization does not require that subaltern epistemology is only presented by subaltern voices, however, as Heleta (2016) notes, these non-subaltern voices “cannot be seen as the all-knowing and all-important canon upon which the human knowledge rests and through which white and Western domination is maintained” (para. 23). In addition, consideration of the locus of enunciation is relevant (Grosfoguel, 2006) as people “always speak from a particular location within power structures” (Grosfoguel, 2008, para. 4). One’s epistemic location is situated by their ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation but also “the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks” (para. 4). We must consider that the knowledge that emerges from a person not situated within a subaltern epistemic location is different than the knowledge that emerges from a person who is situated within such a location. Yet, again, subaltern knowledge is located in subaltern power relations and critically approaches hegemonic knowledge and power relations involved in its dominance. This point is significant for both what is included in a syllabus and the pedagogical approach to engaging material.

Human rights educators must be very cautious when choosing course materials to represent the subaltern perspective, and whenever possible, subaltern voices should speak for themselves as there can be a significant challenge to finding international human rights textbooks that present non-Western ways of understanding human rights. For professors who opt to use textbooks rather than books, articles, or other materials in their courses, there are few textbooks that take a decolonial approach (Aldawood, 2018). When asked, many professors agreed that finding textbooks that present critiques or non-Western epistemologies was difficult as most textbooks present mainstream views representing the western, liberal tradition or are written by Westerners who are not

competent to incorporate subaltern epistemologies as they lack training in them. Professor Anderson confirmed that the “canons reflect academia as a whole...other voices aren’t being recognized in academia as a whole” (personal communication, November 21, 2016). Professor Jackson offered an explanation as to why:

There is an assumption that non-Western societies have no concepts of human rights, and there is therefore no need to examine their ideas...Sometimes, it is also due to ignorance and the unwillingness to understand what other societies offer. (personal communication, February 6, 2017)

Despite the Eurocentric canon of human rights, the majority of professors incorporated some subaltern perspectives. Eight professors included more than five course materials representing a subaltern perspective while four included at least three and seven incorporated one. Even so, many of the other materials professors incorporated into their curriculum were not representative of a decolonial approach as they did not present or originate from subaltern epistemologies of human rights or provide critiques of the human rights framework. Human rights professors who value a decolonial approach face difficulties and must carefully examine and evaluate the materials they choose for their courses. Limiting course materials to the traditional canon of textbooks representing Eurocentric perspectives can itself be understood as a colonial practice. The inclusion of decolonial materials, meanwhile, can help contextualize the genealogical push for decolonization. Readings that are decolonial, even if incorporated in a limited manner, are still able to move beyond the ‘Othering’ narrative as their incorporation separates knowledge from its embeddedness in the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2009).

Summary of Findings

The majority of the professors recognized the existence of hierarchies within human rights knowledge, discussed the impact of power relations on human rights discourse, and included some critiques of human rights in their courses. Significantly fewer presented human rights

epistemology from a pluriversal perspective in their courses. Similarly, few decentered hegemonic Eurocentric discourse by limiting UN human rights documents, such as treaties, conventions, and case law, or incorporating a significant number of works by subaltern authors or theorists in their courses. Thus, the research suggests a minority of the professors' pedagogies reflects a decolonial approach though some criteria was present within their pedagogies. Work toward decolonization must continue; adoption of a decolonial pedagogical approach is part of the complex process of decoloniality and the decolonization of human rights. Continued implementation of pedagogical approaches that reify Eurocentric epistemologies of human rights limits the possibility of creating conditions in which a pluriversal epistemology can emerge.

Discussion

Educational spaces are not neutral and are rooted in Eurocentric ideology; they contain “all kinds of explicit, implicit, and hidden curricula imparting what ‘to know’ but also, ‘how to learn’ and ‘why’” (Standish, 2019, p. 124). Without concerted effort and attention to pedagogy and curriculum, coloniality will continue to detrimentally shape education. Disruption of teaching practices and curriculum is necessary in order to avoid the reproduction of colonial power structures and the continued silencing of non-Eurocentric epistemologies (McLeod et al., 2020).

Though HRE and PE are distinct fields of study, they are strongly linked. PE is viewed as a part of HRE and vice versa (Page, 2008; Reardon, 2009). Education about and for human rights and peace runs the risk of perpetuating the problems they are trying to solve if Eurocentric paradigms and pedagogy are not questioned. Their interconnectedness requires the decolonization of both in order to meet the goals of each. Calls for HRE (Barreto, 2013; Baxi, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Mutua, 2002; Zembylas, 2017, 2018) and PE (Standish, 2019; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2013; Cremin, 2016; Kester et al., 2019) to undergo decolonization stem from similar claims pertaining to the lack of pluriversal epistemologies and the hegemony of Eurocentric frameworks and discourse surrounding peace and human rights.

Though this study focused on HRE, the conclusions drawn offer some insights and considerations for the decolonization of both fields. Further decolonization within the discourses, frameworks, and canons to one of these fields is likely to result in reverberations within the other due to their interconnectedness. Implementing a decolonial approach is possible. The conditions of possibility can be created if professors begin by asking questions such as: Am I willing to closely examine my own beliefs and praxis? Expend the time and energy a decolonial approach will require? Take the risk involved in altering the epistemology I present in my courses? In answering these questions, professors become more aware of the difficulties they may face as they work toward decolonizing their own pedagogy.

The western/Eurocentric canon of PE and HRE (Barreto, 2013; Standish, 2019; Kester et al., 2019) that often serves as the basis for curriculum within these fields will not be replaced without the consistent, concerted effort of the professors within both fields. The interconnectedness of PE and HRE and the similarity in decolonial critique reveals the impact that changes within the discourse, framework, and canon would have on the other. The fulfillment of the goals of HRE and PE is dependent upon the decolonization of both. As professors in both fields push toward decolonization, some of the barriers to pedagogical and curricular change will slowly reduce opening the possibilities for greater implementation of decolonial approaches.

As we strive for decolonization, we must remain cognizant that it is a process of political struggle - an ongoing process related to the process of learning in that it takes time. This political struggle has been documented over time through the writings of such theorists and thinkers as Fanon, Césaire, Freire, and Spivak. There have been moments of breakthrough and of watershed insights, but the process is complex, contested, and often contradictory. In other words, the line between the colonial and the decolonial, the line named 'coloniality' (Quijano, 2000; Mignolo, 2009, 2011), arguably should not reproduce a binary. A decolonial approach to HRE or PE does not mean that canonical texts and ideas are ignored, but that the process of canonization is interrogated; it is not about reproducing a binary,

but understanding the relationships that are layered and scaled. This understanding has already been demonstrated through the work accomplished by those who have pushed for anti- and de-colonial possibilities not only in HRE and PE but other programs in the humanities and social sciences. The decolonial reminds us that binaries do not come from below, only from above. While the decolonial represents differences, the willingness to engage those differences, and for difference to be the basis of agreement, the colonial comes from above with the intention of annihilation of differences, power, and control. The relationship between the colonial and the decolonial produces a space, a third space (Sandoval, 2000), in which dialogue can emerge about curriculum and methodology.

Conclusion

Decolonial theory offers a strong critique of HRE and PE that examines the ways in which Eurocentrism, sustained through colonialism and coloniality, has resulted in an epistemology that ignores and excludes subaltern voices. Both HRE and PE face important consequences as a result, which can only be addressed through decolonization. The implementation of decolonial curricular approaches to HRE and PE is valuable to the process of decolonization. This approach requires a shift away from Eurocentric discourses and authoritative social identities and toward the inclusion of subaltern knowledge and engagement with non-Eurocentric epistemologies. The tenable link between PE and HRE requires recognition that both must undergo decolonization; one cannot be fully decolonized without the other. This reality then requires those who believe in the need to decolonize these fields to work together.

The findings of this research revealed that a decolonial approach is only just emerging within the field of HRE teaching. Though the tenets of decolonial theory have resonated with many of the professors interviewed, the curricular decisions in their courses have not reflected a fully decolonial approach. Likewise, within PE, some academics have embraced and implemented decolonial approaches (Standish, 2019), but coloniality's grip remains intact (Cremin, 2016; Kester et al., 2019; Zembylas and Bekerman,

2013). Moving forward, there is a need to extend this research to peace studies programs to examine if similar patterns emerge. Moreover, research should focus on examining the pedagogical and curricular choices of PE professors as well as further investigate the pedagogy of HRE professors and the impact of decolonial approaches on students' epistemologies.

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Re-conceptualising Human Rights Education: from the Global to the Occupied

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Re-conceptualising Human Rights Education: from the Global to the Occupied

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Abstract

This article provides a critical view of Human Rights Education (HRE) within a context of colonial occupation and an authoritarian national ruling structure. It explores the reasons behind the introduction of HRE in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the Occupied West Bank and investigates how teachers and students make meaning of and implement HRE. Through examining the relationship between HRE and the struggles against injustice, the article problematizes the theoretical basis of HRE and highlights the importance of indigenous knowledges and strategies utilized to bring the decontextualized global to the nuanced and politicized local. This article shows that institutionalizing HRE turns it into a harmful tool in the hands of those in power. Reverting to alternative sources of knowledge and linking human rights to the vernacular of the people, adopting a bottom-up approach and allowing for criticality are necessary measures to enable the re-

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appropriation of human rights, where HRE becomes a true strategy to build a culture of human rights that can dismantle structures of oppression. There is a need to rethink HRE as a concept, shifting its current reality to one that contributes to building 'critical consciousness'. This shift, particularly in the case of Palestine, will not emerge without developing alternative forms of education. This idea might be considered problematic. However, as critical educators and researchers, it is our responsibility to take on this battle.

Introduction

I entered the Human Rights Education (HRE) field in 2008 as the HRE Regional Coordinator at the Amnesty International in Beirut. At that time, there was a global momentum for HRE based on the first phase of the World Program of Human Rights Education (WPHRE 2005-2009) and consultations for the second phase (2010-2014) had just started. HRE work of Amnesty International was flourishing across all its sections. This positive environment fed into my passion about my work and I based my practice on international conventions and agreements. I was ecstatic with every international HRE-related achievement. However, over the years, my belief in the human rights regime was shaken. My positionality towards HRE gradually shifted as I engaged with critical literature and praxis. As I left Amnesty International and moved into academia, I distanced myself from institutionalized HRE, and transitioned to a world of questioning.

My critical view and understanding of HRE grew as I conducted ethnographic research for my PhD in the Occupied West Bank. When I approached human rights practitioners, educators, students and activists to interview them, I was faced with the question: "HRE in Palestinian Authority (PA) Schools! Is there such a thing?". This question came with a dismissive shrug of the shoulder or a cynical expression. My answer to these dismissive and cynical questions was: Yes, HRE in Palestine exists in various spaces, shapes and forms: through schooling, extensive campaigns by human rights organizations, trainings by civil society, and media coverage of human rights issues (Abu Moghli, 2016). In schools, HRE is embedded in civics education or in extra-curricular projects carried out in cooperation

with (I)NGOs. But even after explaining briefly, I was often faced with the same cynical look and the comment: “So what?”.

These skeptical responses framed my research and encouraged me to unearth what led to the integration of HRE within the schooling system in the Occupied West Bank, and what implications it had in practice. I explored the perceptions of students and teachers about HRE. I also explored the connection and disjuncture between HRE in theory and in practice. Through my research, I provide an alternative understanding of HRE’s potential contribution to the emancipation of both the individual and the collective within a polarized, multi-layered, and fast-changing context.

While Peace Education (PE) was not part of the initial focus of my research, it was mentioned during some interviews. HRE literature links HRE and PE particularly when examining the integration of human rights values within PE programs. Hence, this article examines the concept of PE as an interconnected field to HRE. Similar to my engagement with HRE through the narratives of the research participants, I examine PE within the Palestinian context, how it is perceived, implemented and problematized. Finally, I propose precepts framed within de-colonial approaches, beyond institutional international law and declarationist models, for critical educators and researchers to consider when designing, planning, and implementing HRE and related educational fields.

Research Methodology

My research took place in the Occupied West Bank over six months, between March 2013 and June 2014, with further data gathered during periodic visits up until 2016. The research drew on ethnographic methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups and classroom observations.

I formulated my research questions based on a pilot research phase between March and May 2013, a thorough literature review and document analysis. The research questions were:

- What are the sources of influence that shape HRE in Palestinian Authority schools in the Occupied West Bank?
- What are the perceptions of teachers and students about human rights in general and HRE in particular?
- To what extent does HRE inform students' and teachers' engagement in social and/or political activism?

I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Education, (I)NGOs, academics and human rights activists. I interviewed civics teachers, head teachers and school counselors. Group interviews were conducted with 8th and 9th grade students; and I observed citizenship education classes in three schools over a period of three months.

Convenience sampling based on personal connections was implemented for the purpose of the pilot phase during which I gained access to key contacts and insights that informed the refinement of my interview and research questions. During the main research phase, I followed the method of purposive sampling where I defined criteria for selection of schools, age groups, geographic locations and specializations of (I)NGOs and practitioners interviewed. My data analysis, primarily an iterative process, was dependent on emerging ideas and themes. It was not purely inductive, as I have started from the literature and practice of HRE. So I moved back and forth between data, literature and theory, framed under the three research questions.

Human Rights Education: Meaning and Relevance

In the years following the end of the Cold War, the United Nations (UN) convened the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. In this conference, HRE was discussed in detail and a section of the resulting program of action was dedicated to it. Point (I/33) of the program of action reaffirmed that states are duty-bound, as stipulated by international human rights instruments, to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms (OHCHR, 1993). These

international agreements created a global climate in which HRE has become part of the modern state's human rights repertoire (Cardenas, 2005; Zembylas & Keet, 2019). While the Vienna conference marked a milestone in human rights lexicon, theory and activism (Baxi, 1997), in terms of HRE, it marked a regression from the advancements made during previous recommendations.

Education within the framework of human rights had been discussed and highlighted during various UN conventions, congresses and conferences prior to the Vienna World Conference of 1993. For example, the first formal request to educate students about human rights was in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace, and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (UNESCO, 1974). The 1974 UNESCO Recommendation was adopted when the remaining dictatorships in Europe were collapsing and military colonial occupations were coming to an end in most of the world. This movement towards de-colonization, emancipation, democratization and self-determination was reflected in Section III, article (6) of the recommendation:

Education should stress the inadmissibility of recourse to war for purposes of expansion, aggression and domination, or to the use of force and violence for purposes of repression... It should contribute to ...the activities in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations, and against all forms and varieties of racialism, fascism, and apartheid as well as other ideologies which breed national and racial hatred. (UNESCO, 1974)

This is also reaffirmed in Article 18, which stated that education should be directed towards: the equality of rights of peoples; their right to self-determination; ensuring the exercise and observance of human rights, including those of refugees; and the eradication of racialism and the fight against discrimination in its various forms (UNESCO, 1974).

The 1974 UNESCO Recommendation focused on understanding and respect for all peoples, cultures, civilizations, values and ways of life. Additionally, it addressed pedagogy. Article 5 encourages critical thinking and understanding and Article 12 encourages methods that appeal to the creative imagination and prepare learners to exercise their rights and freedoms. The 1974 Recommendation framed human rights and education in new contexts and tackled emerging issues such as self-determination, corruption and power, in addition to highlighting the relationship between socio-economic development and social justice.

In 1978, UNESCO organized the International Congress on Teaching Human Rights. Here the aims of the 1974 Recommendations were articulated and clarified and HRE was mentioned for the first time as a concept. The third point under principles and considerations that came out of the congress stated that HRE and teaching should aim at:

fostering the attitudes of tolerance, respect and solidarity inherent in human rights; providing knowledge about human rights, in both their national and international dimensions, and the institutions established for their implementation; developing the individual's awareness of the ways and means by which human rights can be translated into social and political reality at both the national and the international levels. (UNESCO, 1978)

The quote above highlights the idea of localizing the global. Education about human rights should not only be about distant human rights formulated by global bodies, but should have national dimensions. To reaffirm this, the congress stated that human rights curricula should be adapted to national contexts, and that HRE should protect and promote the rights of marginalized groups, like indigenous populations and people with disabilities, in their own language and according to their needs as identified by them (UNESCO, 1978). When HRE is brought into the local context, and enables oppressed groups to struggle for emancipation, we may refer to it as HRE praxis (Baxi, 1994). Praxis is "reflection and action directed at the

structures to be transformed” (Freire, [1970]1993, p.126). Hence, HRE is not only about knowing human rights but also about doing human rights.

The UNESCO congress of 1978 highlighted the ability of people to discuss human rights critically. This removes human rights from a sacred status to the status where it can be an evolving and changing concept. To this effect, under the second point of its principles and considerations, the congress stated that:

The concept of human rights should not be formulated in traditional or classical terms but should include the historical experiences and contributions of all people particularly in relation to the major contemporary problem of self-determination and all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

Under the first point of its principles and considerations, the congress stressed the indivisibility of rights and the importance of individual as well as collective rights; this was stated in its first guiding principle:

Equal emphasis should be placed on economic, social and cultural, civil and political rights as well as individual and collective rights. The indivisibility of all human rights should be recognized.

A term that was used in the 1978 congress but was not used in any other previous or following UN documents is the “internationalization of human rights”. Point 6 of the 1978 congress’s recommendations affirmed that:

International human rights curricula should emphasize the ‘internationalization’ of human rights, demonstrating the ever increasing international concern with human rights on the basis of the United Nations charter.

This term reflects the awareness at that time of the sensitivity to cultural diversity, the specificity of various cultures and the multiple possible adaptations of HRE in different contexts. Internationalizing human rights entails an inclusion of this diversity rather than an imposition of a universal value system that is perceived as colonial, Western, foreign and hegemonic.

These UN documents that precede the proliferation of HRE resonate with the main critiques of the current formulation of HRE: it is Eurocentric, top-down and detached from the realities of people who struggle against systematic human rights violations (Baxi, 1994; Barreto, 2012; Al-Daraweesh & Snauwaert, 2013; Zembylas & Keet, 2019). The 1974 UNESCO Recommendation and the 1978 Congress were radical in their view that human rights, and its role within education, are connected to the struggles of people for their own emancipation, freedom and anti-colonialism. However, this vision was diluted in the following UN documents. This dilution can be detected in the conceptualizations and definitions of HRE in the UN programs and documents which were part of the proliferation phase of HRE (Zembylas & Keet, 2019) in the early 1990s and 2000s.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training (UDHRET, 2011) is based on two decades of conceptualizations of HRE as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) starting in 1995 and continuing until after the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-2009). The UNDHRET (2011) states that HRE encompasses knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as well as action. Akin to the plans of actions of the WPHRE, the UNDHRET (2011) reiterates a similar conceptualization of HRE and adds the aspect of education *through* human rights. Consequently, under Article 2 the declaration affirms that:

- (a) Education about human rights, includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection;
- (b) education through human rights, includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;
- (c)

education for human rights, includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.

UN definitions of HRE during the proliferation phase were directed at national policymakers and institutions; as such, they provide a top-down statement of what HRE is and should be (Flowers et al., 2000; Coysh, 2014). Based on this understanding, international HRE can be viewed as a way of creating and maintaining binary distinctions; sustaining a one way transfer of knowledge; and disrespecting alternative knowledge, value systems and nuanced experiences (Coysh, 2017).

The diverse UN agreements described above point to a global adoption of HRE. Yet, in practice, there remain diverse perspectives on what exactly HRE is and does (Bajaj, 2011). HRE remains poorly understood (Cardenas, 2005); even human rights educators struggle to define what they do (Flowers, 2003, 2004; Sjöborg, et al., 2017). The struggle to understand the exact meaning of HRE can be attributed to a number of reasons: first, the presence of various definitions produced by different actors and numerous models reflecting varied practices grounded in different histories, socio-economic locations and ideological frameworks (Bajaj, 2012). Second, the definitions can be elusive because of the variety and quantity of activity that takes place in the name of HRE (Flowers, 2003), such as civics education and peace education. Third, the processes of adapting HRE create variations in meaning, aims and types as pressure from above tries to depoliticize it and pressure from below attempts to maintain its link to the struggle for justice (Bajaj, 2012). McCowan (2013) argues that there is “widespread evidence of ‘decoupling’, where the content [of HRE] is sanitized so as not to prove too challenging to existing power structures or pushed to the periphery of school experience” (p.154). Hence, HRE will likely be focused on resistance when provided by grassroots bodies or activists, but not when provided by governmental bodies including UN agencies. Similarly, though the ideas of transformative HRE and critical HRE are emerging from pioneering scholars and practitioners in HRE, many educators still depend on international law and UN mechanisms, which

Keet (2012) calls the declarationist framing of HRE. This framing maintains HRE as depoliticised and decontextualized, thus rendered dangerously irrelevant and to be faced with cynicism and ridicule.

