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Editorial

Criminal Resistance? The Kidnapping of Oil Workers by Temitope Oriola
A Review Essay

By Biko Agozino
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Introduction

As the Series Editor of the *Ashgate Publishers Interdisciplinary Research Series in Ethnic, Gender and Class Relations* in which Dr. Temitope Oriola's book was published, I was pleased and honored to be invited to review this original contribution to knowledge during the public presentation of the book at Alberta University, Canada. That was where the doctoral research that led to the book was done and where the award-winning author was soon lured back, as an Assistant Professor, from a major US university.

As the Series Editor who recommended the innovative manuscript for publication, I was tempted to decline the invitation to be a reviewer of the book. But I relished the challenge to replace my editor's cap with that of the critic and reflect on the book in a way that a Series Editor's preface may not have permitted. For full disclosure, I must also confess that the author, Dr. Oriola, caught my attention in 2005 as a graduate student when he hailed my book, *Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason*, as laying the foundation for what he termed, 'Post-Colonial Criminology'. His review essay was published in this *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies* that I continue to serve as the founding Editor-in-Chief. It is the official organ of African Criminology and Justice Association. In my view, Oriola's own new book is a major contribution to that paradigm of post-colonial criminology.

Following the guidelines for book reviews provided by one of my undergraduate mentors at the University of Calabar, Professor Inya Eteng, who passed away recently at the University of Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta terrain of Oriola's book; I will proceed by critically reviewing the empirical tenability of the book's claims, the internal consistency or theoretical adequacy of the book, and the policy efficacy of the implications of the conclusions and inferences. I will leave out a summary of the contents because the author himself has provided one in chapter eight and because I do not wish to spoil the fun for those of you yet to read the book.

The risks Oriola took to be added to the mailing list of militants, to interview army generals and observe focus group discussions of villagers in the creeks of the Niger Delta where he was 'jokingly' threatened with kidnapping by a key informant, and the attention that he paid to the history of gendered and class-specific ethnic violence in Nigeria make his book required reading by all who are interested in resolving the violent crises that plague African societies today.

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Empirical Tenability

The empirical tenability of the claims in the book is without doubt. Also the attention to the methodology that originated in ancient Egypt as the 'triangulation' of data sources, or what the author called 'methodological eclecticism' in the book, is very commendable. The reflexivity of the author in terms of the potential to be perceived as an outsider because of his Yoruba ethnic identity is equally noteworthy as a key for understanding the violent ethnic chauvinism that tends to cripple intellectual excellence and everything else in its wake in Nigeria.

As the book reveals, the Niger Delta Volunteer Service was initially founded in 1966 by Isaac Adaka Boro to ally the Ijaw cause with the interests of Northern People's Congress against a perceived Ijaw fear of domination especially with reference to the National Council of Nigerian Citizens which was predominantly made up of Igbo members. The author quoted Boro's *Twelve Day Revolution* as stating that; "The only protector of the Ijaws, Sir Balewa (the assassinated Prime Minister), was gone. He and his party were the only people that had consideration for our presence in Nigeria" (p.141). However, Oriola also quoted current leaders of the Niger Delta insurgency as now alleging that

'The lands of the people of the Niger Delta was stolen by the oil companies and Northern Nigeria with the stroke of a pen. ... The Niger Delta has been partitioned into oil blocks which have been distributed amongst mostly Northerners while indigenes of the Niger Delta can barely survive. One such example being General T.Y. Danjuma' (p. 142, original emphasis).

Oriola presented a contrast between the westernized capital city of Abuja in the North and the neglected bush villages of Oloibiri where oil was first discovered in the Niger Delta in the 1950s to press home the alleged 'nexus' of expropriation (pp. 78-79). What is missing is evidence that in Northern Nigeria, poverty is equally crushing for the majority of the citizens who tend to be less educated compared to Southerners. A few members of the elite from across the country wallow in inordinate opulence and the choice properties in Abuja were not owned exclusively by Northerners but by the new rich from across the country.

