

**Rationale for Critical Pedagogy of Decolonization: Kenya as a Unit of  
Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

In December 2007, political violence erupted in Kenya after a general election. Both Kenya and the international community were confronted with the question as to why citizens of a hitherto peaceful nation would engage in acts of hooliganism and violence after exercising a democratic right in a national election. This paper examines how new imperialism interacts with the structures of what one may refer to as classic imperialism to reveal the complexity of identity and ethnic politics, which are largely rooted in the intersection between decolonization processes, and hegemony of global capitalism in the daily lives of ordinary people. It contends that imperialism as we knew it in early 20<sup>th</sup> century may have passed, but empire is alive and resurgent, carving a new economic, cultural, and political globalized order. The paper draws from the recent social and political development in Kenya to highlight how the pedagogical structures are deeply implicated in the reproduction of colonial hegemonies. It argues that although Kenyans would like to think that their country is safe from violence witnessed elsewhere in Africa, the recent violence indicates that there may be no country in Africa that is immune to factors that induce violence. Thus, pedagogy of decolonization broadly interpreted should be deployed in the production of knowledge, social identities, and social relations to challenge practices that inform all cultural sites, thus making the pedagogical more political (Giroux, 1997).

## **Introduction**

When a former colonial subject appears to condemn colonialism and imperialism there is often an underlying suspicion and, even mockery that the native is just preoccupied with capitalist and Eurocentric oppression or has a “romantic nostalgia of communities past” (Dirlik, 1997 p. 98). These views often silence any attempt for native or indigenous people to claim a space in which they can develop a sense of self-definition. But as Lissovoy (2003) suggests, for a people to transform colonized views of their histories and develop a sense of authenticity, they should tell their stories from their social locations as colonial subjects and not from some theories and points of views that

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continue to alienate them. In the following pages, I draw on the insights of Lissovoy (2003), Smith (1999), Bush (1999 & 2006), Harvey (2003 & 2005) to analyze the possible underlying causes of violence that characterized the aftermath of the Kenya December, 2007 elections. This paper does not only show that the violence and the underlying discontent are implicated in colonialism and imperialism, but also it attempt to tease out how sovereign people may challenge colonial mentality and its consequences by examining and critiquing the current social practices and discourses.

The central focus of this paper is to examine prevailing ideas, views, and theoretical models, however there is some empirical drawn from commissioned report on the Kenya electoral violence (Waki, McFadyen, & Kambale, 2008), personal accounts collated from eye witnesses, personal experience as an insider, newspaper accounts that support arguments and positions taken in the descriptive and explanatory accounts. I explore the three main factors and providing their historical contexts in the background section of the paper. The three factors explored are: classic colonialism and imperialism that became the fact of lives for Kenyans in the early part of the twentieth century, the colonial school and its role in the reproduction of the elite in the postcolonial state, and finally globalization and the neoliberal policies that inform and sustain it. Consistent with the three factors, I outline the historical and social context upon which they interact with local and imperial discourses. I argue that it is at the intersection of these factors and the local knowledges and identities that violence which enveloped Kenya after December 27, 2007 was most intense. Although I did not undertake an original empirical study for this paper, I have constructed meanings and frames of reference in my arguments and discussion, and therefore I cannot justifiably remain an outsider in the topics and issues that I raise, discuss, and critique so I provide a space for author's reflexivity. This reflexive standpoint is in line with 'dialogic approach' where meanings in diverse voices about colonialism, pedagogy, postcolonial, neo-liberalism and new imperialism are expanded (Gergen and Gergen, 1991).

### **Reflexivity and the author's voice**

I write this paper from the social location of an "insider" and an "outsider". I was born and brought up in Kenya. In the early 1960s and 70s, I went through the primary

and secondary school system in Kenya. I completed my undergraduate education at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. After completing my studies at Makerere, I went back home and taught at a high school for 15 years. In the early 1990s, I came to the United States to study. Currently, I teach at a teacher preparation college in the United States. I visit Kenya every year. Insights from these experiences frame my insider perspective.

I also view myself as an outsider because I do not live Kenya realities on a daily basis. I use a scholar's gaze to view the events that I write about from a distance and from the social location of an educator. I would argue that the "outsider" perspective sharpens my critique of Kenya's education system so I do not look at Kenya's social and government structures as neutral or as the "way things are" as I used to do in the past but rather as a phenomena that should be subject to interrogation and critical reflection.