Education within Skewed Politics

The signing of the peace agreement, known as the Oslo Accords, between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government in 1993 marked a critical juncture in the modern history of the Palestinian national struggle for liberation and self-determination. One of the most significant political consequences of the Oslo process is that it considerably altered the nature and multiple configurations of the Palestinian national liberation movement, including political parties, grassroots groups and bodies. Those configurations, which for decades led the anti-colonial struggle became, under the so-called Oslo peace process, intermediaries to ensure the implementation of the colonial agenda and to embrace an imposed official strategy of state-building based on the two-state formula (Dana, 2015). This substantial alteration allowed for unprecedented external intervention, which effectively influenced internal Palestinian affairs including education. Education has become a conduit through which this formula is transmitted, with limited possibility or space for criticality, discussion or dissent (Abu Moghli, 2016).

Scattered since 1948 across diverse educational systems, Palestinians have been unable to control their education or construct an authentic curriculum (Sayigh 2017). However, many had a vision of education as a tool for resistance and for the preservation of their threatened national, social and cultural identity. Education was linked to solidarity, liberation, struggle and resistance either by creating their own schools or by devising a philosophy for education under the PLO. This drive to ensure the fulfillment of their right to education against all odds is exemplified during the first Intifada, when the Israeli occupation closed all schools and universities, and education effectively became illegal. Teachers and students had to resort to underground classes. The community came together to support students by lending them spaces to conduct their classes.

Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation called these gatherings of students and teachers “*cells of illegal education*” (Baramki, 2010). Through popular education, Palestinians affirmed their right to education and battled discrimination.

While highly nationalist, the values infused in the Palestinian education vision prior to the Oslo process echoed the human rights discourse that can be found in any universal human rights document. For example a PLO 1972 document entitled: *The Philosophy for Educating Young Arab Palestinians [Falsafat al-Tarbiya lil-Sha'b al-'Arabi al-Filastini]* highlighted gender equality, eliminating discrimination based on ethnicity and/or religion and solidarity among nations struggling for just causes and anti-colonialism. The PLO 1972 document stated that as humans we need to create a community that rejects exploitation, oppression and poverty. Prior to the Oslo process, the vision of education for Palestinians, which I call the *Palestinian Education Utopia*, reflects the HRE framework of education about, through and for human rights in a way that ensures the contextualization of the human rights discourse and links it to the daily lives of Palestinians either in relation to the struggle against the Occupation or for social and political change.

The creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a result of the Oslo Accords and consequently the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 1994 shifted this vision away from a human rights approach, informed by a collective anti-colonial struggle, towards rigidly institutionalized strategies framed within a statist approach. The statist approach is monopolized by a ruling elite, detached from the collective struggle and led by external political forces. Politicized donors' agendas are an exemplar of these external political forces that falsely assume a post-conflict situation in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The donor funding that poured into the PA after the signing of the Oslo Accords is conditional. These funds are considered to be political rent (Hovsepian, 2008) or a peace dividend (Leone, 2011) – the money is given to the PA in return for silencing the opposition and maintaining the peace process. This is reflected in education where the majority of the content of textbooks is decontextualized, presenting a statist utopia far from the reality of a colonized nation. For example, in the 8th

grade civics textbook the second chapter is entitled: “The law is the pillar of democracy”. It includes lessons on the rule of law, law and society, the constitution and political parties. In the 9th grade civics textbook there are lessons on accountability, participation in elections, paying taxes and establishing and supporting institutions. There is no mentioning of the Israeli occupation or its impact on state and civil society institutions or any of the aforementioned democratic processes.

From the donor perspective, Palestinian education, particularly HRE, must not be linked to politics, nor should academic institutions – schools in this case – be a source of producing anti-colonial ideology and dissent. Any reference to the struggle against the occupation is considered incitement to violence and hatred. In 2005, the MOE issued a statement debunking these claims, the MOE stated that in “A Study of the Impact of the Palestinian Curriculum”, commissioned by the Belgian Technical Co-operation at the end of 2004, concluded that: “In the light of the debate stirred by accusations of incitement to hatred and other criticisms of the Palestinian textbooks, there is no evidence at all of that happening as a result of the curriculum. What is of great concern to students, teachers and parents alike is that although they wish it, students find it difficult to accept peace and conflict resolution as a solution to the conflict, and teachers find it difficult to teach, while soldiers and settlers are shooting in the streets and in schools and checkpoints have to be braved every day. It would seem that the occupation is the biggest constraint to the realization of these values in the Palestinian curriculum”. Still, the donors’ agendas are influenced by the claims of incitement of violence, which lead to withholding funds to the Palestinian education sector. Additionally, donors assume that Palestinian culture is inherently violent and needs taming, deeming it inferior and in constant need of intervention and adjustment (Hovsepian, 2008; Leone, 2011). This narrative justified the need for external intervention and led to the disregarding of previous experiences and knowledges, rendering values education, particularly HRE, enshrined in a civics education that is de-politicized, decontextualized and detached from reality. This contributed to feelings of alienation and detachment, amongst teachers and students, from HRE programs introduced in schools. Similarly, HRE projects implemented

by (I)NGOs in schools and with Palestinian students in the Occupied West Bank, are dependent on donors' funding, hence also on donors' agendas and the thematic trends proposed by donors.

Human Rights Education in Palestinian Authority Schools

The introduction of HRE within an education system shaped and framed by skewed and colonial politics resulted in HRE lacking sustainability, credibility, and with a confused vision. This was expressed by the narratives of the research participants and the content of the civics textbooks.

In an interview with Salma, an academic and women's rights activist, I asked her about the reason for including the issue of gender equality and women's rights in the textbooks, she said: Gender sells! The more gender they [the MOE] add in the textbooks, the more appealing it becomes to donors (May 2014).

The inclusion of women's rights, as Salma reiterated, is tied to the potential of increased funding and framed within international conventions. In civics textbooks, Palestinian women's social, cultural and political participation and their leading role in the struggle for liberation and self-determination are difficult to find.

In the civics textbooks I rarely found references to the relationship between human rights violations and the Occupation. In a 12th grade textbook there is a chapter on international humanitarian law, it only mentions Palestine and the Occupation in sentences that include Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Bosnia (Darweesh, 2012). Connecting the Occupation to something distant like wars in other countries prevents students from identifying rights violations committed by the Occupation as part of their everyday reality.

The avoidance of tackling the issues of Occupation and the aspirations for liberation fall under two types of textual silence. First, discreet silences which are defined as "those that avoid stating sensitive information", and second, manipulative silences which are "those that deliberately conceal relevant information from the reader/listener"

(Huckin, 2002, p. 348). It could be deduced that the MOE, as institutional agent of the PA, was reticent to include sensitive information in school textbooks so as to avoid scrutiny and possible withdrawal of support, given the broader context of political rent or discursive domestication as a method to maintain international support. In this way, external politics and the pressure imposed on the PA to keep resistance against the Occupation and opposition to the PA at bay carried over on to the nature of HRE in schools in terms of content. Additionally, the PA's oppressive policies against Palestinians, stemming from their adherence to an external political agenda, trickled down to daily oppressive measures against students and teachers. These oppressive measures contradict the human rights topics presented in the civics textbooks. For example, in the civics textbooks the right of children to participate is presented and discussed within the framework of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Palestinian law, and students are encouraged to participate actively and positively within their communities to create social and democratic political change. In practice, students are banned from forming student councils under the pretext that these councils might encourage students to be engaged politically, an action that according to the MOE, might harm the students and the school.

In an interview with Fadi, an MOE official in Ramallah, I asked about students' political activism, and he said: "We want our students to demand their rights, but in a 'civilized' way, we do not want trouble makers" (April, 2014). In another interview, Jamila, an MOE official in the North of the Occupied West Bank, re-iterated the attitude communicated by Fadi, she said:

Our students live under distressing political conditions; they feel they need to rebel against the Occupation. We want them to understand that in our future state they need to act peacefully, [and] know their obligations to get their rights. (April, 2014)

In these two quotes, MOE officials considered the actions of political participation of young Palestinians as *un-civilized*, mirroring a colonial

donors' discourse that perceives the Palestinian culture as inherently violent and in need of taming. Palestinian students according to the MOE officials are now judged by international norms and standards of rights, tolerance and 'civilization'. Their education is a process of conditioning and disciplining. The students are subjects on display, they are judged, measured, and compared with others. They are trained or corrected, classified, and normalized (Foucault, 1977). The normalizing process, or the colonial civilizing mission, aims to produce what the US security envoy Keith Dayton call the "new Palestinians" (Jawad, 2014).

This normalization mission through HRE contradicts with the students' reality. The cover of the 8th grade civics textbook shows a group of students in a demonstration carrying placards stating: "Yes to the rule of law, yes to national unity and yes to the freedom of expression". However, in practice students stated that such demands do not concern them and are violated constantly.

"Ya miss! They tell us that we have the right to the freedom of expression and participation! But they ban student councils. Why do they teach us about democracy and elections then?"
(Ala'a, student from the South of Nablus, April 2014)

The PA had adopted a pseudo human rights discourse to achieve political gains while violating human rights on a daily basis. In 2014, the PA joined 15 international human rights conventions (UN News Centre, 2014) and a year after became a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Erakat, 2015). However, the PA was losing legitimacy due to its failure to end the Occupation and provide adequate services, in addition to its security coordination with the Occupation, an act that was perceived by many Palestinians as treason. The PA was essentially an authoritarian body; Hajjar (2001) describes the PA as "autonomous authoritarianism" (p.9). Hence, the PA's use of human rights language contributed to the de-legitimization of human rights amongst Palestinians.

On 23 February 2016, Palestinian teachers in the Occupied West Bank announced a general strike and arranged a demonstration before the

Prime Minister's Office in the city of Ramallah. Although teachers' striking is not an unusual action in Palestine, the reaction of the PA this time was severe. On the day of the mass demonstration, thousands of teachers marched to Ramallah, only to find the PA setting checkpoints around the city, stopping vehicles carrying teachers. Some teachers told me that PA checkpoints were also erected at the entrances of other West Bank cities and villages to stop teachers from leaving. Yasser, a teacher from Bethlehem described how he managed to reach Ramallah: "Remember how we used to take bypass and dirt roads when the Israelis closed checkpoints? We took the same route!" (March 2016) This conduct by the PA's security apparatus was dubbed by Saleem, a Palestinian human rights lawyer as "the Israelization of the PA security forces" (February 2016). This suggests that the PA's conduct is similar to and parallel with the Israeli occupation, which further erodes their legitimacy and that of their human rights discourse.

The teachers' calls during the demonstration were originally organized to highlight social and economic demands, but after the PA's oppressive actions, their demands turned political. Placards carried by the teachers called for the resignation of the government, a restructuring of the teachers' union and lessening the heavy hand of the PA security apparatus. The repressive measures taken against the teachers are an example of the PA's violation of teachers' right to peaceful assembly and association enshrined in Articles 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), which the PA joined in April 2014 with no reservations.

This violation directly affected the conduct of teachers in schools. After the teachers' strikes, Sami, one of the civics teachers I had previously interviewed contacted me and said: "From now on, I will only teach history and geography... let the PA teach human rights to the students." (May 2016) His statement reflects the disjuncture between the narrative of human rights used by the PA and its oppressive conduct against the people. This teacher's anger translated immediately on to the way he perceived HRE. For him, his rights were violated, he became cynical and detached, and the human rights discourse in the textbooks became empty rhetoric belonging to the ruling party.

As a result of the teachers' strike, a group of students from a PA school in Ramallah took to the streets and joined their teachers' demonstration (Abu Moghli & Qato, 2018). This political activism of teachers and students embodies human rights praxis. This is what Jalal, a director of an education NGO, told me when I asked him his opinion regarding the events that were taking place and the confrontation between the teachers and the PA: "No textbook will ever teach students what rights mean. Only taking matters into their hands and opposing the oppressor. Their teachers today demonstrated that beautifully." (March 2016) The students who participated in the demonstrations with their teachers had similar understanding on human rights praxis and the disjuncture with HRE presented in schools, Salma a student from Ramallah told me: "We do not need HRE in school to realize we are oppressed, we do not need incitement to know we are occupied, oppressed and so we resist." (May 2016).

The imposed and depoliticized model of HRE, the daily violations of the Occupation and the increasingly oppressive PA policies and practices – in addition to the challenging socio-economic realities – result in an environment in which is not conducive to human rights and HRE. On the macro-level, students and teachers develop serious cynicism and disbelief in the global human rights regime. On the school level, due to this cynicism, HRE that is included in the civics curriculum is made redundant. While Palestinian students have the skill to use language through which they can name the violations and discrimination they endure (Osler & Starkey, 2010), their experience leads them to perceive this universal human rights language as foreign, unless it is linked to their daily lives and the struggles they face. This universal human rights language is alienating because it is not situated, it is disembodied, allegedly neutral, and objective. Yet, this language is deemed superior and worth imposing to modernize, while the knowledges, experiences and language of the students and their teachers are considered anecdotal, 'particularistic' and inferior (Doxtater, 2004; Grosfoguel, 2006; Mignolo, 2011).

In an interview with Nidal, a student from the school in south of Nablus, he

told me:

Ya miss.... Human rights are great [Ala Aini o Rassi], but when it comes to Palestine, they mean nothing.... You hear me.... Nothing. It does not matter what methods we use to resist, we will always be dehumanized and called terrorists. (April 2014)

The discussion above illustrates how HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank has failed to link human rights to the struggle of the people or frame them within people's praxis, consequently rendering HRE meaningless and useless in dismantling structures of domination and oppression. HRE in this case is unable to create alternatives and ways to build a space where students and teachers can make meaningful changes to their lives. In the absence of viable alternatives, they opted to take to the streets as direct confrontation with the oppressor, in this case the PA, in order to weaken the structure(s) of oppression. Through demonstrating critical consciousness and human rights praxis, Palestinian teachers used a pedagogy that is truly liberating. By taking to the streets, they broke free from the curricula and rigid pedagogies that over the years remained distant from them and their students. On 23 February 2016, the oppressed became their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 1993 [1970]).

Peace Education: the dirty phrase

HRE and PE in various scholarly work are interconnected, either through their core conceptual and theoretical basis or through their implementation (Bajaj, 2014; Reardon, 1997; Shuayb, 2015). PE as a field, emerged after World War I and II as educators sought to *prevent* future wars by teaching for peace. Civics education is an umbrella or a vehicle through which HRE, PE and other fields of values education fall (Osler, A. & Starkey, 2010). PE was mentioned in passing during my interviews. When I asked teachers to elaborate on the possibility of including PE in their practice in the classroom or school, the reaction to my question was different than the one I received when I asked about HRE. It went beyond

the shrug of the shoulder and the cynical answers. My question was either completely dismissed or in some instances received with negativity and discomfort.

Participants confirmed that PE is linked to normalization with the occupier; normalization of settler colonialism on their land and acceptance of their state of dispossession. The term “peace” for Palestinians is linked to a failed peace agreement, which led to the Palestinian capitulation (Said, 1993). A popular Palestinian perspective, often repeated in interviews, was that peace can only happen with decolonization, i.e. the end of the Israeli occupation to Palestinian and Arab lands, the recognition of the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination (Mi’Ari, 1999) and the fulfilment of the right of return to Palestine refugees.

Yousef, a MOE official told me:

As long as the Israeli occupation continues to look for excuses to smoke screen its brutality against our people, and to deny the Palestinians’ self- determination, freedom, and human rights in violation of international law, the conflict will continue. Palestinians need peace more than any other nation on earth, but peace must be based on mutual respect and justice for all. (March, 2014)

This was confirmed by Firas, a deputy head teacher in the South of Nablus boys’ school who said:

The biggest and main challenge is the Israeli occupation, their tanks, jeeps, soldiers and settlers are shooting in the streets outside the school as well as attacking the school while teachers are trying to promote human rights and peace in the classroom...The Israeli occupation breeds more hatred and violence than any schoolbook can...what can a school book teach about peace when all this violence is happening around us? (April 2014)

These two quotes indicate the frustration experienced by educators, particularly when they are asked to teach about peace and human rights in spaces that should be safe educational spaces but are instead targets for the Israeli Occupation and its colonial settlers. Hence, when I asked about PE I felt that the question was unacceptable and offensive. According to my research participants, particularly teachers, PE in the case of Palestinians conveys further surrender and humiliation, yet another indicator of the permeation of coloniality into HRE and related approaches like PE.

Decolonizing, Reconceptualizing and Reclaiming

The human rights regime is embedded within a specific cultural and historical framework involving the foregrounding of Western colonial knowledges (Baxi, 2007; Mutua, 2002; Spivak, 2004). For this regime to be viable and universal, according to Sen (2004), depends on its ability to survive open critical scrutiny in public reasoning. Stammers (2009) states that meaningful human rights are inspired by and support long-term human rights praxis and peoples' struggles against oppression, power and privilege. Introducing HRE within an international human rights regime that was framed and rigidly codified by and in the Global North as state centric ignores three important aspects: i) the need to acknowledge and work through human suffering; ii) the need for political engagement and risk, mainly the risk of criticality and scrutiny; iii) and the need to empower the disenfranchised and marginalized through redistribution and recognition (Schick, 2006). Additionally, just like with other values education subjects such as PE, the majority of HRE scholarship is being produced in the West with their descriptive and analytical intentions focused on the so-called developing world (Abdi, 2015). Bhabha (1999) questions whether the global human rights discourse, framed in legal terms, can be a tool with which colonialism can be overcome. By extension the question applies to HRE and whether it can serve to overcome colonialism and other forms of oppression.

With the proliferation of HRE, there was an increased institutionalization of the field. This allowed for higher levels of

standardization and omissions of experiences, struggles and space for criticality. As mentioned earlier in this article, HRE has a history that recognizes people's struggles against colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid. This conceptualization of HRE was stated in the UNESCO 1974 Recommendation for example. However, these key aspects were omitted in recent UN documents such as the UNDHRET (2011) which is now a foundational document for HRE work globally. Another omission is of indigenous knowledge (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Denzin et al., 2008) which is built on peoples' experiences of resistance against oppression and struggles for freedom and emancipation. According to Baxi (2007), the modern conception of human rights was based on mechanisms of exclusion (omission) and thus a major task of human rights narratology is to give language to histories of human pain and suffering; learning from the subaltern (Spivak, 2004). These omissions hinder the ability of HRE to offer a critical, contextualized and bottom-up alternative to the mainstream institutionalized Western, so-called universal, knowledge that is prevalent. HRE is therefore rendered a colonial endeavor, particularly if its sole aim becomes, like in the case of Palestine, to tame struggles for freedom and self-determination or substitute a culture that is deemed by the universal human rights regime as violent and in need of rectifying. A decolonized conceptualization of HRE needs to embrace the ethics of recognition, rather than omission.

I observed a lesson entitled: "Child rights are human rights" for the 9th grade in a school in the north of the Occupied West Bank. The right to education was stressed in this lesson with the only examples given in the textbook for depriving children of this right were child labor and the lack of school facilities for children with disabilities. After the class, students told me that they are required by the Israeli military to go by themselves and apply for a permit that allows them to cross a gate guarded by Israeli soldiers that separates their homes from the school. This caused psychological stress, extreme fear and a loss of a sense of safety, exposing them to interrogation by the Israeli army. I was told that some girls dropped out of school because their parents were scared to send the girls to the military compound to get their permits. These issues were not

mentioned in the textbook, or discussed in the classroom during the child rights lesson. This omission of experiences not only normalizes the violations and makes the lesson irrelevant to the students, but also normalizes the presence of the Occupation army, the gates and the military, i.e. contributes to the normalization of colonization. The reality under which Palestinians live – decades of settler colonialism, denial of the right of return and authoritarian governments in both the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip – represents a challenge to the application of international law and turns human rights into a punctured narrative, with questionable legitimacy and limited applicability. This is necessarily reflected in HRE.