In this connection, the claim in the book that 85% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings come from the 'monocultural' oil industry of the Niger Delta may need to be contextualized. The eminent Marxist economist and another mentor of mine at the University of Calabar, Professor Eskor Toyo, in his chapter; 'Revenue Allocation and the National Question', in the book edited by Abubakar Momoh and Said Adejumobi on *The National Question in Nigeria* that I published in the same Ashgate Series as Oriola's book, estimated the contribution of oil and gas to Nigeria's GDP to be less than 50%. This implies the need to look beyond ethnic

chauvinism in the discourse of revenue allocation and the national question of resource control. Toyo appears to be supported by annual data published by the National Bureau of Statistics which reported that the contribution of oil and gas to the GDP in the second quarter of 2012 was less than 14% while the contribution from agriculture was 40% <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>.

The estimate by Toyo only appears counter-intuitive because Nigerians tend to extrapolate from the estimate that hundreds of millions of barrels of oil are produced in the country per day. Then they multiply them with the price of oil and deduce what they assume to be the contribution of oil to the national income. They do so without taking into consideration that Nigeria probably only receives 10% royalties from whatever the oil companies declare as their profits after production and exploration expenses. Visionary leaders would take the hint from Professor Toyo and invest massively in agriculture but Nigerian rulers appear blinded by greed. In any case, oil and gas, being finite resources, should not be the exclusive motive for any social movement organization to kidnap workers, bomb and kill citizens and sabotage the environment without turning such an organization into a reactionary anti-social movement organization.

The empirical tenability of the claims in the book could be challenged on the ground that the author left out some of the important details. But in fairness to the author, no book ever covers everything and so the author should be commended for narrowing down his topic to a manageable scale under the able supervision of his dissertation advisers. Yet, the empirical tenability of the claims in the book could have been greatly enhanced through a more historical-materialist epistemological approach or through a post-structuralist discourse analysis with more coverage of the narratives of trade unionists and kidnapped workers whose voices appear drowned out by those of six sets of 'actors': community members, political/environmental justice activists, (ex) insurgents, military authorities, representatives of three NGOs and journalists (p. 18).

Exceptions include the reporting in the book of the video-taped broadcast of a kidnapped American oil worker who pleaded for the plight of the people of the Niger Delta to be addressed as a matter of justice. I wish to flag up the relative erasure of the narratives of workers in the book as a loophole that could be filled by future researchers or during the anticipated follow-up by the author towards advancing, revising or challenging some of the arguments and conclusions in *Criminal Resistance? The Kidnapping of Oil Workers*. I also suspect that the relative neglect of the workers' perspectives may have resulted from the choice of theoretical frameworks that are eclectic while privileging the symbolic interactionist perspectives of Ervin Goffman and the interpretive perspective of Max Weber rather uncritically. In contrast, the author appeared reluctant to apply the historical materialist theory of social banditry, according to the Africa-born Eric Hobsbawm, even though it eventually formed the main explanations for kidnapping found in chapter seven. The author initially questioned its relevance in chapter two because of criticism that Hobsbawm restricted the

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concept to rural bandits even while predicting that social bandits would become more common in Africa whereas Oriola found that the Niger Delta insurgents operated in both rural and urban locations.

Theoretical Adequacy

Oriola's theoretical originality lies in the application of the theories of dramaturgy and the frame-making perspective (that were developed in micro or meso sociological studies of radically individualist Euro-American societies) to a macro sociology of power struggles with local and global implications in African societies that the author described as still 'very much communalistic'. The book is internally consistent to the extent that the author sticks with the chosen frameworks even after briefly considering competing perspectives. The difficulty with the chosen analytical frameworks, in my opinion, is that a less skillful writer could have ended up with ahistorical and disjointed analysis given that frame-making tends to focus on a bird's eye-view of one frame at a time and dramaturgy implies the beginning, climax and end of conflict whereas the historically specific nature of politically-motivated violence in Africa requires deeper social structural and more systemic analysis as opposed to the assumptions of 'social process'.