## **Background**

The classic colonial power brought into existence most countries in Africa including Kenya. However, historians fail to highlight that this East African country became a British colony for less than 50 years (1920-1963). This means after forty three years of colonial rule Kenya was expected to be a full fledged modern multi-ethnic nation. It is incredible how over 40 disparate ethnic groups were expected to somehow internalize a wide range of knowledges, discourses, social relations, and institutions modeled after their colonial master, to become a democratic nation-state ((Harvey, 1996). Far from suggesting that Kenya should have been colonized for a longer period, my argument is that it took Europe over three hundred years (1500-1800) for ideas and ideologies that culminated into modern states to develop and solidify (Tarnas, 1991); building modern nation-states in Africa should have been viewed as projects that required extended time for African people to learn, if they wanted to, ideas of democracy, enlightenment, and modernization. Obviously, if this had happened it is likely Africans may have created nation-states different from the models imported from Europe and North America. However, in the urgency to produce nation-states, the complexity and contradictions embedded in linguistic and cultural differences of the native people were ignored. In this quick haste, how could new leaders address the effects of the divide and

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rule policies used by the colonial powers? As Mamdani (1996) argues, divide and rule policies entrenched in the colonial Native Authorities produced tribalism. To effectively carry out the divide and rule practices, distrust and suspicion among different ethnic groups were legitimized and used as tools to disrupt and subvert any cooperation these ethnic groups may have instigated against the oppression of the colonial rule. However, the distrust and suspicion that was embedded in the daily lives of people did not suddenly disappear after independence. In a situation where there were no social structures to interrogate and critically think about relationships between different ethnic groups, divisions and suspicions only simmered and seethed to the extent that today they inform social and political contexts. Perhaps, at independence in 1963, for example, Kenyan leaders imagined that forty disparate ethnic groups would magically work together now that they were in an independent nation-state. As it turns out, neglecting the level of hatred produced by the divide and rule policies did not bode well for the new nation-states; it has become increasingly clear that psychological and sometimes physical boundaries are enduring and are revived time and time again in the politics of the African nation-states. The case of Rwanda should leave no doubt that ethnic strife and other psychological boundaries between ethnic groups may have grave consequences.

In the socio-political context of Kenya, major political parties emerge from affiliation to one or several ethnic groups. You can predict which ethnic group a person belongs perhaps 90% of the time upon knowing their political parties. It is not ideology or the politics of left and right that inform political parties or the social-political contexts. It is therefore a political joke when the 'international community' observes and analyzes the voting process and democracy in some situations. In fact, the discourse of voting and democracy appear to legitimize the below the surface suspicion and hatred. In almost all cases "imagined" international community never interrogates the formation of the political parties and the motives that inform the larger socio-political context. This leaves the major task of constructing the Kenya identity to the natives themselves.

Suspicion and distrust between ethnic groups was not the sole spectacle that was discounted in the construction of nation-states; also overlooked was a thoughtful and critical examination of how the native people had learned to be colonial subjects. Smith's (1999) critical pedagogy of decolonization is a process of analyzing the psychological

and physical forces that subverted the minds of the natives; it is also the idea that formerly colonized people needed to learn or perhaps to unlearn the knowledge that produced them as colonial subjects. Critical pedagogy of decolonization demonstrates that the formal processes of handing over instruments of government to newly independent states are short and ceremonial occasions and that these occasions do not divest the colonial power. This calls for recognition of decolonization as a long process involving the divesting of bureaucratic, cultural, and psychological impact of the colonial power. I argue for a critical pedagogy of decolonization that would provide a space to interrogate the silenced effects of divide and rule policies and the current ethnically divided socio-political contexts.

I take the position that after the instruments of power were handed to a new Kenyan government on December 12, 1963, it was the responsibility of the African leadership to design ways of stripping colonial power structurally and psychologically. It is doubtful that the first crop of Kenya's leaders understood the damage that had been done to their minds and the minds of their people during colonialism. As we shall see later in the paper, the colonial education system was designed to be an instrument for colonizing and not liberating minds. However, the leaders who took the reins of power after independence inadvertently interpreted the colonial education system as a neutral tool for enlightening people. They saw no need therefore to critically rethink schools as sites for liberating the minds of natives from colonial hegemonies and from what Fanon (1986) described as pathological sense of longing and admiration in Africans for things European. Ideas from the West were not critically examined or questioned; rather they were indiscriminately integrated into the education system for Kenyan youth. This is to argue that educational goals remained structurally the same as those established in the 1930s by the foreign missionaries in collaboration with the colonial government (Bagunywa, 1980).