To decolonize HRE, indigenous knowledges, experiences and lexicon need to be acknowledged and considered as the basis for HRE. There is no standardized definition for indigenous knowledge. Semali and Kincheloe (2002) state that indigenous knowledge reflects the dynamic way in which residents of an area come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize folk knowledge, cultural beliefs and history to enhance their lives. Whether we call it indigenous, local, marginalized or popular culture, as Freire referred to it (Morrow, 2008), Palestinians create their own ways of knowing and interacting with their surroundings. The MOE sidelined this knowledge and created an exclusionary educational institution based on a Eurocentric knowledge system (Battiste, 2005). The MOE neglected to acknowledge the numerous indigenous initiatives to create a Palestinian education system. Therefore, the post-MOE education system and philosophy was created without recognition of the accumulated experiences of Palestinians, rendering its approach to HRE irrelevant.

In an interview, Amal, an academic and a women's rights activist, reflected on her frustration with the process of curriculum design with the MOE. She said:

When we were putting together the civics curricula, we were lost. It is our first time to create such a curriculum in Palestine. The first of its kind in the whole region perhaps. We had to research and look for experiences from other

countries, sometimes these experiences did not relate to us, they did not look like us [ma btishbahna], when we asked to refer to Palestinian experiences, our request was denied and deemed irrelevant. (April 2014)

By ignoring the pre-MOE education experiences and the values embedded in these experiences – for example the contextualization of human rights within the struggle against colonialism – a new value system and consciousness was created through the official curriculum. This value system was market-oriented, with a decontextualized outlook on politics, culture and society. This led to the invalidation of knowledge systems rooted in anti-colonial national liberation, thereby disenfranchising them (Dana 2015). Another example was given by Samia, a head teacher from Hebron, she told me:

In school, the girls do mock elections; they focus on the technicalities of the process rather than the context, as if elections are the only manifestation of democracy! School books completely disregard Palestinian democratic experiences during the different historical phases... trade unions, women's movement and so on. Why don't they teach that in school, isn't that more relevant? Our indigenous knowledge and experience is being glazed over with an imposed agenda and a pseudo statist vision.

She continued:

I encourage the students to ask their parents, neighbors and other people in the community to tell them about their experiences before the PA. What democratic instruments and processes existed at that time. Then they come and share that in class to compare and imagine a better future based on our own knowledge and experience. (April 2014)

The above quote exemplifies how head teachers and students utilized contextualized HRE to imagine a future beyond the confines of textbooks,

the PA's statist vision and the Occupation. The head teacher and the students moved beyond the essentialist and universalist notions of human rights. They adopted an anti-essentialist approach by critiquing the monolithic (institutional) portrayal of human rights and by taking their own experiences, and the history and knowledge of their community, into account. The head teacher and the students created an anti-essentialist HRE pedagogy by drawing on various ideas and multiple perspectives on human rights, rather than approaching it from a one-sided universalized perspective. In this school, the head teacher and the students were able to break the colonization and subordination of their imagination, their ways of being and conceptualizing what is considered possible for them (Imani, 2008).

HRE the Global and the Occupied

Formal schooling is by definition political; the educational system is at the center of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy and over the definitions of legitimate authority and culture (Apple, 2003). Hence, linking human rights and HRE to politics is inevitable. Contemporary international law, including human rights, is a system created by states. History has shown that states seek the enforcement of international laws when it suits their interests (Munayyer, 2015). The ability to use human rights as a counter-hegemonic tool for righting injustices and obtaining emancipation and self-determination is not linear and needs to be problematized (Perugini & Gordon, 2015).

For HRE to be emancipatory, several considerations need to be taken into account. The case of Palestine highlights the need for a de-colonial HRE. Civics textbooks in terms of content, social, cultural and political orientation are difficult to change as they are tied to external powers, such as donor bodies, the will of the Occupier and the existence of an authoritarian regime. Within such a challenging context, there is a substantial role for critical educators and researchers to advance strategies for the project of decolonizing human rights (Barreto, 2012); and so that HRE, in turn, can also become decolonizing (Yang, 2015). If decolonization

is going to truly become more than a metaphor (Tuck & Yang, 2012), I suggest four precepts:

- When designing HRE programs, the focus should be shifted away from the universal – local dichotomy. Alternatively, a continuous dialogue should take place on how internationalized human rights, rooted in peoples' struggles, can be the basis of HRE.
- HRE should build upon the experiences of young people, particularly in contexts where young people are part of long-standing political, social and cultural struggles. Their experiences should be considered as a source and insight rather than behavior that needs rectifying.
- Within HRE, the struggles of the people should not be romanticized or considered as having moral superiority. On the contrary, moral absolutism should be avoided when it comes to peoples' struggles as much as it should be avoided when framing HRE within international human rights standards.
- Rooting HRE within particular contexts and linking it to peoples' struggles and daily experiences does not necessarily translate into the need to search for alternative types of knowledges. It means that there is a need to unearth pre-existing knowledges that have been ignored or sidelined by dominant power structures. By doing so, localized experiences can be de-territorialized and the vernacular of the struggle of the people and the tools they use for emancipation can be considered legitimate rather than simply legal.

These precepts call for moving from problematizing HRE, through the reclaiming of local experiences and struggles, to the design of new forms of HRE that engage students and teachers in a collective search for ways to dismantle the structures of oppression. Some examples from schools, like the school in Hebron, showed that head teachers, teachers and students can create their own critical spaces and formulate independent understandings and praxis within the confines of the school. In some instances, they are able to transform the rigid curricula by utilizing creative and relevant pedagogies. However, the school itself is an institution of oppression where

bullying, corporal punishment, surveillance and other manifestations of violent practices exist. To reach critical, inclusive and de-colonial praxis there is a need to create alternative structures to schools as they stand today.

With the shrinking role of the PA due to the uncertainties of the political context, Palestinians may be able to form inclusive community-based and community-led programs of critical HRE. These programs should include Palestinians inside Palestine and those in the diaspora. These programs can build on previous Palestinian experiences as well as experiences of other nations and groups where education was utilized as a tool to struggle for justice, equality, and decolonization. Through the creation of this model, credibility, sustainability, ownership and participation will facilitate the popularization of human rights consciousness.

Conclusion

This article shows that universalist-declarationist and standardized approaches to HRE ultimately subjugate its emancipatory potential. By institutionalizing and depoliticizing human rights struggle(s), and foreclosing space for critique and questioning, HRE is rendered a tool for political and hegemonic domination. In the Palestinian context, this situation led to HRE that is perceived with cynicism and ridicule, and that had turned into a harmful tool of domination in the hands of those in power. Within a settler-colonial context, Palestinian educators and students who were interviewed rejected the concept of PE, which is closely related and sometime conflated with HRE. The term PE itself exemplified to them the surrender and taming of their struggle. To reclaim HRE using a de-colonial lens, HRE theorists and practitioners need to revert to sources of knowledge embedded within people's experiences, and that link human rights with the vernacular of the people. They need to adopt a bottom-up approach and allow for criticality, which is necessary to enable the re-appropriation and re-conceptualization of HRE by those who are on the forefront of the struggles against injustice. Under these conditions, HRE

becomes a true strategy to build a culture of human rights that can dismantle structures of oppression. HRE should not be conceptualized and implemented in an assumed vacuum, but rather in real-life contexts with powerful factors such as political and economic agendas, religion, social and cultural norms that shape its aims and impact. There is a need to rethink HRE in theory and practice, shifting its current reality to one that contributes to building critical consciousness. This shift will not emerge without resistance, and it's our responsibility as critical educators and researchers to take on this battle.

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Radical Praxes*

Article 6

2020

Artist's Statement

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Artist's Statement

Erin O'Halloran*

Toward a global commons, 2020
Oil on canvas, 44 x 48 in



It seems to me that the amorphous nature of the term “peace” offers an opening... an opportunity to step into a framework of decolonial higher education. To me the intersection between Human Rights Education and Peace Education is a third space. A place where other ways of knowing can be elevated. A place whose amorphous nature allows for co-learning and co-creation. When I read that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the backdrop for HRE, I instantly knew that it was likely a hindrance to the process of decoloniality. There is good content there to be sure, but it is inaccessible (Whereas...,Whereas..., Whereas...), and it does not go far enough.

* Erin O'Halloran is an artist and liberation psychologist whose work seeks to use art making as an act of mutual accompaniment with those who see the world differently. Find out more at activistgallery.com. erin.ohalloran@my.pacifica.edu

I turned to the Earth Charter for inspiration because for me it is a better match for a goal of decolonial, inclusive, rights-based, peaceable education. The preamble opens with these words, which I believe are more relevant in the year 2020 than they were on the day they came into being:

We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise.

My re-imagining of the intersection of human rights education and peace education as a third space – is one that depicts nature and its other-than-human inhabitants as equally deserving of representation. In her book, *Mutual Accompaniment and the Creations of the Commons*, Mary Watkins talks of replacing the destructive ways of being that prevail in modernist society “... with a mutual accompaniment in which we seek attunement with those around us, enabling our responsiveness, care, and love, and galvanizing our action in solidarity with others to resist and overturn systemic injustices and injuries.”

Mother Earth, 2018
Oil on canvas, 72 x 60 in



The main image is of Mother Earth as the tree of life. With arms stretched to the sky she offers a nurturing safe space for learning to take place. The tree has a variety of different flowers on it to represent the dynamic learning that can be available with a participatory pedagogy. The pods are inspired by the Bodhi tree and have written dreams of liberation for higher education that include: human potential, creativity, grace of being, inner vision, honest authenticity, and presence. The cocoons also represent a growing process with all three phases of development pictured. This can be seen as representative of the different needs one may require from the higher education experience depending on where they are in their individual development. The diamonds are my nod to Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise* with the intention, along with the fetus, to highlight what women bring to academia and the importance of making room for them in the classroom.

The hair is made from the plastic that was the by-product of a case of bottled water... there are small seashells strewn about in the hair to bring attention to the huge problem of plastic polluting the ocean. The 3 people, cut from bronze panels are meant to represent us, the learners, as weavers. We find ourselves tangled up in our weaving material with the contrast between what we perceive to be the values of decolonial higher education and the requirements of the degree granting system.

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Article 7

2020

Chasing Rainbows: Finding Our Interwoven Narrative and Voice through Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry

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Notes From The Field

Chasing Rainbows: Finding Our Interwoven Narrative and Voice through Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry

Michiko M. Kealoha*
University of San Francisco

Abstract

When was the first time you discovered our stories together are important? This notes from the field article documents the author's journey to discovering collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry as a powerful pedagogical tool to decolonizing peace education and human rights education. With the ability to disrupt colonized academic knowledge through counter-narratives and ancestral practices, collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry can be practiced as therapy, inquiry, liberation, and validation that strengthens voices in an authentic way—equipping people with the ability to promote peace and social justice. What started as a class icebreaker grew into a project that brought communities together on the international stage. Through the process of multiple collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry projects, students at a community college came together to jointly construct

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knowledge, research, write, share, and perform together—leading to a process of healing, connection, trust, and action. This article includes the experiences and benefits of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, how writing and performing opportunities were implemented, implications for future practice, and a support guide on beginning a collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry performance group.

Keywords: collaborative auto-ethnography, poetry, decolonizing, experiential learning, higher education, student affairs, community college, peace education, human rights education

*The rain roars rapidly
coming down on me*

despite my pleas.

Please!

Let me be free.

What does your story have to do with me?

(Kealoha & Padilla Valencia, 2019)

The Origin of Chasing Rainbows

When was the first time you discovered your narrative is important? For me, it was the summer of 2004. I was curled up on my grandmother’s couch, running my finger over the familiar white cranes pattern of the pillows when I heard the front door open. Footsteps came hurriedly up the carpeted stairs. I felt the warmth of my mom’s hand on my shoulder. “You need to come with me right now,” she whispered in an odd, undefinable tone. Worried, I jumped into the passenger seat of her ‘95 Windstar van, and we were off.

She drove street to street in the rain, rapidly turning corners, as she ignored the road (and my questions) and looked up. Knowing how much my mom dislikes driving and how obsessed she is with safety, I was starting

to get anxious. What was going on? She suddenly pulled the van over, and pointed up at the gray sky. A rainbow defiantly shown above through the clouds.

“It’s Daddy! Look! He’s sending you a message!”

Before I could process what she had just said, she exclaimed through tears, “the stories passed down to us remind us that rainbows are a sign from our ancestors, our loved ones...I saw it coming and knew you needed to see it. You need to know even though we lost Daddy, he’s still here.”

Mom and I sat silent and teary-eyed looking up, allowing the sound of the tapping rain to wash over us...we had lost Dad to a sudden heart attack just a few days before this. It was my mom’s unforgettable way of finding hope for us.

As the rainbow faded, and we drove away, reality began to swallow me back up. We still didn’t know where we were going to live, how to pay the bills, where any of our documents were, or what life would be like now that he was gone. We found ourselves in our basement after the drive, trying to find some of the paperwork we needed to get through the next few months.

We waded through books on travel, magazines on home improvements, and a pile of résumés that I remember typing up for him. He had worked as a busboy, a mail man, and a valet. I started to feel sick looking at all these places he wanted to go and things he wanted to do and never got to...and then, I saw it. Under a pile of worn tools was a small and rusted drawer. I was relieved to find a folder in the drawer—“IMPORTANT” scribbled across it in my dad’s familiar chicken scratch. I called my mom over. Expecting to see some important legal or business documents, I lost my breath and fell to my knees upon seeing its contents. Dad had saved all of the poems and short stories I had written about our family over the years. *This* is what was important to him. For my dad, it wasn’t what we didn’t have, it is what we *did* have. That day of chasing rainbows made my parents’ message clear: our stories together are important.

An Introduction to Auto-ethnographic Poetry

Over the years, my parents' lesson was tested over and over again; because what I learned in the classroom and at work was so different. I learned that art and storytelling was extra credit or something "fun," not something I actually studied in education. My writing had to be "detached," "serious" and "professional." I had to erase myself and even my mixed-race Japanese American experiences for my writing to be considered "worthy." I played "by the books" and became the first in my family to graduate from college, and even went on to receive a Master's degree in education.

Yet it wasn't until I got into a doctoral program that I learned what a decolonized education really was, and what it could do. The faculty in the University of San Francisco's International and Multicultural Education and Human Rights Education programs reminded me of my family's lessons. The faculty there valued and centered what my family taught me. In every class, no matter what the subject, our professors intentionally created space for us to share our cultural and family history in whatever form we'd like. Resurfaced rhymes and fragmented lines came pouring out of me as the opportunity arose to share. One of my professors came up to me after a class share and said, "Your storytelling is beautiful! I'm going to send you some articles on auto-ethnographic poetry."

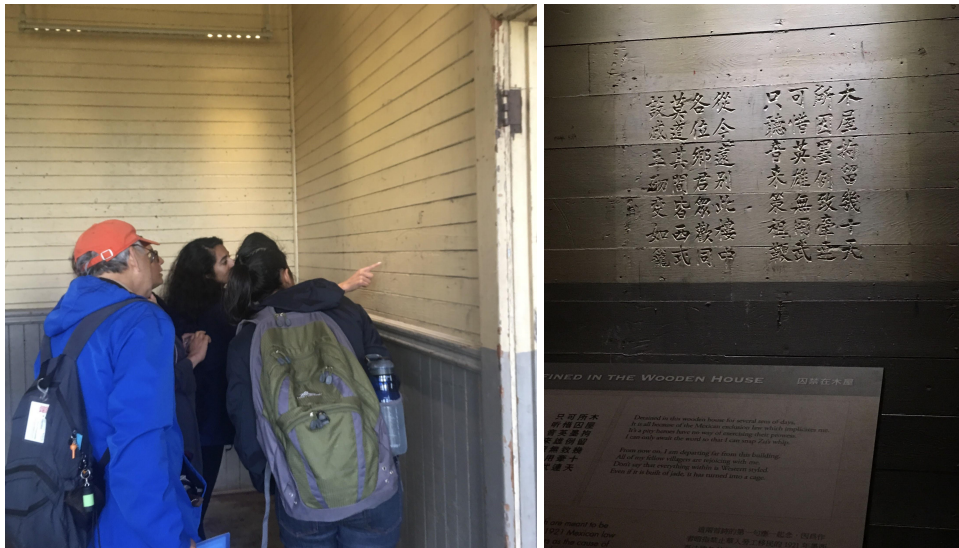
At first I was really intimidated...I just wrote whatever came out..."auto-ethnographic poetry" seemed *fancy*. This was just some fun icebreaker, right? Yet, as I read the articles sent to me, I began to learn how auto-ethnographic poetry is a tool used all around the world to deeply share our cultural story in our own way, our own voice (Kumar, 2011; Camangian, 2008). I also started to see how auto-ethnographic poetry was woven into my own ancestral and cultural roots. Another professor took our class to the Immigration Station at Angel Island,¹ and we could physically feel the

¹ The [Angel Island Immigration Station](#) in San Francisco, California operated from 1910–1940, and processed approximately one million immigrants to the United States. During this time, immigrants carved poetry about their migration into the Angel Island barrack walls. Unlike Ellis Island in New York that was known to welcome immigrants (primarily

poetry our ancestors carved into the walls—using poetry as a place to cry out (hooks, 2012). This experiential learning trip allowed me to see, for the first time, myself in the curriculum. I began to understand poetry *did* belong in the classroom and the community—and so did I.

Figure 1

Angel Island Immigration Station Poetry Carvings



Kealoha, M. (2018). Angel Island poetry carvings and University of San Francisco’s “Pedagogies of Migration” students. [Photographs]

In my exploration, I learned how auto-ethnographic poetry can even be a powerful pedagogical tool to decolonize curriculum and work towards equitable peace and human rights education. The sharing of auto-ethnography is recognized as one of the most powerful vehicles for advocating for global human rights (Schaffer & Smith, 2004; Ilesanmi, 2011).

from Europe), Angel Island served as a “detention facility that unfairly treated immigrants from the global South with prolonged detention and harsh conditions,” often leading to their eventual expulsion from the country based on the racist immigrations laws of the time (Bajaj, 2019, “Immigration Justice,” para. 1).

And the combination of auto-ethnography with poetry is writing without rules, it's healing, and it's accessible (Bline, 2010). It's a way to connect and bridge to ancestral practices, to reclaim histories, and even expose systems of power and privilege (Cruz, 2001). I began to see how auto-ethnographic poetry could also provide a counter-narrative that disrupts colonized academic knowledge (Smith, 1999). I learned how educators even used this type of poetry in their classrooms as an authentic way to promote peace among their students (Roberts, 2005). And as I read queer Black feminist scholar Audre Lorde for the first time, I was moved to see "Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence, ...our hopes and dreams toward survival, ...change, ...[and] action" (1984, p. 36). I began to realize that auto-ethnographic poetry's method of therapy, inquiry, liberation, and validation strengthens our voice so we are ready to act—and I realized I must act. With an abundance of hurtful dominant narratives trying to invalidate and threaten marginalized communities' lives and stories, action could be taken by sharing counter-narratives together through collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry.

Implementation of Shared Voice Emerges

Because of the faculty mentors in my doctoral program, and their decolonial practices and resources, I regained a part of my life I didn't know I had lost. I knew I had an obligation and opportunity to support my students in the same way. Yet, as a student affairs professional at a community college, how could I use collaborative auto-ethnographic practices in my work?

A majority of the readings I found on poetry were centered around educators' work in the classroom—as a student affairs professional, I didn't have a classroom, designated teaching time, or the ability to assign students graded projects or exams. How could I proceed? My beginning doubts were focused through a deficit lens, both on the impact a student affairs professional could have in this area, and on the extrinsic motivation of students. I was worried students would not want to commit to researching, reading, and writing outside of a mandatory course, with no monetary

compensation or class credit associated with it. However, as soon as I spoke about the possibility of poetry together to the students I advised in the college's leadership development program, many were really intrigued.