The question that arises for all African researchers is this; how suitable are theoretical perspectives developed for advanced capitalist societies in the West for the study of more agrarian societies in Africa? Oriola indirectly answered this question by borrowing metaphorical terms from his rich Yoruba vocabulary to explain the intricate Althusserian 'interpellation' of space and social process in the Niger Delta with implications for all and sundry. Perhaps the author should have considered the theory of African Fractals which has been found by Ron Eglash (*African Fractals: Indigenous Design and Modern Computer Engineering*), Abdul Bangura (*Fractal Complexity in the Works of Major Black Thinkers*), Horace Campbell (on the 2008 organization of Barack Obama's presidential campaign) and as illustrated in my conclusion to *Counter-Colonial Criminology* – as a common framework employed by Africans from multiple cultural backgrounds to emphasize the interconnectedness of society, culture and nature in contrast to the lineal analysis of much of Cartesian Eurocentric frameworks or paradigms.

Given the nature of the subject matter, I believe that a historical materialist approach synthesized with the African Fractals-influenced perspective of deconstruction (see Derrida's Africa centered *Specters Of Marx*) and chaos theory (as Hal Pepinsky attempted but without reference to the African roots in the *Geometry of Violence and Democracy*) could have complicated the analysis and raised more challenging implications of the study as Stephen Pfohl recommended (*Images of Deviance and Social Control*) than through the liberalist and apparently pluralist perspectives chosen for the analysis of what is obviously a systemic and post-structural violence presented as 'social processes'.

Policy Efficacy

How efficacious, policy-wise, can the conclusions and implications of the book be said to be? This is a question that haunts the reader right from the preface by Professor Patrick Bond where it was almost gleefully stated that the book proves that the ‘romanticization of non-violence’ by African scholars was debunked by the book. The author repeats this theoretical claim without endorsing it in the book and reports the belief of the insurgents that non-violence failed and so, presumably, violent armed struggles were more successful. I invite readers to engage the ex-insurgents in debates on this conclusion that the author stated alongside the views that contested the presumed efficacy of violence because violence deserves more explicit critique given the high frequency of futile violence throughout Africa:

First, the claim by ex-insurgents that non-violence has failed and by implication only violence led to their success appears spurious given that the history of Africa is enveloped in permanent violence since the intrusion of Arabs and Europeans starting with Trans Saharan and then Trans Atlantic slavery and continuing in the post-colonial situation under the domination of imperialism as Oriola himself pointed out and as Toyin Falola detailed in *Colonialism and Violence in Nigeria*. If violence is a successful strategy, then Nigeria would have since joined the ranks of developed democracies given its recent history of a genocidal war in which an estimated three million people were killed presumably to guarantee access to the oil of the Niger Delta for members of the ruling class. Another mentor of mine from the University of Calabar, Professor Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe (*Biafra Revisited*) never tires of reminding us that the Igbo genocide is the foundation of the genocidal state in post-colonial Africa. Similarly, the genocidal states in Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, and Congo have all failed to record significant success despite the abundance of violence and despotism. The failure of insurgent violence and violent military repression cannot be overemphasized but all Africans need to extend their concern to the poor throughout Africa who appear to be deliberately deprived of the benefits of modern education, healthcare and jobs in the midst of plenty of national resources. What the militants refer to as the failure of non-violence is the enduring reward for violence that originated since the slave raids and continues in the form of unearned income from lucrative oil blocs awarded to military commanders of the genocidal war against Eastern Nigerians and the award of contracts to insurgency commanders or their appointment to office as patronage while the masses of the people continue to suffer deprivation all over Nigeria.