The economic scene was not different; our leaders listened to the sermons of Bretton Wood's institutions and became converts. There were massive development plans in every government department produced through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financing. First of all, the Bretton Woods institutions gathered economic data from around the globe to rationalize international aid programs,

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foreign investment, and development plans of individual countries (Staples, 2006). This data normalized development and progress discourses and served as mechanism of control of the population in the newly independent countries. The objective data, the bankers argued, could make better-informed decisions about development programs because it removed the subjective element from its decision-making process. In some way, Governments of the newly independent African states inadvertently accepted the World Bank's unswerving faith in the promise of Enlightenment rationality that was going to rescue the world from poverty, superstition, ignorance, and suffering (Giroux, 2003).

It is reasonable to argue that the ideologies of the Bretton Wood institutions prepared former colonies to believe that progress depended on the positivist view of the world; a world that celebrate facts that can be measured, expressed, and calculated in precise mathematical formulas. In the mire of positivism, the elite in these newly independent countries compromised the power of imagination and critical thought. They ignored reflective practices that give prominence to the power of imagination. Without power of imagination, the African leaders (including Kenya's leaders) took IMF and World Bank at their word and waited to see how the sound development plans would bring their populations out of grinding poverty and misery. How would the World Bank executives have known the lives of native people without hearing their subjective voices and their stories? In there a possibility that the imposition of foreign values stripped away the traditionally established concept of having a voice? How then did some people come to believe anything from the West suggested development and progress? The promised development plans did not influence any change for the benefit of the majority of Kenyan people. Today, the wealthy 10% of Kenyans control 70% of the national income, while the poorest 40% percent control a paltry 2 percent (Kathuri, 2004) thanks to the neo-liberal theories advocated by the IMF and the World Bank with the backing of the US treasury.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank laid the foundation for future neoliberal project that emerged and was promoted by the financial press in the early 1970s (Harvey, 2005) as a necessity. Neoliberalism feeds into what Tikly (2004) and Harvey (2003) describe as new imperialism. New imperialism undermines

sovereignty of low income countries. While the classic imperialism used political, diplomatic, and military strategies to assert its interests in the world at large, new imperialism is presented as the incorporation of countries formerly subject to older forms of European imperialism into a new regime of global governance which serves to secure interests of the USA, its western allies, and global capitalism. New imperialism is a subtle form of domination and control under a 'notional' recognition of the sovereignty. The term notional is deliberate as the recent military intervention and occupation of Iraq in the name of war on terror appear to override the principle of national sovereignty (Tikly, 2004). Citing Hannah Arendt, Harvey (2003) argues that “if...any hegemon ...is to maintain its position in relation to endless capital accumulation; [it] must endlessly extend, expand, and intensify its power. Thus, to maintain an endless capital accumulation in the imperial center, new imperialism maintains notational sovereignty of former colonies using International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank as world financial cops.

Said (1993) defines classic imperialism as the practice, theory, and the attitude of dominating metropolitan center ruling in a distant territory. Bush (1999) argues that when creating the idea of Africa, two myths shaped the European’s vision: first, Africa was primitive and secondly it was Europe’s mission to intervene in that ‘heart of darkness.’ Therefore, intervention involved coercing Africans into subservience for their own ‘good.’ The critical question to ask in the next section is: What good did European vision for ordinary Kenyan peasant?

### **Classic colonialism and the violence in Kenya**

The story of classic imperialism and colonialism in this section is narrated from the perspective of a native in order to highlight the direct link between the European settlers' greed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the violence that enveloped Kenya after the December 2007 elections.

To discuss the effect of classic colonialism on the daily lives of native people, I focus on the Kikuyu people. The Kikuyu are a Bantu speaking ethnic group that occupy central Kenya and has occupied Kenya’s political scene since the arrival of the first European settlers. In 1895, Thomas Watson of the Church of Scotland Mission went



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through the Kikuyu country and found much cultivation. Watson is said to have remarked that trying to acquire land from the Kikuyu would constitute a lot of trouble because to him all the land in the Kikuyu country (central Kenya) was owned by one or more natives (Sorrenson, 1968). Similarly, Lugard arrived at Dagoretti (near Nairobi) in 1890 and was immediately “struck by the density of Kikuyu cultivations” (p. 32). As if to reinforce the idea of Kikuyu attachment to land, Leakey (2007) reports how Von Hohnel and his caravan were anxiously looking for food when they entered Kikuyu country in 1887. However, upon contacting the Kikuyu people the caravan found no need to be anxious about provisions because they were able to buy food for several months in a very short time. These stories highlight the negative impact that the loss of land to European settlers was likely to have had on the Kikuyu people. Besides losing sustenance, most Kikuyu in particularly Kiambu district also lost the fundamentals of culture, identity, and memories linked to the places they called home (Harvey, 1996). Indeed, each clan or lineage of the Kikuyu had an elaborate system that established ownership over a defined portion of land. The boundary of each plot (githaka) was well known to lineage members.