In these discussions, students reminded me that our community college students' experiences could especially resonate with auto-ethnographic poetry's purpose. Community colleges were created with the purpose to serve their communities (Gilbert & Heller, 2015). Seen as cost-effective and accessible, along with a 100% acceptance rate, community colleges are seen as a gateway for all the community to receive a higher education (Gilbert & Heller, 2015). And "community colleges were the public institutions of higher education that enrolled (and still enroll) the greatest number of working-class students (of color)" (Ferreira, 2014, p. 119). The California community college system that I work in is also the largest institution of public learning in the world, with 2.5 million students; 6,000-7,000 faculty; and 40,000-50,000 student affairs professionals; with almost half of community college students identifying as first generation college students, 75% of students identifying as people of color, and one in four community college students having come to the United States as immigrants (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2019; Connell, 2008). Although my work as a student affairs professional is outside of the classroom, I had to remember that my role was created to enhance the educational experience through community engagement, and that our community college students' unique and marginalized voices needed to be amplified (American Council on Education Studies, 1937). I had to challenge myself, understanding that student affairs professionals could and should find ways to reimagine our practices, and incorporate human rights education and peace education into our work.

I recognized an opportunity to weave auto-ethnographic poetry practices into the work our team was already doing when I was accepted to speak at the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) annual conference. There would be about 8,000 educators from across the world attending, and our department had just confirmed our first student delegation of five students to attend as participants in the conference. Yet with speakers invited to talk *about* students, could we have the chance to

not speak *for* or *about* students, but *with* them on the international stage? Could we create a collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry piece together to generate awareness and spark action? Checking in with my colleagues at the conference, and my student group, both parties accepted the opportunity of our delegation performing together with excitement. Once we confirmed this joint performance, it was decided by the conference planning committee that our joint delegation would not only perform together—but would open the Student Affairs Speaker Series at the conference.

With a delegation of all Asian and Asian American young women, Hadiya, Sherilyn, Tianna² and I started to scour the internet for research on how to begin. I knew auto-ethnographic poetry was important, but how could we actually write something together? As I saw the incredible work already being done in local schools by educators like [Gerald Reyes](#), and [Patrick Camangian](#), and organizations like [Button Poetry](#), [Kearny Street Workshop](#), or the media company [Write About Now Poetry](#), I began to feel imposter syndrome creep in; I couldn't do this! I wasn't an English teacher, I didn't have a formal class, I wasn't some expert performative poet, and I had no professional experience in writing with my students in this way! Yet in those doubts lay ingrained colonized thought patterns. Did we need a formalized classroom to have permission to do this work? Must I be a professional writer to be deemed worthy to start this work? Was I not centralizing myself in these thoughts and implementation? Did we not already innately know our own personal narratives? This work needed to begin with decolonizing my own thoughts about education. As we dove deeper into our research of how we wanted to begin writing together, a student shared a Youtube video of a collaborative auto-ethnographic poem jointly performed and written by Pages Matam, Elizabeth Acevedo, and G.

² Consent was given by students to use a combination of real names or pseudonyms on a case-by-case basis. We recognize as a group the privilege and disparity in the ability to share our identities and beings. Where some of us have the liberty to give voice and name to our stories, others are unable to be recognized in the same way due to the violence or threats in their lives.

Yamazawa titled "[Unforgettable](#)" (2014). These artists spoke about their experiences in the classroom, sharing lyrical lines and stories through the power of poetry, and our group was immediately inspired. We began to write together with the simple idea, "what would we want an auditorium full of educators to know about the experience of Asian and Asian American women in higher education?"

Hadiya, Sherilyn, Tianna and I began to meet after school; sharing narratives and collaboratively brainstorming about our poem. We shared our personal stories openly and deeply, and human rights themes of freedom, gender equality, immigration, asylum, faith, and the right to education came to the forefront.³ I learned the incredible hardships and triumphs my students experienced before they ever stepped foot onto our college campus and even began to understand how different our Asian and Asian American history education was amongst the four of us. Although the students had volunteered together for almost a year prior to this experience, we each learned something new about our cultural histories and the injustices our families faced. These narratives began to shape my deeper understanding of human rights and peace education, and how that education *is* possible in a student affairs context. Our group began editing our collaborative poem together as equals, and we were inspired to read and send each other Asian American higher education articles, videos on the human rights injustices we spoke about in our individual narratives, and began to find a collective voice for action. After writing and practicing with each other for several months, we took to the stage in Los Angeles. At the end of our collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry performance, we joined hands and walked to the edge of the stage, proclaiming together:

*We dream of the day
we can be seen*

³ As with our names, we recognize that sharing our group's histories and identities would help contextualize backgrounds and challenges. We honor that because some of our group members are in safer situations than others, we choose not to delve into individual member's circumstances.

*in the classroom,
campus,
community,
together....
for our whole selves.*

*Whole history and collaborative action must meet
or true academic achievement is not complete.*

*We need to un-learn the lessons that we are docile.
Understand OUR intersectional leadership is worthwhile.
We need curriculum that covers and doesn't cover up.*

*Teach to reach; academics for action.
Because our work as educators will never be done
until everyone everywhere has freedom.*

(Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019)

After taking our bow and heading into the dark backstage, we hugged each other with semi-disbelief it was over, laughing and holding each other as some of us wiped away tears. After performing, Hadiya shared that “I never saw myself as somebody who could perform in front of a big group audience. I received so much encouragement and support from friends and even strangers.” Before graduating, Tianna shared “I’m very grateful...it was a very unforgettable experience.” And even a year after the performance, student participant Sherilyn wrote on social media, “now a year later, I’ve had a chance to listen and apply all the skills and wisdom I have learned, and it has honestly been one of the best opportunities.”

After performing, our collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry experiment together snowballed into something we weren’t expecting. A colleague who worked at the conference encouraged our team to keep doing this work, and noted that we should reapply to share this work at an upcoming conference in Portland. More students on our campus were

becoming interested as a video of our performance was shared,⁴ and students began to request formula poetry assignments in our team's bi-annual retreat presentations (Roberts, 2005). We got accepted to perform in Portland, and other students hearing the news began requesting more collaborative art assignments in their classes, clubs on campus were starting poetry open mics, and one of our poetry teams was asked to perform at an annual all-campus faculty training.⁵

Implications for Future Practice

As students, faculty, and staff began to see more and more poetry included on campus, I realized the unique and powerful learning opportunity the collaborative act of writing and sharing auto-ethnographic poetry was. This collective lens to sharing narrative is not new, it was just new to me. The collaborative aspect of auto-ethnographic poetry has been practiced across the world, allowing marginalized groups to come together and gain “self confidence, a collective spirit, a deep respect for one another, and a much sharper vision to live and fight” (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006 p. 3). Unlike writing assignments or projects where members are asked to write and share their own stories as just an individual, the process of writing and reflecting collectively on personal narratives gives our lives new eyes and understanding (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006 p. 61). It also allows us to experience and practice what a united community feels like.

Being involved in the creating, practicing, and deep collaborative sharing with my students over the past years have taught me more about validating and uplifting stories than I thought possible. Collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry truly brings out the importance of a community of cultural wealth practice (Yosso, 2005), allowing me to challenge my own

⁴ Although this video was shared with campus, our group of performers from this iteration have asked that the video remain local, for the continued safety of our performers.

⁵ The faculty training performance was our third iteration of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, and within this iteration, students took the lead in organizing poets, meetings, writing, and practices.

privilege as an educator, and to jointly construct knowledge with *everyone* on our campus (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006). It teaches us to deeply listen, and is a practice for an educational debt that is owed (Campbell, 2016). This pedagogical tool also allows participants to have more genuine and honest conversations about injustice and oppression, with less defensiveness due to the nature of delivery (Bell, 2010). This practice also helped me to understand how even as a student affairs professional, I could practice peace education and human rights education in my work. This collaborative practice of poetry and story sharing also allowed me to see myself on a college campus, in the curriculum, and in the community, and gave me the confidence to become a new instructor at our college. This type of work has benefited me greatly, and it can do the same for our students and communities.

Some of the effects students shared from this experience were: the validation of being heard, how powerful their voices could be, and the lasting connection with their fellow writers. Hadiya shared that through this process she learned, “If you have something to say, there will be someone to listen.” Adrian, a poet who performed at a faculty training shared, “I learned from this experience how powerful our voices can be and the impact it makes to those around us. Listening to people’s comments from the crowd, I realized how one piece of art truly can start a conversation and eventually lead to a bigger discussion.” From sharing his experience with faculty, Adrian later gained the confidence to run for Student Body President, and won. Students shared over and over how writing together was both therapeutic and enlightening. Hadiya noted that “after reading my peers’ poetry, I also felt I connected to them on a new level...it was extremely rewarding afterwards.”

Hadiya’s message was a powerful one, because the connections we made helped us realize how much each of us are going through; particularly in a community college setting that serves groups that have traditionally been excluded from higher education. This experience allowed us to see the vastly different histories we each were taught about one other’s cultural communities, and how what we learned in school could put us at odds with each other. We unlearned some of those colonized and imperialized

histories by learning each other's individual narratives, and created a sustainable bond of empathy and connection between each other. And because of our sharing through writing and performance, we each gained knowledge on human rights histories we hadn't learned in a classroom: the colonization of Hong Kong,⁶ the cultural practices of the Uyghur people,⁷ and the connections of farmwork movements and family separation between Japanese American and Latinx agricultural communities.⁸ In the act of researching, writing, and performing our auto-ethnographic poetry aloud in unison, our poetry team felt more connected, trusted, and powerful collectively.

Jasmin, a poet from our second iteration of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, shared how this art form could also lead to more avenues of accessible education and action. In an end of the year reflection, Jasmin vocalized that "as a first generation college student, I really appreciate everything we've been through together...my favorite [experience of this academic year] was going to Portland with Michiko and doing collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry, she constantly challenges me to do poetry...it was really memorable to get on stage and do that." Jasmin later went on to perform the collaborative poetry piece about immigration, indigeneity, and family at a California activism camp, sharing with her peers how stories through poetry could invoke change, like curriculum reform.

⁶ Hong Kong was colonized by the United Kingdom for over 150 years, and occupied by Japan for approximately 5 years (Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019). Hong Kong has its own legal system, internet usage policies, passports, currency, and cultural practices compared to China (Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019).

⁷ Although there are approximately 9 million Uyghur people who are living predominantly in western China, the regional land is seven times the size of the United Kingdom, and the cultural land is bordered by 8 different countries; few people in the United States know of this culture (Chan, Kealoha, Kuo, & Ahmed, 2019).

⁸ Japanese and LatinX immigrants to California were predominantly farmworkers, and in the 1960s worked together in the farmworker movement (Kealoha & Padilla, 2019). Japanese and LatinX families in the United States also faced similar exclusion and family separation: Japanese Americans through internment in the 1940s, and LatinX families and immigrants in the 2010s (Kealoha & Padilla, 2019).

She has also taken lines from the collaborative auto-ethnographic poem and turned them into art pieces, working with local activists and non-profits to make the stories of peace and injustice more accessible to a wider audience.⁹ Writing and speaking these lines together not only brought us closer together, it made us accomplices in educating and peacemaking:

*Indentured in fields as foreigners,
both our ancestors were told.
Fit the mold.
Speak only English.
...Enunciate...
Don't congregate!*

*Put "American" food on your plate.
Cus to assimilate they must desecrate,
to indoctrinate!*

*We have learned...
there is lineage in our languages.*

*We're not hysterical.
Historical hurt in our hearts.
There's so much outside denial
of our family's arrival...
and their survival.*

(Kealoha & Padilla Valencia, 2019)

As our collaborative groups perform in front of more and more peers and educators, many in the audience are grateful to be challenged and included in seeking action. In hearing students in this way, faculty and staff

⁹ You can check out Jasmin's auto-ethnographic poetry and social justice art at her art page [@princessa_xicana](#).

members shared that this type of story sharing is necessary and invaluable to them. They shared how this fueled them to do their work and teach in a different way. In hearing students share their collective experiences together in an artistic and open format, many listeners told us how just seeing data about students on slides, or seeing students on a standard panel was drastically different, and this type of storytelling had so much more impact, and lasting effect on them. Being able to do this work together has the powerful potential to bring communities closer, find interwoven narratives and a collective voice, bring detailed and lasting awareness of what challenges students are faced with, and opens up the possibilities of including different practices in education.

Recreating Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry

In my journey as a new educational professional, I have exhausted myself in chasing after a colonized notion of what success is; some pot of golden-success measured in ivory towers. Although collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry has been impactful to our collaborative teams and is gaining traction with faculty, many others in the field see our work and comment, “oh, that fun after-school thing where you play on words with students for a short time?” Hearing this can be discouraging. Between all the meetings, extra hat wearing, the tireless schedules, and exhaustion from putting out fires all the time during the regular school day, one might ask themselves, “Why am I trying to do this? Do I really have the time? Is it worth it?”

What I’ve learned by doing this with my students is that we have to make the time. This work is important. Whether you find time in an already planned retreat, in your curriculum, in a staff meeting, or as some new program, collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry heals, connects, can lead to action, and can teach you to listen and trust on a deeper level. And paired with coursework and exploration of peace and human rights, this type of poetry can unveil the affective dimension of how individuals and communities experience violence and can begin to heal from the resultant traumas.

For those who may be interested, below is a timeline breakdown to support you in creating your own alignment with this work:

Figure 1: A Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Collaborative Auto-Ethnographic Poetry Group

Creating a Collaborative Auto-ethnographic Poetry Group	
Action 1: Identify the Need	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a need to share collective narratives? • Are some voices and experiences being silenced? Whose? • Is some needed action bubbling up on your campus or in your community? 	
Action 2: Reaching Interested Members	
<p>Reaching out to interested people could occur through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A team of students/people you already interact with in a class/program • Broad campus/community advertising • Individually reaching out to people you'd like to work with on a collaborative team for action 	
Action 3: Writing and Editing Collaboratively	
First Meeting	<p><u>Setting the Stage Together</u></p> <p>Why do we want to do this and in this way?</p> <p>What are our joint expectations?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who will our desired audience be? 2. How do we want to share our piece(s)? 3. How will we call each other in on our own privilege and share space as we journey through this? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How do we democratize the space so we are coming together as equals?

	<p>What kind of timeline do we want to set for ourselves?¹⁰ What do we want to share with people and why?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brainstorming Potential Themes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What do we want this audience to know? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. What human rights violations or celebrations of peace are we sharing? b. What action towards peace and justice do we want people to take? c. How do we want to tell this story? d. What dominant narratives do we want to speak back to?
	<p><i>Homework: Free writing on themes spoken about at first meeting, research on themes</i></p>
<p>Second Meeting</p>	<p><u>Share Free Writing & Collaborative Updating</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share findings and materials on chosen theme¹¹ 2. Share areas where writing was a struggle 3. From Sherron Killingsworth Roberts' work: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. After first sharing your piece aloud, ask yourself: What do I feel? Why do I feel this way? (Roberts, 2005)

¹⁰ In our multiple iterations of practicing collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry together, different timelines were set: a) Team 1 decided on a five month timeline between conception, practice, and performance, b) Team 2 worked off of a four month schedule, and c) Team 3 set themselves at a faster paced three week timeline before performance (this team performed predominantly off of scripts and did not utilize choreography in their performance)

¹¹ We found that having shared research/materials that we could all review together was helpful. This looked different in all three iterations: a) Team 1 shared articles and even dissertation sections like Canlas' ["Leadership Means Moving A Community Forward": Asian American Community College Students And Critical Leadership Praxis](#) (2016), b) Team 2 chose to share their favorite poetry videos and social media posts, c) Team 3 did a focus group with faculty before writing to gain more knowledge on how faculty prepare their classes.

	<p>b. If anyone feels “stuck” on getting writing started, try out formula poems as a basis for writing. Examples of these writing prompts can be found in Robert’s <i>Promoting a Peaceful Classroom through Poetry</i> (2005).</p> <p>4. Analyze what writing, research, and experience matched with others, and potentially if there were things that didn’t align in a major way, why that might be</p> <p>a. Analyze where power and privilege play in these “matchings”</p> <hr/> <p><i>Homework: more free writing, research, and unpacking spurred from what others shared</i></p>
<p>Third Meeting</p>	<p><u>Share Free Writing & Collaborative Updating</u></p> <p>1. Share updated free writing</p> <p>2. From Gerald Reyes’ work, using this peer feedback format was helpful:</p> <p>a. “I liked it when you said___</p> <p>b. I noticed you used ___</p> <p>c. When you said ____, I wondered___</p> <p>d. What do you think?</p> <p>e. What parts do you like?</p> <p>f. What parts do you have concerns about?” (2006, p. 14).</p> <p>3. Discussion and collective decisions on what feels like a story arch.</p> <p>a. Using Reyes’ “ReVision,” come together to organize segments, asking each other, what makes the most sense where? (2006).</p> <hr/> <p><i>Homework: continue edits</i></p>

Fourth Meeting	<p><u>Share Free Writing, Collaborative Updating, and Sharing Voice</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did our re-writes go? 2. “ReVision” exercise again 3. Who should say which parts with me? Which sections must be said by a single poet? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Which of our stories are braided together? (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006)
	<i>Homework: practicing “lines” out loud and getting familiar</i>
Action 3: Practice, Practice, Practice	
Fifth Meeting	<p><u>Practicing Out Loud Together</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing out loud, updating what feels more comfortable as words are shared “off paper”
	<i>Homework: Having your “lines” memorized</i>
Sixth Meeting	<p><u>Practicing Out Loud & Choreography Together</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practicing out loud with choreography 2. What movements do we want where? 3. Where do we move together and separately with intention?
	<i>Homework: practicing choreography with lines</i>
Seventh Meeting	<p><u>Practicing Flow</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice getting comfortable with the rhythms, memorization, and choreography

	<i>Homework = have memorized choreography and lines by next meeting¹²</i>
Eighth Meeting	<u>Practicing Flow 2.0</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to get comfortable and practice until the collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry feels “ready” 2. Practice in various spaces and get comfortable with any outside noise or a quiet audience
Action 3.5: Experiential Learning Bonus: Trips and Shared Meals	
<p>We can all learn deeply by experiencing something together (Kolb, 2014). This collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry experience is in itself an experiential learning opportunity. If your group is able to add any “trips,” bonus activities such as museum or historical location visits, or shared meals together, our team found these opportunities to be extremely beneficial to both our writing and understanding of each other’s journeys.¹³</p>	

¹² In viewing many poet’s performances, groups chose different approaches to memorization: a) Team 1 was hesitant if we had the time and confidence to memorize everything for the stage. For this group, memorizing not only allowed the team to feel more free and powerful in front of a larger audience, in hearing each other practice together, poets regularly memorized other’s narrative sections. We believe that memorization helped us to remember each other’s human rights struggles when volunteering together outside of our poetry work. b) Team 2 similarly memorized not only their own parts, but each other’s stories as well. That co-memorization of the entire poem supported each other in the practicing process if the other was struggling, and allowed them to perform in different venues spur of the moment in confidence. c) Team 3 had a varied approach, with a short timeline, some students memorized, while others read to feel more confident.

¹³ Our groups were extremely privileged to be able to connect our poetry to extracurricular activities: a) Team 1 visited the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California together, as well as did a joint trip to a Uyghur cuisine restaurant, a Japanese restaurant, and a Chinese restaurant, where each poet shared cultural practices throughout the meal. b) Team 2 visited the Chicano Research Center in Stockton, California together, as well as shared multiple cultural meals with each other. c) Team 3 also shared multiple

Action 4: Performance

Performing Together

- It's so crucial for the action and validation elements of collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry to have an opportunity to share your piece.
- This could take the form of:
 - Regular Open Mics (Reyes, 2006; Jenkins et al., 2017)
 - Meetings
 - Training
 - Retreats
 - Classes
 - Campus/community event(s)

Action 5: Debrief

To be able to come back together and talk about how the group feels and what they experienced is helpful to unpack and even plan for future action items. At this same debrief meeting, the group could share their desires or concerns with optional other sharing, such as publication.

Action 6: Publication

To broaden the audience and scope of your team's collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry narratives, your team could also decide to publish their work. Making these narratives available to even more people could allow for more awareness, impact, and action (Schaffer & Smith, 2004).

This publication could take the form of a book (Sangtin & Nagar, 2006), academic journal, posts on social media, college/community

meals together, and visited historical locations in San Francisco, California together to speak upon the history of *muralismo* and art for action together.

printed booklet, or in the form of an e-book on websites (Schaffer & Smith, 2004; Kearny Street Workshop, 2020).