Secondly, it is dubious to cite Fanon as an evangelist of violence because Fanon used his psychiatric skills to explain why people resort to violence under violent domination but not why they should do so. On the contrary, Fanon repeatedly pointed out the violent pitfalls of national consciousness by people who may fall upon each other and continue to kill even after the foreigner has been forced to withdraw. Fanon predicted this with specific reference to Ivory Coast and the

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country lived up to the prediction with the fanatical bloodthirsty ideology of *Ivorite* or the search for who is more purely Ivorian than others. Fanon saw violence more accurately as a sign of mental disorder displayed by the torture victim who runs down the street screaming that he was going to kill a settler with a kitchen knife only to be gunned down, on the one hand, and equally by the torturer who goes home after work to torture his wife and kids, on the other. What he offered was an explanation of violence and not a prescription of violence and he concluded by inviting us to find a different path that avoids the abomination of humanity everywhere by Europeans who were nevertheless tirelessly theorizing about humanism.

Had the insurgents adopted the African philosophy of non-violence they would not have resorted to the superstitious dehumanization of younger women who were expelled from their camps whenever they had their periods with the belief that such crude sexism was necessary to avoid polluting the 'warriors' who nevertheless welcomed post-menopausal women to come and 'fortify' them spiritually for victory and they told Oriola that rape was a 'rarity' in their struggle, whatever that means since any rape is one too many.

Ali Mazrui (1975) may have inadvertently validated the Eurocentric wanton adoration of militarism only five years after the genocidal war in Biafra while Africa was mostly under military dictatorships by positing that Africa was reviving a 'Warrior tradition' culture. He completely neglected the much more vibrant tradition of non-violence and participatory democracy that relatively survived European conquest and distortion even among the African Diaspora where Martin Luther King Jr. led a successful non-violent revolution while the Rasta philosophy of Peace and Love remains lively. Not surprisingly, Oriola found vocal condemnation of violence and kidnapping even by a major insurgent commander who complained that the tactic of kidnapping had been hijacked by purely criminal elements and rejected especially by communities that did not have a 'benevolent insurgent commander' who could rationalize such violence by providing infrastructures and patronage in the vacuum created by those that Fanon called the unproductive phantom Bourgeoisie of post-colonial Africa.

Contrary to the claim in the book that scholars are relatively silent on the efficacy of violent modes of struggle, left-wing scholars tend to romanticize violence to the extent of misreading Karl Marx as advocating only a bloody revolution without realizing that *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* was not a call for the establishment of an army and that Friedrich Engels stated in the preface to *Capital* that Marx saw England as having the possibilities for a non-violent revolution. Subsequently, the Bolshevik party of Lenin was officially called the Social Democratic Party and his answer to the question of *What Is To Be Done* was the establishment of a newspaper for the organization of the masses. Gramsci capped the much misrepresented Marxist tradition with the observation that even the ruling class cannot afford to dominate by force alone nor mainly by force but more commonly through coerced consent or hegemony – the very exact strategy through which the working class wins the support of other oppressed

classes, not by force or mainly by force but through intellectual and moral leadership - hegemony. Amilcar Cabral applied this in his national liberation war by emphasizing the need to understand that culture and even theory is a weapon in the struggle, not just militarism. Joe Slovo also defended the strategy of the national democratic revolution in South Africa against enthusiasts of militarism (who preferred to chant; one settler, one bullet) just as Lenin defended the strategies of social democracy and dismissed the militarists as people suffering from the infantile disorder of left-wing communism. Mao Tsetung suggested that the contradiction between violence and non-violence is a false contradiction because the response depends on the nature of the challenge posed. Malcolm X also stated that any means necessary was appropriate in the struggle for freedom but brother Malcolm used the means of intellectual and moral leadership himself, he never kidnapped or killed workers for ransom.

Finally, to answer the rhetorical question that Oriola posed with his very own title: *Criminal Resistance? The Kidnapping of Oil Workers*; the unambiguous answer is affirmatively yes; it is criminal to kidnap and kill workers and this cannot be justified with the claims to 'resistance.' It is completely reactionary violence to bomb citizens who were gathered to celebrate the independence day of their country and claim that the militants were doing so 'with due respect' because, in their view, there was nothing to celebrate. It is indeed criminal to bomb an oil refinery and kill or wound dozens of workers as one militant organization did while this review was being written at the end of October 2013. At the same time, MEND apologized for bombing oil pipelines and thereby spilling oil to pollute the environment that they claimed to be seeking to protect with questionable 'resistance' strategies. They were simply involved in what Oriola questioned as 'crass opportunism' designed to extort ransom payments from the state and from oil companies for the benefit of a few ethnic warlords who did not hesitate to collude with the state to eliminate scores of their own supporters who questioned their leadership style as some members of the community complained to Oriola during his courageous fieldwork.