Sorrenson (1968) depicts the determination of Sir Eliot, a new commissioner for East African Protectorate in 1901, to encourage the settlement of Europeans in the part of the protectorate which became Kenya colony. Although Eliot was so determined to establish the European settlements, he did not make prior arrangement to survey land. In total disregard of the indigenous people and their human rights, Eliot allocated land to settlers contingent on examination and identification of land for the Kikuyu people. His decision created confusion in which many settlers were allocated land that belonged to the Kikuyu.

The commissioners who took office after Eliot did not try to alleviate the oppression and suffering of the Kikuyu. Indeed, Sir Belfield accepted 999 years lease demanded by settlers in August 1913 and also removed all restriction against land accumulation. He refused to accept native people's proposal for land allocation and was “unconvinced that the Kikuyu were ever in possession of areas disposed to the white settlers” (Sorrenson, 1968 p. 188). Belfield also concluded it was unnecessary to pay Kikuyu more than the traditional compensation of Rs. 2 per acre for standing crops. This

compensation did not include land that was not under cultivation. As Mignolo (1994) argues, people without writing were people without history and people without history were inferior human beings. To Belfield, the Kikuyu were an inferior people and he felt no obligation to listen to the oral history of their elaborate land tenure. Perhaps Belfield and Eliot's attitudes and behavior were influenced by a common perception that Africans were a huge, incomprehensible, vaguely menacing black mass (Bush, 1999).

After the unfair allocations of land to settlers, a fury of activities followed to allocate the landless mass to what the colonialists defined as reserves. Foreign laws and ordinances that did not respect the traditional land tenure were randomly imposed on the natives. So after 1915, the Crown Lands Ordinances made it less of a "possibility that there would be a successful Kikuyu action over land in the courts (Sorrenson, 1968 p. 189)". In law, all Africans became tenants at will of the British Crown. Some of the people whose parents and grandparents lost land were forced by circumstances to settle as squatters in the European farms; most of these farms were located in the Rift Valley province of Kenya. It is important to note that the Rift Valley was ancestral land of other ethnic groups including the Masai, and the Kalenjin. A Mr. Koinange, a Kikuyu leader, captures the essence of the migration of Kikuyu to the Rift Valley in his 1914 petition to the crown for the return of his family's land. He wrote that some of his people had gone to Njoro in Rift Valley because they had no place to cultivate (Sorrenson, 1968). The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the migration of thousands of young Kikuyu to Rift Valley looking for work on the European farms (Kanogo, 1987). Central and Rift Valley Provinces are not just geographical names on a map, they denote strong emotional attachment to the land for the people who claim each as their ancestral land. As Harvey (1996) notes, Native Americans understanding of the physical world constituted the understanding of themselves, therefore land loss was equivalent to losing identity. The story of Native Americans reflects what happened to the ethnic groups displaced in Kenya.

Some of the Kikuyu people or their descendants who were forced to go to the Rift Valley by settlers were more likely re-victimized in the recent post-election violence. In Waki et al (2008), the report commissioned by government on political violence contains chilling personal stories of victims that underline the nature of ethnic hatred and strife in Kenya. The personal story of an elderly Kikuyu man Joseph Mwangi Macharia (Karobe)

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depicts what may be described as ethnic cleansing at its worst. This incident took place in Uasin Gishu district in the Rift valley province. The Waki report (2008,) underlines how Mwangi “watched seven members of his family being hacked to death – his wife, three sons (aged 36, 33, and 23), one daughter (aged 25), a grandson (aged 6) and a granddaughter (aged 6) (p. 44)” To summarize Mwangi’s story, on the night of December 31, 2007, a crowd of forty young Kalenjin men among them his neighbors arrived at his homestead and demanded five heads. As Mwangi pleaded for mercy, one of the young thugs struck his son on the chest with a club and another shot him with an arrow as he tried to escape. His other son had his throat slit open with a spear. The rest of the family tried to hide inside the house but all was in vain because the thugs easily broke in and killed them all including two six year-olds. Mwangi escaped the massacre by running into a nearby bush, where, he watched his house burn.