Additionally, if you are reading this “Creating Your Own Collaborative Auto-Ethnographic Poetry Group” timeline during COVID19, don’t lose hope! Although COVID 19 may currently restrict us from physically visiting locations together, and many of our schools look very different than they did before this pandemic, with the power of video calling and recording, live document editing capabilities, and the ability to cut and edit videos together, collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry work is still very possible. And as we shelter in place and in power, we see that social movements are evolving, and so too must our educational practices. This work didn’t start during the COVID 19 crisis, however, it can continue to evolve through it as a way for our communities to unpack, bring awareness, heal, demand justice together, and find new ways to explore peace and human rights.

Conclusion

I am still chasing rainbows, and I am not alone. We are chasing our collective narratives: our histories not included in curriculum, our stories not shared on major airwaves, and the possibilities for a liberatory and collective human rights education that can bring sustainable peace between our communities. We are chasing, and we are catching up—together. The decolonized practice of my doctoral program has shown me that we have a range of practices for resistance, and the power to be whole. Through engaging in collaborative auto-ethnographic poetry within our college community, we have learned to eliminate various stereotypes and harmful perceptions we had about each other. We have also learned how we can equip one another with the knowledge of our diverse experiences of freedom, gender equality, immigration, asylum, faith, and right to education. This collaborative education has begun to show us what an enhanced existence within our community could look like. And it has taught us the importance of deeply listening and respecting others;

uplifting one another's narratives, and the power we have for creating change together.

Every year, graduation for our college falls on the anniversary of my mom and I chasing rainbows. Watching our community's students cross the stage reminds me that like a rainbow, we are only physically in each other's lives for this fleeting moment. In this little time we have together, are we truly doing justice for one another? Are we reminding and supporting each other to shine through the darkness, because our life and story is important? I can't imagine a better way to honor my dad's life than celebrating this milestone in my students' lives—knowing what it took for them to get to that stage, and where they want to go. Acknowledging and championing each other's narratives not only reaffirms why we do what we do in education—it reaffirms our own journey. Within human rights and peace education, we must continuously and intentionally create space to come together and share our realities in a deep and authentic way—reaffirming that our stories together are important.

*The rain roars rapidly.
Coming down on us
But in this we trust:
hate ends with us.*

It's the future our descendants deserve.

*We choose bridges,
not a babylon
as others babble hate on and on.*

*Our colors shine together,
despite the rainy weather.
We will rise up with rays,
regain ancestral ways.
Our linking language is love;
together, we'll rise above.*

*We shine bright with all our colors in the rain,
connected through the pain.
Our resistance is a rainbow.*

(Kealoha & Padilla Valencia, 2019)

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Re-Envisioning Trauma Recovery: Listening and Learning From African Voices in Healing Collective Trauma

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Notes From The Field

Re-Envisioning Trauma Recovery: Listening and Learning From African Voices in Healing Collective Trauma

By Jean Pierre Ndagijimana* and Kissanet Taffere**

Abstract

This paper critiques the influence of neoliberalism on mental health and the ways in which it denies the knowledge and capacities of Black African immigrants in the United States. It promotes and proposes community-driven approaches to supporting survivors of human rights abuses. The commentary is divided in two major parts: The first section discusses the impacts of monetization of Black grief, psychologization of poverty, and predatory inclusion on survivors of human rights abuses and staff within the humanitarian sector. The last section proposes more culturally relevant and

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humanizing healing pathways and frameworks for African immigrants in the United States. We advocate for mental health support that centers and promotes decolonial approaches and that prioritizes and values honoring communities' wisdom, experiential knowledge, and capacities.

Keywords: African immigrants, collective trauma, collective healing, decolonizing mental health, neoliberalism, humanitarian sector, non-profit organizations

In the wake of the most recent violent murders of Black Americans, mental health professionals have been forced to reckon with the suffering and violence Black people face on a daily basis by virtue of living in a racist white supremacist society. It is in the context of ongoing anti-Black violence that we are committing to upholding the belief that Black Lives Matter, and to writing about the ways in which anti-Black violence is replicated and enacted within well-meaning and, often, generously funded institutions and organizations tasked with healing African survivors of human rights abuses. We have observed how different systems tasked with healing survivors of collective tragedies can cause harm by reproducing the very dynamics and oppressive practices of colonial and exploitative systems they *claim* to address and rectify. As we engage with these issues, our critiques are, first and foremost, rooted in a deep faith and trust in the people and communities we work with and for. This undertaking is rooted in love, deference to, and reverence for people who have experienced human rights violations and who are more than the sum of the violations they have survived (Ginwright, 2018).

Contextual Background

The 2015 Pew Research Center's analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau and Eurostat report states that 65 percent of Sub-Saharan African refugees and immigrants in the United States have a college degree (Solomon, 2018, para 1). Despite their level of education and experiential knowledge, humanitarian agencies in the United States fail to recognize and support Black Africans' capability to address their own healing needs. This deficit lens stems from dominant western assumptions around the people's upbringings (destitute) and level of knowledge and education, often deemed inadequate for determining their own needs and capacities (De Haas, 2008). Consequently, the ways in which trauma-informed care is

provided is failing many of the very people these systems purport to serve and heal, while also harming practitioners of color operating within these systems (Ginwright, 2018). We, therefore, seek to problematize what continues to be normalized in order to change the way trauma healing work is done. We need more than a semantic play with words such as *diversity* and *inclusion* but rather “a tectonic shift in how we view trauma, its causes and its intervention” (Ginwright, 2018, p. 11). This decolonial conversation denounces hegemonic approaches to the healing of human rights violations, especially among Black Africans in the United States. It suggests more humanizing strategies that could inspire healers, educators (especially peace and human rights educators), activists, community organizers, researchers, and policy makers who want to serve Black Africans in a more dignified way. The article is divided in two major sections: The first section unmaskes neoliberalism in the therapeutic context and the last suggests more just and humanizing healing pathways and frameworks.

Our Positionality and Perspectives

We have worked in various local and international humanitarian organizations in our home countries and abroad. Our work has dealt with addressing legacies of genocide, war, gender-based violence, extreme poverty, childhood trauma, and forced migration. This work is close to our own hearts and lives. Ndagijimana, a former child refugee, is a Rwandan Visiting Research Scholar and Global Fellow in the United States. He is a Rwandan trained clinical psychologist and currently, doing doctoral studies in International and Multicultural Education in the United States. His research and practices have focused on community-driven culturally and contextually relevant educational and psychosocial strategies to heal/reduce impacts of individual and societal toxic stress both in post-genocide Rwanda and in the African immigrant communities in California. Taffere is an Eritrean-American clinical social worker who has worked in a number of humanitarian and intergovernmental organizations in the United States and abroad for the last decade. She holds a master’s degree in social work, and provides psychological and psychosocial care for asylum-seekers and forcibly displaced people. Her graduate and post-graduate training has included trauma-informed clinical care for asylum-seekers, refugees, and other forcibly displaced persons. We are implicated in the very neoliberal system we critique, systems that draw from the cultural knowledge of providers but do not allow providers to change systems so that they may be

both culturally responsive and contextually relevant. Some of the community members we serve know us personally. When services do not reflect their needs and cultures, our communities ask us, “If you are like me, why can’t you understand what will help me?” What may not be fully understood is the explicit and implicit racist biases and neocolonial mindsets that drive humanitarian organizations that require us to implement projects that we aren’t allowed to design and conceptualize with our communities.

Identifying the best ways to serve our communities involves both a learning and unlearning process. We were trained to believe that the psychological theories and practices originating from the Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and (supposedly), Democratic (WEIRD) societies are the universal norm (Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). We are bringing to this essay the conversations that took place on the margins of official meetings, legitimizing them by centering them. The core of our problem is this: We are working within a number of institutional powers that prescribe services to our communities. We are relegated to delivery persons, not thinkers, not allies in co-creating liberatory possibilities where the communities’ needs and capacities are centered. In many ways, we feel stuck in between two worlds, detached from both sides: not authentically part of our communities, and perceived as benefiting from our proximity to whiteness and its structures. While it can be true that this proximity grants us some privileges, it also succeeds at doing just the opposite—it tokenizes, disempowers and alienates (Ho, 2017). Our proximity to whiteness and the access to its resources is a source of our power and oppression. The duality and complexity of our identities as *insiders* and *outsiders* can feel lonely. As the Ethiopian-American novelist Dinaw Mengestu (2007) puts it, “A bird stuck between two branches gets bitten on both wings. I would like to add my own saying to the list now, Father: a [person] stuck between two worlds lives and dies alone” (p.228).

Monetization of Black Grief

We have observed a pattern of sad truths from our time working in the non-profit and humanitarian sectors, foremost among them being the monetization of Black grief (Mclaurin, 2017). The neo-liberal influences that shape mental health work have shifted the focus of treatment from healing to money (Greene, 2019). It should come as no surprise, then, that organizations which uphold white supremacy culture engage with Black or

Indigenous suffering only when funding exists to address the needs of these communities (Okun, 2000). Without any meaningful engagement or partnerships with these communities, these organizations identify gaps, define needs, outline solutions, and sometimes propose ways to ensure sustainability. When such organizations apply for and are awarded grants to support communities they have deemed *disadvantaged*, most of the funding goes back to the organization—staff, facilities, administration, etc. Communities are rarely consulted about how the funds secured in their name are expended.

The exclusion and misappropriation of Black staff members and community members' contributions are common and rarely discussed. Community members are excluded from pivotal processes where their expertise could inform how healing work is done. Their expertise is a threat to the white-centered ways of knowing and doing. When a community leader has an idea that they believe could help, such organizations rarely adopt it unless they can monetize the idea or hire and manage the community leader (Kivel, 2000). Once hired, an attempt to speak up may feel like “playing with fire” (Saṅgatina, 2006). Organizational leaders use different strategies to sustain the monetization. For instance, a Black staff member may share their thoughts with their white superiors and the latter may very well write a report or apply for a grant with no recognition of the major contributions from the Black staff member. Equally harmful, white staff solicit ideas and feedback from Black colleagues only to disregard them and make decisions that do not factor in this feedback. Whichever way you look at it, whether it is as staff or community, the voices of Black people are silenced and dismissed, ironically and tragically, in the name of healing. With this type of violence, often unseen and unnamed, the trauma within these organizations intensifies.

Psychologization of Poverty

The neoliberal mental health framework benefits from shifting the focus from the social and political roots of suffering to focusing on how an individual's brain processes that suffering (Greene, 2019). The phenomenon is referred to as “psychologization” (De Vos, 2014). For instance, when survivors of human rights abuses are in need of material resources like cash or shelter, those who have been trained to treat trauma and work in the emotional realm are at a loss: What does it mean to work outside of the processing of memories to support someone's healing journey?

Imposing a practice of healing that privileges *introspection* over physical survival needs is harmful. I remember when a Black African client stormed out of my office.¹ They had asked for food and an item of clothing. Aware of the limited resources I had, I managed only to restate their needs and offer a referral, shared that I too was powerless to offer them what they needed, and wondered aloud about what it must have meant for them to ask a younger woman for support. I did all of this because that is what years of training had taught me to do: uphold and maintain *boundaries*, encourage and promote *empowerment*, apply sophisticated concepts to my work, and find words and theories to rebrand and repackage a moment of harm and disconnect.

This encounter runs deeper than saying *no* to people in our own community. It is saying no to an elder whose sacrifices made my relative privilege possible. It is saying no when scarcity has more to do with allocation and prioritization than absolute lack. It is saying no to a modest request from an immigrant who has been *beaten* and assaulted countless times with rejections and indignities. When we say no to clients seeking basic material needs, bypassing their need to survive and imposing upon them a need to engage in reflection and introspection, we are causing harm. We assume that our clients' survival needs are separate from their emotional and spiritual needs. We impose our idea of a hierarchy of needs and a disembodied perspective on mental health and wellness. We pathologize and psychologize the political. For Crawford (1980), "labelling individuals as mentally ill only accentuates the burden of disease by situating the problem within the person, rather than to engage in the difficult task of addressing the contextual elements that may be at the source of distress" (p. 257). The pathology is with the system, not the individual; a suffering individual is a product of a sick system.

Predatory inclusion and tokenized diversity

Organizations promote ideas such as equity, inclusion, and cultural relevance. Few, however, move from *expressing* these ideas to practicing them. By definition, "predatory inclusion refers to a process whereby members of a marginalized group are provided with access to a good, service, or opportunity from which they have historically been excluded but

¹ Kissanet Taffere's encounter with a client

under conditions that jeopardize the benefits of access” (Seamster & Charron-Chénier, 2017, p.199). Such forms of recruitment enable organizations to check the *diversity* box, but this diversity focuses on skin color and not the diversity of opinions, experiences, and knowledge the staff members of color bring to the table (Ho, 2017). Many white-led humanitarian organizations that serve African survivors of human rights violations uphold western and colonial values in healing spaces, often harming the Black staff and clients they work with. Black staff have access to truth about the communities they represent, but are denied the institutional power needed to adequately respond to the needs their communities express. Paradoxically, bringing authentic perspectives from the communities being served can feel like a personal attack to white leadership and even donors, especially when these perspectives criticize the ways in which the current system fails communities. Yet, holding back the truth can feel like a betrayal of self and community as well as a disservice to the institution one is working for.

Our Recommendations

Many humanitarian agencies operating in the U.S. and internationally uphold white supremacy culture and silence Black voices in numerous ways: exclusion from key decision-making groups and processes, feedback sought but discarded when it challenges the status quo, citing a lack of knowledge in a given area to avoid taking on responsibility, and an overall lack of transparency (Talley, 2009). As Black staff members, drawing attention to these dynamics is often dangerous. First, the emotional and physical cost of being a Black person tasked with helping Black people in white-led organizations, funded by white donors to implement interventions designed mostly by white men in a white supremacist nation, are steep. Staff members who constantly resist the institution run the risk of depression and burn out and may be pathologized by their colleagues. Far less attention is paid to the root causes of this distress. Second, one runs the risk of hurting their career and professional reputation. The less critical the staff member, the more rewards they get. Consequently, eagerness to engage and participate may give way to disappointment and pain brought on by an accumulation of prolonged stress, exclusion, and feelings of ineffectiveness.

Reimagining programming and organizing in a manner that returns power back to the people can be tantamount to *class suicide* for those of us

who dare to propose and pursue such a path (Freire, 1977). Consequently, community scholars like us will remain in a sort of professional purgatory: providing services that are not adequately culturally and contextually relevant, while lacking the access to resources and spaces needed to provide more egalitarian and culturally relevant healing spaces and modalities. While leaving the colonial institution may offer temporary relief, it usually does not take long before the same position is filled with someone else who, for a number of reasons, may not speak up, and so the cycle continues where it left off.

Based on our shared experiences, we suggest the following decolonial approaches to healing the harm from human rights violations in a way we believe would promote the creation of peace in our communities.

- 1. Recognize and acknowledge racial stress:** Experiencing racism is heartbreaking. We have personally experienced this heartbreak in the United States, and so too have our clients and community members—even if it’s not explicitly named or stated. According to Usha Tummala-Narra, “there may be times when a client comes into a session with a specific story about racism that they experienced, and they want to talk about it” (NICABM, n.a, para.1). However, as we know too often be the case, Black immigrants may not feel comfortable naming racism or they may not necessarily recognize the particular brand of American racism “and it could be easy to miss if [therapists] aren’t listening carefully,” Tummala-Narra added (NICABM, n.a, para.1). For this reason and others discussed in the next sections, we suggest that mental health practitioners who are working on healing the harm from human rights violations among Black refugees and immigrants go beyond just diagnosing individual clients or pathologizing their normal reactions to racial attacks and microaggressions. Rather, we suggest providers also engage in a thoughtful process where they respectfully explore various social factors that are likely impacting clients’ lives. For example, if a client is facing deportation, as a therapist, is the sole focus of the work on *treating* the client’s insomnia or does the work also include advocating for access to quality legal representation? We encourage the latter: engage with the source of the stressor, not only with its symptoms.

2. **Do considerably more than offer one-on-one counseling:** Black African refugees and immigrants can encounter unforeseen and disempowering experiences when accessing mental health services: invasive and culturally inappropriate screening questions, unequal power dynamics in therapeutic relationships, language barriers, and the near absence of trained professionals who understand the diverse cultural perspectives of Africans. Further, many of the African immigrants we have worked with have been raised in settings where the nuclear family was only part of a network of extended relatives and community members who provided advice, care, and various kinds of support. Even when displacement deprives immigrants of this rich and expansive source of care, offering one-on-one counselling, separate from other more communal forms of support, is a strange and rather intimidating arrangement. We have observed how naturally community members engage more in informal conversations than when dialogue is solicited in structured settings (Ndagijimana, 2019). Community members are in the best position to decide when accessing support from their peers is safe for them and when it is not; it is not the role of the mental health industry to decide that community support is not safe and that safety can be achieved only in individualized therapy.

We therefore suggest de-centering the model of treating and healing that offers one-on-one standalone counseling as a core service. We suggest instead a model whereby one-on-one counseling is something requested by or for a community member needing the particular benefits of one-on-one therapy. We encourage the promotion of the community's organic support system where people feel collective accountability to take care of each other. This model of providing care could include practical support in navigating systems and accessing resources. Professionals could then invest their efforts in helping to enhance and expand a communities' support system and serve as advisors while also providing direct support to the people whose physical and/or mental health requires professional attention. Even this decision about who might benefit from more intense institutional care and support could be decided alongside community in a manner that honors individual needs and relevant laws and ethical guidelines, especially when it concerns vulnerable and marginalized community members.

3. **Ask difficult questions and accept unflattering answers:** How do people trained and socialized to work in a neoliberal individualistic system with people defined by their histories of enslavement and colonization know they are not imposing their ways of being and knowing on a systematically victimized population? Answering this question requires a deep examination of what is being offered, for whom, by whom, and at what cost. We must humbly identify all of our implicit biases and our assumptions, then question those assumptions, and accept answers that may likely require surrendering power to affected communities.² For example, this process may look like identifying an assumption that talk therapy is beneficial for survivors of trauma from all countries. Where does this assumption come from and how have educational and healthcare institutions upheld this assumption? From there, one can begin to examine how these assumptions shape institutional decision-making: what kind of knowledge is valued, who is trained, who is hired and promoted, what kind of care is provided, for whom and by whom? In what direction does accountability flow: in the direction of those with the most institutional power or in the direction of those who are disempowered and marginalized? (Kivel,2000). Further, do we report our impact and our vision to our communities, to our donors, or to both? As Freire (1977) writes, a democratic and empowering institution requires both criticism and self-criticism; a commitment to “simultaneously teaching and learning in the liberation struggle” (p.18).

4. **Respect the community’s ways of knowing and doing:** Almost everywhere in the world, different white-led humanitarian agencies win enormous grants to heal the trauma among Black Africans and the chorus remains the same: “addressing stigma and improving mental health literacy in sub-Saharan African communities” (McCann, Mugavin, Renzaho, & Lubman, 2016, p.10). Trainings promising to heal trauma are expensive, again privileging those able to afford access to knowledge that is valued within the sector. The

² For more on critical consciousness and anti-racist identity development or critical race theory, see Freire (1973) and DiAngelo (2016).

monetization of healing is inexorably connected to and shapes how healing professionals are trained and conditioned to understand suffering, its causes, and its remedies. And yet, the voices of African communities in dialogue about their own mental and community health are largely excluded from this enterprise.

Communities' indigenous knowledge and lived experience are judged or altogether dismissed as lacking an "evidence base." The belief that an outsider is by default the expert, and knows what is needed to fix a problem for a darker-skinned person, is an act of arrogance and dehumanization. According to bell hooks (1991), not allowing people to theorize their own experiences denies them of the opportunity to heal. We endorse a midwifery approach of helping a community generate more humanizing knowledge and practices from their own body of often-subjugated knowledge. This approach is rooted in the conviction that community members with lived experiences are the experts of their own lives and can "give birth" to their own processes of healing. From this perspective, the role of a facilitator is to support the community in generating theories and actions that stem from the wisdom they have gained from their culture and experiences (Freire, 1977). In other words, when we stop claiming to be *the* experts on the lives and experiences of others, we learn that "maybe the real discovery to be made in partnership with these residents [is] less about their need for training, and more about identifying and multiplying what they already know" (White, 2012, p.4).