Rather than be seduced by violence, readers of the book should also read Chinua Achebe (*There Was a Country*) who condemned the hostage-taking of Italian oil firm workers in Kwale as a tactical blunder by Biafran troops that cost them a lot of goodwill internationally. He called on all Africans to revive the greatest contribution of Africans to political strategy and philosophy – the discourse of Ubuntu or Mbari which Mahatma Gandhi claimed that he learned as non-violence from the war-like Zulu in South Africa. Martin Luther King Jr. echoed these thoughts in 1967 at the outbreak of the Biafra war which coincided with the climax of the Civil Rights Movement in America, the Vietnam War and the anti-apartheid movement, in three speeches on the theme of a 'World House'. According to him, distant relatives inherited a 'World House' and must learn to love peace and end violence before violence puts an end to them (*Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*). Oriola provides support for the viability of non-violence by reviewing the work of Christine Achebe on the peaceful role of

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Igbo women that helped to save more lives during the war but Oriola slanted this slightly to suggest that the women were participating in the conflict as part of 'a vastly important war machine' (p.119).

What the militants in the Niger Delta want more than anything else is a fair distribution of the revenues from oil and the protection of the environment but if these can be guaranteed by the Nigerian government and by the oil companies, there will be no question about the criminality of the kidnapping of workers for ransom, the killing of citizens with explosives or the damaging of the environment in the name of resistance. The late President Umaru Yaradua heeded this kind of logic by abandoning the militarist strategy of his predecessor, General Olusegun Obasanjo, whose security forces committed massacres in Odi in the Niger Delta and in Zaki Ibiyam in Benue State. Instead, Yaradua initiated the 50 billion Naira amnesty program for the rehabilitation of the ex-insurgents who gave up their arms. Such a program of reparative justice should be extended to the survivors of the mass violence by the state and insurgents alike by allocating generous resources as a fund for reparations for the continued killing by oil militants, Boko Haram terrorists, university cultists, professional kidnapers, and by the state all over the country. President Goodluck Jonathan announced in November 2013 that there would be no compensation for the victims of Boko Haram terrorism in order to avoid a 'slippery slope'.

Reparative justice can be partly achieved by setting aside at least 10% of the budget annually to be awarded to the citizens as grants for them to invest as they see fit while using the rest to develop basic infrastructures in the country rather than embezzle the bulk selfishly and use token sums to settle insurgent commanders. Nigerians should also look beyond their own ethnic interests and collectively demand that the Nigerian state should atone for the Igbo genocide that evidently brutalized the consciousness of the nation so much that the slaughter of students in their dormitories, the killing of worshippers or the kidnapping of babies and workers for ransom could be seen as legitimate. Reparations for the ravages of the slave raids should also be demanded.

The South American countries that followed the path of guerrilla warfare for decades have since transitioned power to the former rebels through the ballot while the violent method has achieved nothing in the Niger Delta except to force the release of one corrupt politician from detention or win the release of one insurgent commander from jail. Given the hundreds of billions that are annually allocated to the Niger Delta states by the Nigerian federation, the militants could democratically win control over such budgets and use them to transform their localities rather than encourage the kidnapping and killing of workers in Nigeria, including foreign employees of oil companies that they xenophobically call ATM but rarely kill unlike their Nigerian counterparts that tend to be wasted by their predatory abductors. The fact that they describe kidnapped workers as 'enemy combatants' is an indication of how much they mimic the ideologies of the global war on terror by the international community.

In the light of the recognition of the exceptional tolerance that Wole Soyinka (*Of Africa*) identified as exemplarily African, the Niger Delta ex-insurgents should renounce their past violent strategies against workers, go beyond their narrow focus on the Niger Delta and their utter neglect of the sufferings of other Nigerians in other parts of the country and embrace other Africans with whom we should unite to build a more viable Peoples Republic of Africa. They should desist from their inexcusable destruction of the environment as ‘collateral damage’ in the greed for ransom from oil companies and from the state just to enable a certain ‘Mr. Government’ to offer them patronage. They are capable of continuing to dish out charity from the profits of the pipeline security contracts that were awarded to them as part of the amnesty agreement.

They too should consider the non-violent strategy of Ken Saro-Wiwa Jr. and the Ogoni who successfully sued a major oil company in the US and won some damages but without taking workers hostage, bombing them or spilling oil through the inexcusable and irresponsible damaging of pipelines for profit. Kidnapping workers and killing some to extort ransoms is bad enough but to target the members of one of the most radical trade unions in Nigeria, National Union of Petroleum Energy and Gas employees, who paid huge prices for their opposition to military rule when most of the so-called militants were nowhere to be found, deserves to be condemned by scholar activists for the neo-fascist opportunism that it represents.

In Conclusion

This book, in short, demonstrates that there is no heroic exploit in exploitation – a term that is used interchangeably to refer to the extraction of natural resources and to the exploitation of workers in the English language. Oriola carefully avoids using the term, resource exploitation, preferring to talk about extraction while the villagers and ex-insurgents were more likely to call the spade of exploitation the spade of exploitation. The Canadian First Nation people, the Innu, also have a story that Joseph Campbell included in his classic, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, about the raven who tricked the native people and made them run away so that he could have the carcass of a whale cow all to himself. That was not heroic because the greedy raven could never consume all that meat by himself and would more likely watch the meat rot and waste to damage the environment or stuff himself into the chronic illnesses associated with ‘affluenza’ or excessive consumption.

The lesson of *Criminal Resistance*, as Kevin Haggerty, Oriola’s doctoral supervisor put it during the book launch, is that criminologists should not focus exclusively on street crimes when the macro analysis of political criminality could make more original contributions to knowledge. Furthermore, in my opinion, the ‘denouement’ that Ken Saro Wiwa warned against at his conviction and subsequent execution for the murders of Ogoni chiefs that he did not commit is also a self-fulfilling prophecy of the brutalization effect of capital punishment

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which tends to escalate violence than deter it wherever it is applied. Therefore the death penalty should be abolished across Africa especially given that the European colonial regimes that imposed the barbaric punishment on our people have since abolished it in their own countries. In spite of a damning report by Amnesty International in October 2013 to mark the international day for the abolition of capital punishment, Nigeria under a president from the Niger Delta (where Adaka Boro was once sentenced to death for their cause but narrowly got reprieved), Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, was pursuing the resumption of capital punishment instead of joining the enlightened world to abolish the barbaric punishment that apparently contributes to the normalization of structural violence in Nigeria.

The book convincingly demonstrates that the kidnappers of oil workers were reacting against the structural violence visited upon them by the state and by the oil companies. This review essay concludes that violence against workers and against the environment is a contribution to the perpetuation of the structural violence rather than part of the solution. The solution may lie in the African philosophy of non-violence through peaceful democratic struggles to win political mandate over the huge budgets that are allocated by the state and use the resources to advance education, healthcare and infrastructural development. Efforts should also be made to unify the people of Africa across colonial boundaries and use the will of the people to persuade the state and the mining companies to devote 10% of their budgets towards grants for all Africans to start up their own enterprises. Finally, the power of the people will hold public office holders more accountable for the public funds they embezzle across Africa.