5. **Educate and challenge donors:** The dominant model of humanitarian psychosocial healing services positions donors' needs and interests over those of the survivors and their communities. It imposes an institutional model of healing that disregards a local community's own traditional wisdom and cultural healing practices, a foreign model of healing that may inflict further harm. The neoliberal and ongoing neocolonial frameworks have created various obstacles for those affected by poverty, traumatic experiences, and migration to define, design and determine their own healing process. Where traditional and informal support systems have been disrupted, communities now turn to donors to meet their needs. The discrimination we've experienced within the nonprofit sector also

operates at a broader scale (Greene, 2019). Recent reports support what has long been suspected: “Organizations led by people of color win less grant money and are trusted less to make decisions about how to spend those funds than groups with white leaders” (Rendon, 2020, para.1). In addition to discriminatory funding practices, licensing boards and professional associations also control who has access to the credentials to provide services to our communities. We encourage individuals and agencies concerned by such injustices to *end* the violent exclusion of communities of color in systems that consistently favor whiteness.³

Final words

Experience has taught us that the closer the people are to a lived experience, the better they understand what is needed to improve that experience. We believe that alternatives to imperial ways of thinking, knowing, and doing are embedded within communal knowledge (White, 2012). As Freire articulates, "from the outset, then, our position [is] a radical one: we rejected any type of "packaged", ready-made solution and any type of cultural invasion, explicit or disguised" (p.12). We therefore have a simple but radical proposal: shift from a deficit-view of the communities we serve to an affirming, culturally-responsive and anti-racist approach that centers the needs of the community and is grounded in deep listening. In so doing, we can move from perpetuating harm toward supporting communities along their own paths toward collective recovery. Ultimately, we see this as integrally linked to decolonial approaches to peace and human rights education in their broadest sense of centering the “human” in classrooms and communities. This is a shift that must begin within ourselves and within our organizations in order to then inform the work we do in our communities.

³ For guidance on how to start this meaningful and difficult process, we suggest visiting resources such as the ones Okun (2000) and Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook provide.

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Notes From the Field

Bridge over Troubled Water: Human Rights Education and Nongovernmental Organizations in Hong Kong

By Thomas Kwan-choi Tse*

My notes from the field examines three prominent Hong Kong NGOs' contribution in promoting Human Rights Education (HRE) in five specific areas: provision of educational resources, school talks, pedagogical innovations, school clubs, and youth engagement in the community. This article shows how their advocacy and education work has helped disseminate the idea of human rights in Hong Kong, push the government to include human rights concerns in its domestic policies, and fill the gaps in HRE due to political neglect and the inadequacy of the existing school system. However, NGOs also face a number of challenges in HRE.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), especially youth work organizations that offer both delivery and advocacy services, are viewed as suitable vehicles for delivering HRE inside and outside schools because the experience, networks, services, and missions of these organizations are geared toward nurturing adolescents' civil engagement and interest through a variety of activities. HRE is a distinct and viable strategy for NGOs to strengthen their profile and human rights work (Mihir & Schmitz, 2007).

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Felisa Tibbitts' (2002, 2017) recent three models of HRE posit that there is a strong association between the activism-transformation one and NGOs as institutional sponsors. NGOs also occupy a special position in the non-formal education sector and address the deficits of the mainstream schooling system (Lam, 2014; Oguro & Burridge, 2016; Park, Senegačnik, & Wango, 2007; Yuen & Leung, 2010).

Hong Kong is a hybrid polity and further democratization has been deferred by the vested interests and the central government. In addition, the government is complacent about keeping the current human rights framework and has failed to recognize the limits of the existing institutions (AIHK, 2012). As a result, for many years the work on human rights has been unfocused and ineffectual.

The Hong Kong government is not committed to HRE. There are no explicit or systematic HRE programs because HRE is neither a priority of the education policy nor an independent subject in schools. In the name of school-based civic education, HRE is being carried out in a piecemeal and superficial way in school lessons and activities. Outside schools, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education promotes civic education through various publications and publicity programs, as well as sponsorship for community organizations to promote HRE. With the shift of emphasis of civic education toward national identity and Basic Law education after 1997, HRE has been disregarded by the government in terms of attention and resource allocation (Chong et al., 2010; Fok, 2001; Leung, Yuen, & Chong, 2011).

The inadequacy of the HRE provided in schools and the community means that schools and students have to rely on external support for HRE (Lam, 2014; Wong, Yuen, & Cheng, 1999). Using three major active NGOs as examples, this article shows their accomplishments in promoting HRE inside and outside schools. It also discusses some difficulties and the prospects in implementing HRE. The data are drawn from newspaper reports and websites, and newsletters, published reports, relevant documents, and learning materials provided by the NGOs. I also conducted interviews with seven key informants involved in the relevant NGOs between April and September 2017.

Profiles of the NGOs

The three NGOs examined in this article are Amnesty International Hong Kong (AIHK), the Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF (HKCU), and the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong (BGCA).

AIHK was formed in 1976 and became a subsidiary of Amnesty International in 1982. AIHK currently has 200 members and a large pool of volunteers and donors, and is actively involved in global campaigns and local human rights issues. In addition, it is dedicated to HRE as a means of enhancing people's understanding of and respect for human rights. A charitable trust for HRE was set up in 1993 to aid in fundraising for education causes. In 1995, with overseas funding support, AIHK embarked on a three-year education program and appointed its first full-time education officer to concentrate on HRE and organized a seminar on school rules and human rights in light of the passing of the Hong Kong Bill of Rights (*Singtao Daily*, January 22, 1995; *South China Morning Post*, January 22, 1995; January 27, 1995; February 9, 1995). In the past, AIHK organized letter-writing campaigns involving school students (*PTU News*, January 24, 2005). Echoing the move of strengthening HRE by the International Council of Amnesty International in its 2014/2015 strategic plan, AIHK also set up an HRE team in 2015, recruiting two new education officers and further expanding its service (AIHK, 2017; Tusi, 2016).¹

HKCU was established in 1986 as an independent local NGO to raise funds to support UNICEF. In recent years, HKCU (2007, 2016) has also promoted and advocated for children's rights via organizing education and youth programs in Hong Kong. In the early 1990s, it started to deliver school talks to primary and secondary school students. Following UNICEF's strategy, HKCU also expanded its work on HRE.² In 2005, HKCU (2016) established a youth and information centre to organize various children's rights educational activities. Its education team working on HRE currently comprises seven full-time staff.³

The BGCA was founded in 1936 to nurture neglected and uneducated children through literacy and skill-set training, games and sports, and material aids (Kwok, 2006). When the government expanded the provision

of social welfare services in the 1970s, this voluntary agency received government funding and became a state partner in the provision of children and youth services. Its central vision and mission is to nurture children and youth to become contributing citizens and to raise parental and social awareness of the younger generation's welfare, particularly that of disadvantaged groups. The BGCA (2004) believes that children's opinions and willingness are crucial to a child-friendly city and it also advocates for children's and adolescents' rights by providing special city-wide or local-district projects for them to channel their views and encouraging social participation. It also raises the society's awareness and concern on children's rights and children's participation.

Accomplishments in HRE

This section discusses the accomplishments of the abovementioned NGOs in HRE in recent years in five major areas: provision of education resources, school talks, pedagogical innovations, school clubs, and youth engagement in the community.

Provision of education resources

HRE can be promoted through the distribution of materials such as leaflets, booklets, teaching packages, and videotapes. These materials help provide basic knowledge about human rights, the related foundational texts, and the institutions that support human rights. Each year, AIHK distributes information packs on its education program to all secondary schools in Hong Kong. Teachers are welcome to apply for exhibition materials and the magazine *Human Rights*, a thematic bilingual quarterly publication suitable as a tool-book for reference. In 2016, 118 schools subscribed to the magazine.⁴ Similarly, HKCU provides different education resources for school teachers, such as the first interactive educational kit on the UNCRC, lesson plans on the global goals for sustainable development, and the One Minute Video Series (*Singtao Daily*, November 2, 2009). It also translated some materials for the "World's Largest Lesson", which was

launched in 2015 in partnership with UNICEF.⁵

School talks

A more direct approach to delivering HRE is to meet the target audience, such as students and teachers. HKCU began conducting school talks in early 1990, with the number of school talks conducted each year increasing from less than fifty in 2009 to 140 in 2013. The talks, which include videos, life stories, and statistical data, enable the students to learn about the lives of children around the world and UNICEF's work on child survival, protection, development, and civil participation. The topics covered in the 2016/17 school year included children's rights, natural disasters and children, war and children, water and sanitation, children in mainland China, ending child trafficking, and HIV/AIDS and children.

In 2016, AIHK delivered thirty-two talks on human rights to 8,000 participants in local schools and tertiary institutions.⁶ Recently, AIHK extended its thematic school talk program to primary students. The topics covered in the 2016/17 school year included the rule of law, human rights, rights of the child, freedom of expression, refugees and asylum seekers, and the death penalty. AIHK also provides issue-based lectures for secondary students on various human rights issues. Case studies based on prominent court cases have also been used in student debates to highlight the conflicts involved.

Pedagogical innovations

In addition to disseminating human rights content, the NGOs have developed innovative delivery and learning methods (Mihir, 2009). For instance, an interesting and interactive learning approach "Theatre in Education" is very popular among young children. HKCU has been collaborating with professional theatrical groups to develop drama education tours for primary school students since 2002.⁷ There were thirty performances in 2016/17. The drama performances and interactive sessions enable the students to easily understand children's rights, and encourage them to take up responsibilities and respect others. In the latest program,

students can make decisions for the main characters and change their destiny. By experiencing situations in which children are deprived of their rights, the students can also learn about their own rights and ways of speaking up for themselves, and apply this knowledge to their daily lives.

Film screenings are another interesting way to help arouse interest in human rights. AIHK has held the Human Rights Documentary Film Festival annually since 2011 (Tsui, 2016). Each year, the festival has a main theme, and the theme for 2015 was HRE. In 2015, AIHK also hosted nine in-school film screenings. The documentary list included children's movie series and gender series, and covered issues such as school bullying, equality and non-discrimination, forced eviction, the right of the child to be heard, poverty, child refugees, the death penalty, and women's rights.

In 2015, AIHK (2017) launched the Youth Human Rights Journalists Program, an initiative targeted at senior secondary school students, to improve adolescents' knowledge of various human rights issues such as children's rights, rights of expression, discrimination, and the controversy over the death penalty.⁸ Approximately fifty students joined the program in 2015 and were given human rights and journalistic training by current journalists and scholars of mass communication. The participants are required to submit a news report after each workshop and an in-depth news report as a graduation assignment. The student journalists then exhibit their works and participate in "Human Rights Press Awards." The program not only helps students recognize their responsibilities and influence in enhancing and protecting human rights, but also equips them with "critical human rights consciousness".

Experiential learning in the local community is also an attractive and down-to-earth approach for learners. The rule of law is the bedrock of human rights protection, and AIHK's Rule of Law Walking Tours have been conducted for school students and members of the public since 2016. The participants can listen to stories about the legal history of Hong Kong and learn about Hong Kong's path toward the rule of law as they walk along the historical streets in Central. In 2016, AIHK conducted eleven school tours with 170 participants.⁹

The BGCA's Junior Advisor Project was launched in 2005 as a means of

recruiting primary four to secondary two students to participate in the service units in a number of local districts. Over the years, the project has covered themes such as care for the environment, domestic violence, green living, children living in inappropriate housing, happy learning, and news in children's eyes, with activities including community visits, workshops of questionnaire setting and interview techniques (*Hong Kong Economic Times*, June 20, 2005).¹⁰

School clubs

Although the above mentioned innovative and interesting HRE activities can effectively communicate knowledge on human rights and provide "education about human rights", they do not necessarily provide "education through human rights". It is still not sufficient to only cultivate a human rights culture without placing emphasis on action for transformation, both personal and social. Hence the NGOs have placed greater emphasis on action and empowerment in some recent HRE programs, such as shaping the daily life environment in schools and the community.

In 2001, AIHK initiated an AI Club program in local secondary schools and international schools to equip students with comprehensive knowledge of various human rights issues and skills for organizing campaigns on campuses. Since then, many international schools in Hong Kong have set up AI Clubs on campus. AIHK has also fostered inter-school groups to encourage more adolescents to become involved in various AI activities and to share their experiences with their peers.

HKCU has achieved great success in a similar scheme called the "UNICEF Club", which was launched in 2007 based on similar programs overseas.¹¹ The number of clubs increased steadily from twenty-five in 2012/13 to forty-seven in 2015/16. The club committees can receive training, promotional materials, souvenirs, and financial subsidies from HKCU. The clubs need to hold at least three events each year, including assemblies, speeches on "International Water Day" or "World Refugee Day," booth games, movie appreciation, hunger banquets, and joint school functions.¹² The students are encouraged to participate in community services and

organize campus activities to arouse their peers' concerns about world children in need and crises. In the 2012/13 school year, twenty-five UNICEF Clubs organized seventy-seven child rights educational and promotional activities, and raised HK\$35,000 for UNICEF's global work.

The clubs can serve as a platform for students to practice what they learn in the classroom and to penetrate the works of HKCU into the school environment. Some students would contact HKCU to serve as volunteers with this contact point. Furthermore, the UNICEF Clubs have links to different HKCU projects, such as the Young Envoy Program discussed below.

Youth engagement in the community

HRE for children can become more relevant and effective when it is close to the community. Efficacious, well-informed, and committed citizens need a platform to express their opinions and opportunities for civic participation. These opportunities can help broaden the participants' horizons, enhance their understanding of current social issues, and improve their self-confidence and sense of community. Accordingly, HKCU and BGCA organize a wide range of youth engagement programs each year so as to actualize children's right to participation, nurture young leaders to serve the community, and draw public attention to the needs of children (Table 1). The activities usually include elements of service learning and community-based learning, and bring about visible changes in the community.¹³

Table 1. Overview of Four Major Programs

Organizer	Name and Year	Activities	Constituency
HKCU	UNICEF Young Envoy Program since 1996	A ten-month training program comprises leadership training camp, understanding UNICEF workshop, school project, social service project, community project, and field visit	Over 1,080 secondary school students between 1996 and 2016

HKCU and two other children's rights NGOs	Children's Council (formerly UNCRC-Child Ambassadors' Scheme) since 2000	Learn about children's rights and present motions relating to children issues, interact with government officials and legislative councilors	Held twelve times until 2017, with over 600 child counselors and forty motions concerning children discussed
BGCA	Hong Kong Junior Chief Executives since 2001	Training and opportunities to prepare a policy address or conduct a poll of Hong Kong children's top ten news items of the year. Meet with the officials, attend a children's rights forum and media program, and conduct a mock debate in the Legislative Council.	Eight batches of students ranging from primary five to secondary two, 291 participants in total
BGCA	Junior District Councilor since 2005	Training activities and community learning. Attend meetings with district councilors, and express their concerns about district problems.	A biennial local district project for around fifty primary four to secondary one students

Sources: BGCA (2009), Children's Council (2011), HKCU (2013:5), *Ming Pao* (23 June 2007), and interviews with Informants No.4 (10 June 2017) and No.5.

Discussion: Strengths and difficulties

Overall, the NGOs offer a wide variety of projects and activities with regard to HRE, and play an active educational role in informing the public, particularly the adolescents. These projects and activities have several merits. First, many of the activities are free of charge or very affordable for the participants. Second, with their specific niches and advantages, the NGOs can target their specific target groups and provide diversified and novel services and activities that can meet the needs of different people. Third, the NGOs serve as a bridge between the wider community and the formal schooling system by bringing together the service-recipients, volunteers, community groups, the media, and private sector sponsors. For instance, training the trainers is a viable strategy and HKCU and AIHK

regularly recruit volunteers (mainly college students) to take part in their education workshops and train them as voluntary school speakers to lead various school programs or translate teaching materials.¹⁴ HKCU conducts various drama- and theatre-in-education programs in collaboration with professional theatrical groups. HKCU and the BGCA have also sought sponsorship from the business sector for their projects.

These NGOs promote HRE in complementary ways, and sometimes in cooperation with other NGOs. For example, in 1996, AIHK and Oxfam Hong Kong co-conducted a survey on secondary school teachers' and student teachers' conceptions of human rights and global values. The Youth Human Rights Journalists Program afore-mentioned also involves the assistance of other NGOs. Since 2002, AIHK (2017), together with other NGOs, has organized a series of events on annual International Human Rights Day to raise people's concerns about the local and global human rights situation. In addition to the usual carnival-style celebrations, the organizers held inter-school debating competitions in 2003 and 2005 and a writing competition in 2006. Moreover, AIHK worked with other concerned groups in shaping civic education policy. They pushed for including HRE in the new civic education guidelines, lobbied the curriculum committee to make civic education an independent secondary school subject, and held talks to facilitate teacher professional training in HRE. AIHK occasionally forms ad hoc alliances with other advocacy and pressure groups to advance common causes, such as the Alliance of Civic Education (established in 2002) to challenge the government's current policy on civic education, particularly its one-sided emphasis on national identity.

HKCU collaborated with Hong Kong University's Faculty of Law in a study on children's rights education between 2012 and 2014. The Children's Council also relies on collaboration among NGOs. The BGCA and HKCU are active supporters of the Children's Rights Forum and have advocated for the Commission on Children for many years.

The network or social capital aside, another asset of these NGOs is their branding. A niche of AIHK is its position as an international human rights expert in the eyes of the school sector. With its long history of over fifty years and wide coverage of branches in more than sixty locations,

Amnesty International is well vested in knowledge of the relevant laws and policies. AIHK can easily access these rich and diversified resources in terms of cross-regional exchanges and support, which have enabled the organization to gain public recognition. The strength of HKCU lies in the brand name of the United Nations.¹⁵ HKCU's track record in HRE has also earned it word-of-mouth recommendations. Finally, the BGCA has built a solid reputation in the field of children and youth services through its widespread community network of children and youth centers.¹⁶

In addition to embracing the international standards on human rights, the NGOs have developed localized HRE programs in terms of language and contents, and take account of the needs of students and school teachers and the specific requirements of the local context. AIHK uses many Hong Kong examples and court cases in its school talks, and matches them with the teaching content of the school curriculum. In the case of HKCU, after translating teaching materials from English to Chinese, it adapts the materials to the local context by adding local examples and activities suitable for local schools.¹⁷ HKCU also draws special attention to issues of children's rights in Hong Kong such as the learning pressure of students, school bullying, and education for minority children. Because Hong Kong is a highly developed city, children's right to life and protection are not serious problems. Instead, children's participation and developmental rights deserve more attention, for instance, children's rights to participate in entertainment and recreation.¹⁸ Moreover, the contents of the UNCRC may not necessarily meet the teachers' "appetite". Instead, it is easier to use terms such as "world citizen" because teachers have a positive perception of such concepts, and think that they can enhance students' international perspective.¹⁹ For example, topics on the Syrian civil war and climate change can be presented to provide a global view as an entry point to attract teachers.

The NGOs have also actively and strategically sought to gain entry to the schools against the opportunities arising in Hong Kong's recent curriculum reform by integrating HRE into the relevant school subjects and learning activities (Leung, 2007). By sharing their knowledge on human rights, the NGOs can enrich the school curriculum and education practices

and contribute to teaching in areas such as moral and civic education or relevant subjects.²⁰ To increase the teachers' incentives for inviting AIHK and HKCU to conduct HRE, the school talks are made to align with the aims and content of the relevant school curriculums at different levels. Furthermore, AIHK scrutinized the content on human rights and the rule of law in the textbooks, with a view to suggesting corrections and improvements to the publishers. AIHK (2016a, 2016b) is also concerned about curriculum review, asking the Curriculum Development Council to include and strengthen HRE with reference to international human rights treaties.

HRE can also be incorporated in extra-curricular activities. For instance, under the new senior secondary curriculum starting in 2009, all senior secondary students have to engage in 405 hours of Other Learning Experiences (OLE) over three years, of which nearly one-third should be allocated to moral and civic education, and community service (Curriculum Development Council 2009). Schools accordingly need to recruit students to engage in service learning with NGOs. In response to the OLE initiative, AIHK launched the "Young Human Rights Journalist Scheme" and student participants can credit the hours required for OLE.²¹ Similarly, HKCU's school partnership scheme in 2015/16 also mainly catered for the needs of OLE of the pilot school.