In this Volume

In keeping with this broad Pan Africa vision of our journal, I am pleased to introduce the diverse contributions of intellectually stimulating articles in this volume from all parts of the African world, starting with the Sixth Region of the African Union Commission – the African Diaspora. In 'Happy Kwanzaa?', Natasha Pratt-Harris compared the family backgrounds of Black Male college graduates with the family backgrounds of black males released from prison and found that they did not differ much in the frequency of single parent female-headed homes. Where they differed slightly was with reference to their identification with some of the seven principles of Kwanzaa, a Pan African cultural celebration with emphasis on collective work, unity and the communal sharing of resources. The irony is that Kwanzaa originated in Africa but is almost exclusively celebrated in the Diaspora today. The African Union Commission should proclaim this holiday across Africa and use its principles to re-emphasize the non-violent culture of education, peace and love for collective emancipation as an alternative to the mass incarceration of our youth at home and abroad.

Samuel Aronson follows this with an analysis of the historical and contemporary causes of terrorism in Kenya but without reference to the history of the terrorization of the people by the British colonial administration for which the

British government recently offered an apology and some compensation to the survivors. He suggests measures like the strengthening of law enforcement and the securing of the borders with the help of the international community. He also called for the ‘winning of the hearts and minds’ of Muslims by including Islamic scholars in national leadership rather than repressing them as terrorism suspects. This editorial suggests instead that a focus beyond the colonial boundaries of any state in the African Union and the replacement of the militaristic solutions preferred by the Western international community would help Africans eradicate the threat of terrorism through non-violent approaches.

Also in this volume is an article by Ogubazghi and Andemariam on how to integrate ‘Eritrean Customary Law’ into more just sentencing of convicted offenders in Eritrea and in other countries. This editorial serves to warn Africans to be wary of retaining European colonial principles of ‘just desert’ in preference to the more common African principles of reparations, peacemaking, forgiveness, love and mercy.

Additionally in this volume, Radda and Ndubeuze analyzed a survey on the fear of online victimization by Nigerian undergraduate students and suggested ways to reassure the public of safety while using the newly introduced online banking or ‘cashless economy’ that people take for granted in other parts of the world in spite of the risks of online fraud.

Smith and Hamilton contribute a quantitative analysis of the social capital concept of trust in South Africa to show its implications for the perception of public safety. While they recognize the originality of their study as an attempt to apply the concept of social capital to South Africa for the first time, they imply that a superficial correlation between social capital and perceptions of crime should not blind us to the fact that the residues of apartheid continue to haunt the country and that this structural problem should not be blamed on the absence of social capital but should be addressed urgently.

Yekini and Salisu contribute a review of the law providing for probation as an alternative to imprisonment in Nigeria. They recommend that administrative support should be provided for the extension of the measure beyond juveniles to adult offenders if only to reduce the huge fifty billion naira correctional budget while also doing a better job of reforming offenders who tend to be hardened by prison experiences.

This editorial implicitly supports the call for the abolition of the prison (except for violent offences) because the repressive fetish of imprisonment was imposed in Africa by colonizers. I suggest a return to the non-violent methods of resolving disputes in African cultures. The abolition of the death penalty will also help to reduce the brutalization of the conscience of Africans and encourage non-violent ways of resolving disputes in the community.

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We round off this volume with another contribution from a part of the multicultural African Diaspora. Sumter and Turner offer an exploration of the needs of prison inmates who were being prepared for re-entry into the society. Although they refer to the inmates as 'offenders', readers are encouraged to see them simply as inmates given that being in prison is no proof that the individual is an offender. Many poor innocent people do end up in prison for crimes they did not commit. And given that the authors indicated that up to 60% of the inmates admitted using drugs before their incarceration, it could be the case that they were incarcerated for drugs-related offences and so if those drugs were not illegal, perhaps they would not be in prison in the first place. The paper indicates that the greatest reentry needs of the inmates were employment and education opportunities. I call on the people of Trinidad and Tobago (among whom I lived and worked for three fruitful years) to consider abolishing prison sentences for non-violent offences, to legalize drugs and to turn the prisons into educational institutions especially because education is funded at all levels by the government through public funds and without tuition fees. That way fewer people will end up in prison and those that are incarcerated for violent offences will be given proper education to understand that violence does not pay and that non-violence is the road to success in life.

Finally, Agozino paid a tribute to Nelson Mandela for his contributions to the decolonization perspective in criminology as part of the struggle for human freedom.

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