Given that many HRE programs offered by the NGOs have been one-off activities that primarily focus on content knowledge and thinking skills, HRE in Hong Kong are still marginal and not properly institutionalized. Admittedly, these HRE programs closely match the "Values and Awareness Model" described by Tibbitts (2002), in that they aim to enhance adolescents' awareness of human rights. Although there is some emphasis on the cultivation of universal values and critical thinking, there are limited opportunities for practical applications to local human rights issues. Moreover, although the other programs do not neglect action skills and participation, the programs only include small numbers of participants and the participation is somewhat restrictive in terms of breath and depth.

Prospects

Using the three NGOs in Hong Kong as examples, this article has highlighted their contribution in promoting HRE in five specific areas. The NGOs help young people explore human rights issues in the relevant school subjects, and use experiential learning in different extracurricular activities. In addition to the “one-off” reach-outs, the NGOs provide some platforms and opportunities for young people to participate and voice their concerns through different HRE programs. The NGOs also play a salient connectivity role within the field of HRE, including bridging the gap between formal and less formal education (or between schools and the community), and fostering collaborations among different partners.

Although faced with unfavorable contextual factors, the NGOs have managed to exhibit their active agency in promoting HRE. In addition to their expertise and branding, they have taken advantage of new opportunities arising, adopting different strategies in promoting human rights, and experimented with a reconciliatory approach to HRE. The NGOs have also strengthened their capacity in HRE by building and utilizing their resources and social capital. The government’s recent decision to establish a Commission on Children in 2018 was welcomed by these NGOs, because they saw it as a chance for an independent and authoritative body to look after children’s well-being and formulate long-term targets and strategies related to children’s rights. The NGOs have also advocated for pluralistic representation on the commission, to ensure that children’s voices and opinions are heard and considered in the policy-making process, including the issue of HRE (BGCA, 2018; HKCU, 2018). It remains to be seen whether the commission will extend HRE to a larger child population. However, the prospects for HRE are dim, particularly with the deterioration of human rights due to the central government’s meddling in Hong Kong affairs and tightened control over the society by the local government. A case in point is the human rights abuses by the police in the recent social movements.

Notes

1. From Informants No.1 (11 April 2017) and No.2 (27 April 2017).
2. From Informant No.5 (24 August 2017).
3. From Informant No.1.
4. Statistics provided by AIHK on 11 April 2017.
5. From Informant No.7 (30 Sep. 2017), and World's Largest Lesson, *available at* <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>
6. Statistics provided by AIHK on 11 April 2017.
7. From Informants No.5 and No.6 (24 August 2017).
8. From Informant No.1 (11 April 2017).
9. Statistics provided by AIHK on 11 April 2017.
10. From Informant No.3 (5 April 2017).
11. From Informant No.6 (24 August 2017).
12. From Informant No.6.
13. From Informant No.3 (5 April 2017).
14. From Informant No.6.
15. From Informant No.5.
16. From Informant No.3.
17. From Informants No.5, No.6 and No.7 (24 August 2017).
18. From Informant No.6.
19. From Informant No.7.
20. From Informants No.1 (11 April 2017) and No.7 (24 August 2017).
21. From Informant No.1.

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Education: Recognizing and Re-envisioning
Radical Praxes*

Article 10

2020

Just Violence: Torture and Human Rights in the Eyes of the Police by Rachel Wahl

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Book Review

*Just Violence: Torture and Human Rights in the Eyes of
the Police* by Rachel Wahl

Stanford University Press, 2017. 246 pages.

\$26.00 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-5036-0101-7

Review by David Tow^{*}
University of San Francisco

Soon after I first received this book, Ahmaud Arbery was followed, attacked, and murdered by a retired Glynn County, Georgia police officer, assisted by both his son and neighbor. I read its portrayal of police moral imaginations as Breanna Taylor, a 26-year old EMT, was shot eight times in her apartment by three Louisville, Kentucky, police who were given a “no-knock” warrant. I finished it as people began marching in streets across America to protest the murder of George Floyd, who was killed when a Minneapolis police officer, aided by three others, kneeled on

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his neck for seven minutes and forty-six seconds. And now, as I write this review, unidentified federal agents on the streets in Portland, Oregon, are arresting activists after over 50 consecutive days of demonstrations and protests.

In the summer of 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement, the international effort to confront systemic anti-Black racism and its embodiment in police brutality, crystallized into a new formation. The movement, which was born in response to racist state violence, advances a cohesive critique linking police brutality to the larger historical trend of anti-Black violence in the United States and calls for the end of, for example, qualified immunity protections for police officers, the firing of violent and complicit officers, and reduction or elimination of police department funding. At their core, these marches, demonstrations, protests, and riots aim to interrogate the moral position of the police to deploy violence, commit torture, and kill. Into this political moment, Rachel Wahl's *Just Violence: Torture and Human Rights in the Eyes of the Police* offers a timely and nuanced exploration into law enforcement officers' individual and collective moral identity, their understanding of their violence—especially torture—within that frame and how their justification of it seemingly coexists with exposure to human rights and activism.

Synthesizing over a year's worth of ongoing interviews with officers throughout India, from the local constabulary to high-ranking officials who work in many of the various branches of the country's law enforcement apparatus, Wahl's ethnographic project examines the tension inherent in a moral understanding of the police and their use of violence simultaneously as an institution and as individuals within one. The book illustrates the way ethical questions and moral identity play out at the individual level. In addition, Wahl, a researcher interested in dialogue across social conflict, illuminates the apparent gap between law enforcement officers and human rights educators and activists, offering a counternarrative to the standard attribution of violence and torture to ignorance and lack of knowledge.

Roughly divided into three sections, the book first offers a pithy philosophical and political hermeneutic to discuss the function and utility

of state and police violence before introducing how officers' political and moral values, as well as their conceptions of their role within broader political and moral systems, shape their decision to employ violence. The expansive third section addresses the tensions, conflicts, disconnects, and contradictions that arise when human rights activists and human rights education confront torture and violence, often compounded by a set of contextual 'complications' that exacerbate violence or stymie reforms. Wahl is careful to consistently situate her interviewees and their responses within the national context of Indian policing, paying particular attention to local needs and the internal divisions between different law enforcement bodies. While a local constable in Delhi serves a different function than a mid-level paramilitary officer in Uttar Pradesh, their relationship with torture is surprisingly consistent. Despite her attention to context, *Just Violence* translates across national and political boundaries, elegantly diagramming torture's role in policing.

The brief but vital first section illustrates the ethical stakes, arguing that while prohibitions on torture and violence are universal, they are also fraught, fragmented, and highly contested, especially within law enforcement. Within that contestation, police, Wahl argues, torture not for evil or malignant reasons nor to flout international human rights guarantees. When law enforcement officers torture, they do so in (what they perceive of as) service of (what they perceive as) justice. They consider it forgivable and cohesive within a human rights paradigm. Individual officers are only partially individual moral agents and also partially under pressure from colleagues and superiors to maximize the form of retributive justice peculiar to law enforcement institutions, even when the individual knows torture is wrong. This contrast is complicated by the nature and environment of police work – a lack of oversight and generous freedom from accountability while also suffering from exhausting demands and continually expanding job roles. Wahl astutely notes a major gap in the existing research. Torture does not result only from the environment or personal beliefs, as torture scholars suggest, nor solely from police culture, as law enforcement scholars argue, nor exclusively from colonial legacies

and history. Rather, torture appears and spreads from a combination of these factors as determined by local and global complications.

Her analysis of the complex ethical positions of law enforcement officers is drawn from philosopher Charles Taylor's concepts of moral identity and moral imaginary, in which an individual's understanding of goodness and relation to it help form a sense of self. The concept of moral identity emphasizes the need to understand conceptions of right and wrong, while moral imaginary describes how individuals imagine their moral (or, for Taylor, social) existence. Taken together, these two concepts help explain the use and usefulness of violence for police, how it is justifiable, and how this violence does or does not form the core of the individual. While Wahl's reading of Taylor's moral identity theory does rebut the stereotypical human rights critique that torture stems from either a lack of knowledge or cruelty, it also appears strikingly generous to law enforcement – as shown in later chapters where she humanizes officers while still being candid about their participation in and approval of torture.

The second section aims to distill the understanding of violence and torture gleaned from Wahl's interviews into a concise explanation of principles. The author highlights how the Indian officers' understanding of justice is based on determinations of deservedness and objectives rather than equal protections and procedures. Torture, then, is a human rights violation that finds its justification in serving some justicial ends. Officers willingly engage in and perpetuate a narrative of heroism that centers their duty on finding evildoers, terrorists, and hardened criminals. For the officers Wahl interviews, torture is morally justified because suspects are perceived as either inhuman, not bound by human morality, or residing outside of the community, which only guarantees its members full protection. The conclusion is that, according to these officers, some people do not deserve human rights despite universal guarantees. Around this understanding of human rights as flexible is a systemic expectation for violence and a pressure for results, whether arrived at by torture or not. Torture, similarly, is integrated into protocols or left unaddressed, with no tension expressed. The officers describe skepticism of a human rights framework where some actions are categorically wrong, instead favoring

intention and circumstance over universality. As a tool, torture largely exists outside of the rule of law, according to a high-ranking prison officer in Haryana (the state surrounding Delhi), which leaves its use and regulation up to the officers.

Critically, Wahl follows this line of argument, identifying within her interviewees' moral identity the conflation of justice with law and order. Indeed, to these officers, violence against protesters in service of law and order, even in full knowledge of the inalienable right to protest, is forgivable at best and at least understandable. Rather than bolster universal rights, the officers described an internal utilitarian calculation, weighing rights against one another. Protection from violence, for protesters, or torture, for criminals, is only ever conditional for the interviewed officers. Somberly, Wahl notes the officers' moral calculus "rarely favors the rights of those who question the state" (p. 55).

The third section documents human rights interventions and how officers react to this training before exploring avenues and factors for reform. Generally, Wahl finds that officers subscribe to the ethical codes associated with human rights and incorporate the vocabulary but only superficially, while continuing to violate human rights. The officers look for ways to use human rights language to explain their use and approval of torture. Even after human rights training, these Indian officers from national paramilitary organizations and local police departments refused to view rights as anything but conditional and as privileged rights that related to their enforcement efforts. For example, officers stationed in Kashmir or other politically tumultuous areas favored rights related to security or social order at the cost of other equally-protected rights, though officers in model police pilot programs elsewhere in the nation echoed these preferences. From these observations, Wahl concludes that law enforcement officers are invested in moral issues, their moral identity, and a moral imaginary, but view these as ways to understand their labor without substantively changing it. She notes problems with what Sally Merry (2006) calls the 'vernacularization' of rights and identifies varieties of subversion to human rights reforms. She ends this section exploring local and global

‘complications’ - tensions between human rights activism and human rights education and contextual issues that slow or frustrate work.

In her conclusion, Wahl continues exploring the difficulties and tensions that inhabit the work of human rights reforms within policing. She recognizes the need for formal training but expresses concern that this may offer law enforcement officers merely additional vocabulary to justify torture. She acknowledges that humanization and understanding is vital to meet human rights objectives, but worries that it may remove the heft of the only meaningful check on police powers - accountability. By way of a solution, she points to the opportunity to expand existing human rights education programs, although she emphasizes the need to move beyond traditional methods and hierarchies, instead of favoring a model akin to transformative human rights education (Bajaj, Cislighi & Mackie, 2016) without ever naming it as such. This approach, which incorporates educators to help law enforcement navigate human rights issues, combined with greater accountability from activists, could lead to deeper, more widespread, and sustainable systemic change.

Wahl’s volume is alternately highly practical and profoundly philosophical, addressing both the material conditions of police work and the theoretical dimension of their violence. Furthermore, it explores a side of state violence that is often recorded but little understood. As such, it belongs alongside William Vollman’s treatise on violence, *Rising Up and Rising Down* (2003), Slavoj Žižek’s *Violence* (2008), and Hannah Arendt’s slim volume *On Violence* (1970), which all frame the political apparatus that perpetuates violence. Furthermore, because she works to unpack how torture and violence is inherent in policing, her work is also useful alongside books like Alex Vitale’s *The End of Policing* (2018) and *Who Do You Serve? Who Do You Protect* (2016) by the Truthout collective. Even by itself, Wahl’s text highlights the complicated nature of police violence generally and torture in particular, aiming to understand it without apologizing or justifying it. Such a perspective is not only helpful but essential, especially for human rights educators, those invested in social justice, and other education researchers looking to challenge and reform institutions that perpetuate oppression.

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Article 11

2020

Becoming Rwandan: Education, Reconciliation, and the Making of a Post-Genocide Citizen by S. Garnett Russell

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Book Review

Becoming Rwandan: Education, Reconciliation, and the Making of a Post-Genocide Citizen by

S. Garnett Russell

Rutgers University Press, 2020, 272 pages

\$28.95 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-9788-0286-5

Review by Liliana Deck*
University of San Francisco

In *Becoming Rwandan*, S. Garnett Russell provides a rigorous and detailed account of the Rwandan experience of incorporating global frameworks to local settings as the country navigates the post-genocide era while being accountable to the international community. With a deep knowledge of the country and its educational system, Russell explores the adaptation of international models to local contexts under the current political climate led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the current ruling political party. This book is a must-read for practitioners and

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scholars exploring the effects of education policy in fragile contexts under a state-driven peacebuilding project.

As I read this book, I had to pause several times, since as a Colombian, it felt too close to home, too raw. Thankfully, readers are in good hands. Russell (2020) honors the pain and suffering of Rwandan society. With a perfect balance of scholarly expertise and empathy, she complicates the narrative by comparing what is being taught in schools with what people are really feeling. *Becoming Rwandan* brings to light the danger of bookending historical periods as discrete events instead of placing them in a continuum of lived experiences that are multigenerational, transnational, and complex. Russell describes how the Rwandan government created a new Rwandan identity by utilizing the educational system as part of the transitional restorative mechanisms for its new generation. Her book reveals how Rwanda's road ahead is multi-pronged and treacherous. The contradictions and tensions are palpable in the data she presents, and she carefully centers her research around the voices of teachers and students interviewed during her year-long fieldwork in Rwanda. Borrowing the term "decoupling" from the field of sociology to address these contradictions, her research concludes that "In Rwanda, decoupling occurs in two forms: where intended policies are not always implemented in the schools, and where the policies when implemented produced unintended consequences that are not aligned with the broader objectives of the regime's peacebuilding project or its desire to maintain power" (p. 20).

Russell's (2020) study critically explores the challenges of peacebuilding through education in the post-genocide era. She achieves this by simultaneously acknowledging the positive aspects and questioning the long-term success of such an approach. The book is organized into six chapters, offering the reader the necessary tools to grasp the magnitude of the challenges faced by the Rwandan peacebuilding project. Throughout, Russell provides a detailed account of the precolonial, colonial and independence educational policies while tying in the current situation. She makes evident the country's treacherous road ahead. She finds that "in seeking to foster a generation focused on a unified and patriotic future

rather than on the ethnically divided past, the (Rwandan) government has incorporated global models of peacebuilding and human rights” (p. 3).

In the first chapter, Russell (2020) provides an overview of the genealogy of the peacebuilding concept. Anchored in the classics, she starts with John Galtung’s (1969) concept of “negative peace” (absence of direct personal violence) in contrast with “positive peace” (absence of indirect structural violence). She brings us to today’s United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and their prior iterations tying it to Rwanda, examining the connection between peacebuilding and reconciliation processes (p.5). Russell adds to the academic literature by exploring how the adaptation of global educational models can assist a country in post-conflict situations while exposing the tensions and conflicts that arise as a result.

Russell (2020) exposes how Rwanda's colonial past, first under Germany and then under Belgium (1916-1962), has shaped society, including the educational system. She highlights how the colonial powers created division among Rwandans, stating that “Under the Belgians, missionaries had almost complete control over the education system, implementing a system favoring the Tutsi and explicitly discriminating against the Hutu” (p. 9). She highlights how a dual-tier system (ordinary and advanced level schools) and language of instruction still persist today and both are used to exclude, favoring the group in power, and bookended with historical events (p. 11). The first language of instruction was French and now, based on politically-driven curriculum and return migration from Uganda and Tanzania, is English. By presenting an overview of the country’s historical events that include the post-genocide developments, the author provides a historical frame of reference for the reader to understand the transitional justice mechanisms used in Rwanda.

In chapter two, Russell starts by describing what has been done in the transitional justice arena at the international level in post-conflict societies and then offers an introduction to the Rwandan case. Locating the educational systems as one of the three commonly used transitional justice mechanisms along with judicial (retributive) and nonjudicial (restorative) mechanisms, she proceeds to describe each one. She explains that “it is assumed that retributive justice will address the justice requirement, while

restorative justice will promote peace within society” (p. 32), and introduces the reader to the mechanisms for judicial (criminal tribunals) and nonjudicial (truth commissions and reparations) transitional justice. Russell reminds the reader that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) of 1994 and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) of 1993 preceded the International Criminal Court (ICC) established in 2002 by the Rome Statute and was ratified by 123 countries as of 2017 (p. 34). She offers comparative examples of transitional justice stories from other countries such as South Africa, Sierra Leone, Perú, and Guatemala. She emphasizes the impact of these processes, stating that “transitional justice is concerned not only with addressing the past but also with promoting a shared future” (p. 29).

In the second part of chapter two, Russell (2020) describes how Rwanda has used legal, nonlegal and educational mechanisms for reconciliation. For the legal mechanisms, she critiques how Rwanda relied on the controversial localized transitional justice mechanism of *gacaca* courts (“justice on the grass” in Kinyarwanda) (p. 47). She notes how this was controversial since despite its efficiency in processing the cases, some scholars agree that *gacaca* were more punitive than conciliatory. Writing about the nonlegal mechanisms, Russell outlines three of the main institutions created in Rwanda: the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, the National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (designed to refuse “genocide ideology”), and the *ingando* (solidarity) camps. The final part of this chapter introduces the reader to the last category of transitional justice used by the Rwandan government - formal educational mechanisms. This section sets the tone for the rest of the book and Russell’s research. The Rwandan educational mechanisms include policy reforms, curriculum reforms and institutional culture.

Russell peppers her book with interesting details that provide a contextual understanding of the curriculum development processes. For instance, she relates how after the genocide, the Rwandan Ministry of Education placed a moratorium on the teaching of Rwandan history, given the lack of consensus between officials and academics on which version to teach. She exposes the disconnect by explaining that after the moratorium,

the Rwandan government partnered with the University of California, Berkeley and an American non-governmental organization to develop a history curriculum which in the end was not distributed equally. Instead, a condensed and edited version was disseminated with different iterations for O- (“ordinary”) level schools and A- (“advanced”) level schools.

Chapter three introduces the reader to how civic education has evolved from the national to global level. This new version of civic education now includes human rights education, multiculturalism, and diversity education. Russell (2020) exposes the differences before and after the genocide stating that “in the colonial and postcolonial eras, government powers manipulated notions around citizenship and ethnicity to ignite division and violence” (p. 60). Russell goes back to precolonial times to highlight the existence and fluidity of different categories where these groups existed as “social classes,” which were distinguished by socioeconomic status or occupation in terms of those who herded cows (known as Tutsi), farmers (known as Hutu), and hunter gatherers (known as Twa)” (p. 61). To explore civic identity and non-ethnic identity concepts, Russell explores the curriculum and textbooks that are a part of the Rwandan Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning’s Vision 2020 program. Her findings lead her to conclude that “the government promotes a nonethnic identity but at the same time mandates that schools teach about the ‘Tutsi’ genocide” (p. 179). She summarizes the goal of the government to provide “a new Rwandan citizenship” as “the construction of a non-ethnic identity and the promotion of the English language” (p.72)

Russell (2020) is intentional in her sampling, which includes over 500 secondary students spanning 15 schools in three different provinces. Her data provide a strong foundation to support the evidence accounting for regional, linguistic, and multigenerational experiences with genocide and the post-genocide era. Highlighting how the new identities have replaced old ones, she asserts that “boundaries based on new markers, such as language, experience during the genocide (i.e., returnee, survivor), participation in clubs, and scholarships, have replaced the notion of three exclusively and rigidly defined groups (Hutu, Tusti, and Twa)” (p. 97).

Russell (2020) offers strong critiques of the government's policies in chapter four; she states that "many observers of the regime's public commitment to human rights [view it] as cynical and hypocritical, given accusations that the regime has in fact committed numerous human rights violations and abuses" (p. 107). This observation summarizes the author's critique in regard to the Rwandan's adaptation, implementation, and communication of human rights education (HRE). The chapter further delves into how HRE has spread around the world and how the Rwandan government has adopted and implemented this global narrative to the national context. Russell explores curriculum and textbooks unveiling the contradictions present in the incorporation of HRE to the Rwandan peacebuilding process. She observes how HRE rhetoric is used to talk about the past, - the genocide - yet ignores current violations. She uncovers how some human rights have been given priority over others and politicized: "The way in which Rwanda has embraced norms linked to human rights and gender equality helps connect the country to the broader world but does not encourage critical discussion within Rwandan schools of contested issues of the past" (p. 131). She exposes how human rights are oversimplified and discussed in abstract terms to avoid controversial narratives.

In chapter five, Russell (2020) analyzes the Rwandan government's efforts in schools to address the genocide as a part of the reconciliation process. By stating that "reforms in history education, or discussions about how to teach about the violent past, particularly the recent past, are usually contentious in a post-conflict context" (p. 136), she acknowledges the challenges for this ambitious endeavor. Connecting transitional justice, reconciliation, and collective memory, she unapologetically challenges the Rwandan government by affirming that they have "produced an official collective memory around the genocide that might be interpreted by some as forced or manipulated to serve the interests of the state" (p. 135). Russell continues her critique by explaining how Rwanda's own *kubona* (reconciliation) does not match the ideal global model because "this version of reconciliation is more akin to thin reconciliation which involves only coexistence, rather than to a thick reconciliation process that involves true introspection and forgiveness" (p. 180). She goes even further by asserting

that “despite the monumental efforts of the government to re-create an imagined narrative of the genocide while wielding the threat of imprisonment for genocide ideology, collective memories, intergenerational memories, and counternarratives live on the minds of students and teachers” (p. 178).

In the final chapter, Russell (2020) expands her argument that the “how” of the peacebuilding project in Rwanda is full of contradictions and nuances. Despite achieving substantial improvement in the development goals that include access to healthcare and education for most Rwandans, along with gender equality, Russell reminds us that there are voices being silenced under the implementation of these peacebuilding efforts. Russell closes her book by highlighting Rwandans’ optimism and trust in the development efforts of the government. This becomes evident in the words of Innocent, a student, who states, “for now there is *peace (amahoro)*, but in ten years it will be even better than today because the whole world aims at *development*, and Rwanda will be much more developed than today. The future is so bright” (p. 183). Russell concludes with her central thesis that “The lived realities and perceptions of teachers and students often do not correspond with the government’s prescribed narrative, demonstrating the complexities of a state-mandated project for peace and reconciliation” (p. 192).

I write these words with caution. While I am conveying my own perspective about what I consider an outstanding piece of scholarly research, it is not lost on me that the inconceivable happened to Rwandans. The wounds of the genocide are present every day of their lives and will be for generations to come. This book provides another perspective to understand the post-genocide experiences of Rwandans and the educational journey of a country that is trying to heal from unimaginable horror. As a Colombian who has experienced and witnessed the horrors of war and internal conflict, I appreciate Russell’s acknowledgement of her positionality while doing research in Rwanda.

Russell’s book questions the use of the Rwandan educational system as part of their peacebuilding project. Her field work, interviews, surveys, and observations expose clearly how the curriculum conflicts with the

realities on the ground. In other words, her research can be interpreted as taking the pulse of the silences. She allows the reader to eavesdrop on what is not being said in public spheres. It is these silences that cause me to marvel at Russell's adept use of academic research to uncover the complex layers of rebuilding a new Rwandan identity while utilizing international frameworks of peacebuilding and reconciliation. I read this book as a cautionary tale of what other countries emerging from violence and conflict, like Colombia, can do as they incorporate transitional justice models into their educational systems.

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Article 12

2020

Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

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Book Review

Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership by

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

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Review by T. Gertrude Jenkins*

University of San Francisco

Three quarters through *Race for Profit*, I called my mother. She'd worked in the housing division of Newark Legal Services in New Jersey from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. My childhood days had been spent in that legal aid office, absent-mindedly eavesdropping on discussions about landlord-tenant law and housing disputes. I remembered the mass tearing down of housing projects throughout Newark and East Orange and how they'd almost immediately been replaced with rows of new townhouse structures. I'd also remembered how those tearing downs and building ups affected members of my family; many of us became migrants in our own city, being moved from one downtrodden structure to the next,

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like rodents after a chemical bombing. However, those memories gained new meaning after understanding the policies that had brought them to life. I needed the perspective of someone like my mother, whose career had been dictated by the trickle-down of federal decision-making and who could humanize it for me.

But this is what she said:

“Yeah, I remember when they tore down those projects and replaced them with all those HUD homes.¹ I’m surprised they left up the ones around the corner from Watson Ave. All you see over there is drug dealers and fiends; they need to knock that one down too.”

My mother’s response was not anomalous. It’s the collectively shared response of so many African Americans from poor and working-class neighborhoods throughout the country. It’s reflective of an internalized narrative that has placed Black bodies at the blame-worthy end of this nation’s pointed finger. In *Race for Profit*, Dr. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor disrupts this narrative, exposing the housing crisis of the late 1960s to mid-1970s for what it was – a war against Black lives. A finalist for the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for History, this book takes a detailed look at federal housing measures directed towards urban (Black) communities during the Johnson and Nixon administrations and the lengths taken to maintain segregated neighborhoods post-redlining. Taylor unpacks how the public and private sectors worked together to orchestrate predatory measures against low-income Black communities and how these practices affected other institutions within those communities. Taylor brilliantly relates how these acts cultivated and sustained a dominant narrative against Black people that is still very much alive today. She breaks down political intricacies that the average African American may not have been aware of, but has definitely felt by virtue of being Black. Each chapter builds on the premise

¹ HUD refers to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, a federal agency that oversees the provision of public housing.

of how, at its core, federal housing measures were created to maintain racial segregation and a white supremacist structure.

The Price of Black Citizenship

In Chapter One, “Unfair Housing,” Taylor makes it clear that at its inception, Black homeownership was a doomed endeavor. The influx of Black families arriving to Northern states during the Great Migration and World War II incited worry in white citizens who did not want to live amongst Black people, never mind see them as equals. Housing opportunities increased but remained segregated for Black citizens, despite their eligibility and stellar payment record. Since the federal government enacted no legislation against racially discriminatory practices by banks and real estate agents, acts of discrimination were given license to flourish under “gentlemen’s agreements” between real estate agents and bankers whose primary concern was vested in keeping neighborhoods separated (p. 48). Blacks were charged higher interest rates on mortgages compared to white citizens for far more inferior housing, creating what became known as a “Black Tax” and resulting in deteriorating neighborhoods that became justifiably invisible.

This discussion is furthered in Chapter Two as Taylor unpacks “The Business of the Urban Housing Crisis.” This chapter displays how the federal government blatantly used the poor living conditions in Black neighborhoods to entice private sector market ventures. Improving “ghettos” was advertised to the private sector as an opportunity to expand business. As a result, the “Black Market” was soon capitalized on. Intriguingly, Taylor clearly explains the political motivation behind corporate lobbying and private sector involvement in political decision-making, at least from a federal housing standpoint. To put it simply, the American government was unable (or unwilling) to provide the funding necessary to improve housing measures for Black citizens. In exchange for financial investment in low-income housing developments, banks, insurance companies, and the like were allowed to cultivate and maintain discriminatory practices with little to no federal oversight (p. 76). As such,

Black people were held in a dichotomous choice between accepting access to homeownership and being relegated to segregated neighborhoods or having no homes at all.

However, as highlighted in her chapter, “Forced Integration,” Taylor makes it clear that attempts at desegregated housing did not make circumstances any better for Black homeowners. Rather, it stoked dormant hatred and new resentments against Black people. White, working-class communities were held under threat of government cutbacks for necessary resources if they didn’t oblige to the Open Communities Program. However, community resources soon drained due to overcrowding; the government did not strengthen the infrastructure in these districts to accommodate for the increased number of residents. Here the reader grasps a harsh reality: the vast majority of Black Americans were damned, one way or the other. If they remained in inner cities, they’d be subject to not only segregation and dilapidated housing structures, but also the abuse of predatory government partners. However, if they chose to move into newly desegregated neighborhoods, Black families would suffer varying acts of resentment from their white neighbors, teachers, and other community figures. Taylor leaves no room to argue against the counter-narrative; contrary to popular belief, Black people didn’t stay in poor neighborhoods because they had a genetic predisposition to dereliction; it was just safer than living amongst white people.

Will the Real Slum Lords Please Stand Up?

Chapter Four lays out three factors that made affordable housing for low-income Black families so difficult: (1) the demand for more housing in urban areas instead of suburban communities, (2) suburban residents’ resistance against welcoming low-income (Black) residents, and (3) lobbying from the housing industry to invest in already existing structures rather than building new ones. Again, Taylor challenges the internalized notion that Black neighborhoods remain in shoddy conditions due to lack of care among residents. To the contrary, Federal Housing Administration (FHA)/HUD housing in existing structures was substandard and hazardous.

Predatory dealers were actually buying cheap, condemned buildings and using them for profit, without oversight from the FHA. Even new homes continuously fell apart due to the pace of production in building new homes and rushed home inspection procedures (p. 144). Taylor makes it clear that Black neighborhoods never had a fighting chance.

The federal government's abuse of Black communities was downright criminal, so much that complicit parties from speculators to senators were eventually brought to trial (and some even brought to justice). However, the damage had already been done; Chapter Five, "Unsophisticated Buyers" outlines how Black mothers in particular were blamed for the destruction of their dilapidated homes as an issue of poor housekeeping. When tons of FHA homes went into foreclosure, the blame went right to families in "urban" neighborhoods. The accepted truth was that Black women simply didn't have the capacity to live in suburban dwellings. But Taylor exposes how in actuality, Black women were predatorily sought out to buy homes with the promise of offering repairs and certain amenities only to discover that their homes were unlivable (p. 179). Real estate agents would mark up the price of the homes well above market value and then refuse repairs, leaving homeowners with no other choice but to foreclose on the house.

A "Welfare Queen" is A Queen, Nonetheless

Taylor brilliantly shines a humanizing light on the treatment of Black women throughout the FHA/HUD homeownership process. For readers who have deeply known and loved Black women who survived these homegrown human rights abuses, Taylor's portrayal is a welcome redemption. She reveals the untold stories of Black mothers who organized and took legal stance against their oppressors, and in some cases, won. Those who know the toil of Black grandmothers, mothers, and aunties, understand that this false narrative is mere deflection from the culpability of the federal government.

However, the most poignant part of the history Taylor lays out is in the final chapter. She reveals Nixon's declaration in 1973 of the end to the

urban housing problem as the beginning of the “urban” problem – and “urban” always means Black. Removing the nation’s responsibility to appear to care about Black lives opened up the floodgates for division within the Black community at large. The moratorium on low-income homeownership programs, compounded with massive job loss for government workers, left Black families in desperate straits. Suddenly, families who were barely making it to begin with, were left unhoused and without work (p. 214). But the collective amnesia of the United States misses that major point. And this is where the Pulitzer Prize finalist goes in! The invention of the Underclass shifted the blame and shame away from the racist practices in the Federal Housing Administration and placed them on the Black community. The need for government programming was deemed obsolete as the dystopic imagery of poor, Black life was foisted into a dominant narrative.

Without directly saying it, Taylor provides an “aha moment” for everyone who already knows historically what followed. This is what makes *Race for Profit* brilliant. The bulk of the book focuses heavily on the Nixon administration; I found myself leaning into the chronology, anticipating what would be revealed in the decades that followed. But it never goes there. I’d like to think that Taylor is slyly nudging the reader to realize that the remaining writing is already on the wall. This isn’t just a book about “how” the urban development crisis became what it did, it’s also a book about “why” urban housing is what it is today. Americans, regardless of ethnicity, bought into the narrative of the “welfare poor.” When the “working poor” believe that it’s the “welfare poor” that are causing the lot to suffer, everyone stays broke. When “welfare queens” are believed to be real, every Black woman in America loses her crown. Their children become justifiably unteachable to their teachers. If we’re willing to look a tiny bit further ahead, we can also understand this as the catalyst for mass incarceration; when helping Black people is declared hopeless, jailing and tucking them away for lifetimes becomes an accepted course of action. The majority says boo, and the minority rages against a machine that is all too massive.

So, Now What?

This is why I can't fault my mother for her comments, despite having worked so close to this system and enduring her own homeownership woes. I can't blame her any more than I can blame myself for reaching age 36 before I knew any of this. As Black people from low-income neighborhoods, we grow up feeling these things but are never quite sure of the mechanisms in place that cause us to feel them. I'd venture to say that this was at least in part Taylor's purpose as related to Black audiences; it's really easy to get caught up in the "Black people vs. N----- debate." I'd be lying if I said that I haven't unduly clenched up and become hyper-vigilant in Black neighborhoods that weren't my own. The fear we have of one another is by design; Taylor has simply made visible the blueprint.

Race for Profit illuminates the bleak shadow already cast over issues of Black housing and programs that superficially aim to level the playing field for poor and working-class people. While perhaps not intentional, this (re)telling of history inspires segregation of a different kind. If at the root of public legislation lies the pursuit to separate and provide inferior resources to Black and other vulnerable BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) communities, then it stands to question why we need to participate at all. At this point, there appears to be more value in home/community-grown efforts to vacate oppressive systems that are resistant to dismantling. In the remixed words of Harriet Tubman, "We out." If not, what's the alternative? We are still very much feeling the effects of the Nixon administration. How long will we feel the effects of Trump's? I believe this is the point Dr. Taylor is getting at, but she masterfully leaves us to draw our own conclusion.

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Joyful Human Rights by William Paul Simmons

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Book Review

Joyful Human Rights by William Paul Simmons

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019, 304 pages

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Review by Maria Autrey*
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Clowns, dancing, and pillow fights are not something I was expecting to read about in a book on human rights, and that is a problem; or so William Paul Simmons eloquently and joyfully exposes in his book *Joyful Human Rights*. Weaving together theoretical rigor with vivid, and sometimes visceral, narratives, Simmons offers us a new way of conceptualizing human rights beyond the law and its institutions. This book reveals a means for us to radically re-imagine a less punitive approach based upon a more comprehensive understanding of human experiences. For many of us, joy in the realm of human rights might feel contradictory. Still, by focusing on it, Simmons shows us how to distance ourselves from the paternalistic, colonial, and penal approach that has become commonplace in textbooks, activism, and academic writing, where "human rights" is usually followed by "abuse."

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Drawing from over a quarter of a century of experience as a scholar, teacher, consultant, and activist, Simmons proposes a disruption to current human rights thinking and practice. He dares us to think of joy as an integral part of human rights, both in spirit and in action, by questioning the status quo of history and storytelling that favor atrocities and terrors while glossing over iconic moments of human rights marked by great joy. He draws attention to the neglect of joy and its role in the field of human rights and warns us that, to our intellectual and psychic detriment, this exclusion has limited our understanding of human rights. This volume seeks to answer the question: what is to gain by carving out a significant role for joy in human rights work?

This compelling work provides a sharp point on how we can make a better sense of the philosophy and origins of human rights discourse and offers us a new perspective when talking and thinking in a nuanced way about human rights. In this book, joy is understood as a "radical affect [that] has the power to radically transgress hegemonic symbolic realms - misogyny, racism, colonialism- including the hegemonic discourses that have developed in political theory and human rights" (Simmons, 2018, p. 55). It is with this understanding that we are presented with four examples to study through the lens of joy: the joyful activist, the joyful perpetrator, the joyful martyr, and lastly, the human rights winner (or the joyful victim). Focusing not on the politics and treaties of human rights, but rather on their *spirit* and profound impact on marginalized populations reveals that those who experience the most pain are also most likely to find joy and radical new possibilities for human rights.

Joyful Human Rights is structured in three sections and organized into seven chapters. The first part, comprised of the foreword, preface, and first chapter, serves as an introduction, compiling statistical and anecdotal evidence that document the elision of joy from current human rights discourses. In the second section, made up of chapters two and three, the book explores the theoretical framework of joy in human rights. The second chapter serves as the foundation of his argument, providing an in-depth phenomenology of joy based on diverse writers and thinkers that have rarely been invited to the conversation on human rights, from classical

philosophy (Spinoza) to social theory (Lacan) and feminism (Lorde). However, Simmons is careful to separate his understanding of joy from that of happiness. Grounding his argument on Sara Ahmed's (2010) and Lorde's (1984) thinking, he points out that the critical difference is that happiness and anger are inimical. In contrast, joy can be tethered with anger, and in doing so, escapes the hegemonic grips of forceful happiness.

The third chapter examines the historical, philosophical, and legal factors that have led to the near-total absence of joy from human rights discourse and the almost exclusive focus on abuses. Journeying back to the origins of human rights scholarship, Simmons searches for fundamental causes for this disconnect, finding that during liberalism's founding period, reason was favored as a less dreadful alternative to enthusiasm and passion. This chapter argues that embracing solemnity in human rights has become in itself a form of fanaticism, as a way to add to its apparent gravity; nevertheless, joy persists. To illustrate the point, Simmons uses examples of Nelson Mandela, Emma Goldman, Adolek Khon, Audre Lorde, and others who, when faced with the gravity of human experiences and the fragility of human rights, still found the space for joy, dance, and songs.

The final section, made up of chapters four to seven, covers the "so-what?" question, exemplifying what it means to approach human rights with joy as a lens. In this section, we are challenged as readers to view the foundation of human rights with joyful eyes. Through evocative examples, we are invited to shift the way we see activists, perpetrators, martyrs, and, most importantly, victims. Vivid tales of comradeship and carnivals during protests represent the joys of the activist. Chilling stories of torturers and mob lynchings illustrate the "sinister joy" perpetrators experience, and the ambiguity of martyrs demonstrates the difficulty of escaping the politicization of human rights, even when focusing on joy.

In my opinion, the most crucial point is made in the last chapter entitled "Human Rights Winners" where Simmons expands on the idea of victimization. Instead, he proposes that victims and even survivors of human rights violations should be seen as winners. The notion of victims experiencing joy is one that all of us working in human rights know from experience, but rarely see in texts. Many times, it is joy that sustains

survivors and helps them heal and recover from their trauma. To see the victims as just victims is to reduce their agency and reduce them to a small part of their lives. To see them only as victims is to see them as their perpetrators do. Therefore, Simmons proposes joy as a humanizing tool that sheds paternalistic and colonial attitudes towards victims.

Simmons's vivid writing and engaging selection of vignettes make this book an excellent resource for educators. *Joyful Human Rights* offers us a blueprint for growth with our students by focusing on human rights success stories, planning for self-care to prevent burnout, and transforming vicarious trauma into vicarious growth. Centering joy in our classroom allows us to guide our students through a balanced perspective that moves away from courses that usually focus on the worst abuses and terrors in human history. Furthermore, human rights workers and activists will appreciate Simmons's conceptualization of human rights winners. As someone who works with survivors of sex trafficking and sexual abuse, I found this very useful. Instead of reducing individuals merely to their victim status or the tragedies they have experienced, human rights workers, educators, and students can help harmed individuals reclaim their full humanity, including positive emotions such as joy.

This book provides an innovative and nuanced way of correcting a historical imbalance that has reduced the history of human rights to a timeline of abuse. Bringing joy back to a field that has mostly ignored it can lead us to a better understanding of the meaning of human rights, beyond the legalistic version determined by state and international actors. Breaking out of the symbolic world and embodying our rights, joy becomes a force to be enjoyed and wielded against the co-optation by a larger rational order. Finally, joy is presented as fuel for the passion of human rights workers who need to be joyous and celebrate to find balance in their work and recuperate from trauma.

In a time where thousands of people are dying every day from an unprecedented global pandemic, where we are physically distanced from our communities and seemingly bombarded with a never-ending stream of terrible news, *Joyful Human Rights* might be the text we need to refocus our thoughts. The book calls for joy and encourages human rights educators to

incorporate more joy into our classrooms, for scholars to focus on moments of human rights victories in our writings, and for everyone struggling to find a balance to look for joy in our paths, knowing full well that everyone has a different route to recovery and growth. May we all find healing in joy.

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