The report adds that members of communities perceived to be both foreigners in the Rift Valley and P.N.U.( this acronym stands for Party of National Unity, a predominantly Kikuyu political party to which the then President Mwai Kibaki was affiliated) sympathizers were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the violence and the numbers of the attackers. The incident that caught the attention of the world is when thugs similar to those which killed Mwangi’s family, entered a church where mostly Kikuyu men and children were huddled and set it ablaze on January 1, 2008. These people had sought refuge at the church after their village of Kimuri was set ablaze (Waki Report, 2008).

It may be true some Kikuyu people may have acquired land in Uasin Gishu district illegally, but it is also likely some people killed in the violence migrated to Rift Valley from central province as squatters of the European farms in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This links classic colonialism directly with the recent post-election violence in Kenya. Some of the media stories appear to suggest “a democratic country” had suddenly sunk into a pre-modern village mentality where ethnic identities trumped the Kenyan identity. The more critical reflection, I think, is to evaluate whether people from different ethnic groups had ever attained an authentic Kenyan identity. Further, the critical question to interrogate, as educators and as members of the civil society, is why after 50 years of independence, Kenyan identity is so illusive.

From the ashes of colonial oppression a multi-ethnic nation called Kenya emerged. During the short period of colonialism, displaced natives were more likely to be on survival mode; and not sitting in a lecture hall learning western knowledge of democracy and the strategies of building a multi-ethnic nation-state. When Kenya became an independent nation in 1963, the native people were thrust into situations and responsibilities that were not clearly and critically reflected upon. How were well over 40 ethnic groups expected to subjugate their ethnic ties and subjectivities to create a multi-ethnic nation-state? How were they to deal with arbitrary boundaries drawn across their lands? Most importantly, how were they going to heal from colonial scourge of divide and rule policies? It is clear Kenyans had not worked through these challenges themselves. Building the Kenyan identity has to be the sole responsibility of Kenyans. Unfortunately, my literature research does not reveal any theoretical framework or project for critically building Kenya as a nation-state devoid of hatred and suspicion across party (read ethnic) lines. Schools and other educational institutions could have been centers of imagining a new Kenyan identity through critical reflection. A critical reflection in schools and other civil organizations should have helped Kenyan interrogate what they were becoming. However, as we shall see in the next section of this paper, people charged with the responsibilities were colonial subjects who failed to question the colonial mentality that had constructed their lives. Thus school objectives in the independent nation-state remained more or less as those established in the colonial school.

Despite the account I describe above, it has increasingly become fashionable for Africa's top intellectuals to tell their fellow Africans to quit blaming colonialism and imperialism for their troubles today. For the most part I agree with this argument, after all Africans should solve their problems. However, using Smith (1999) rationale for critical pedagogy of decolonization, Africa's intellectuals and politician sit on the laurels of the *order* constituted in the colonialism and imperialism even as they condemn those who mention colonialism in any discourse. According to Smith, pedagogy of decolonization is a program of complete *disorder*. She contends that native and indigenous people need to critically examine the deep structures of cultural sites such as schools, legal procedures, appropriation of sovereignty, trade and so forth, because these

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sites regulate and legitimize imperial designs. In Kenya, there is a critical need to critically examine and unearth historical strategies of land allocation beginning with the land lost to colonialists in central Kenya. A national forum about fairness and justice of this issue is necessary, certainly, as mentioned in Smith (1999); however this would be an exercise in disorder because it is an uncomfortable discourse especially for those who benefited unfairly in the allocation of land after independence.

### **Pedagogy of decolonization**

Smith (1999) also frames the pedagogy of decolonization as the moment native or indigenous people come to know their past from their perspective. This process transforms the colonized views of their histories as written by the West. I use Smith's description of pedagogy of decolonization to highlight how the colonial education failed to liberate students from a colonized view of the world. Acquisition of the dependent view may have been an objective during the colonial period; however this view still persists long after Kenya's independence. The struggle for independence suggests that native people were eager to throw away the legacy of oppression and denigration; however, after the ceremonial handover of power from the British, the leaders did not turn their attention to what the colonial oppression had done to the minds of the leaders and the people.

The concept 'pedagogy of decolonization' adopted in this paper suggests the broader definition of pedagogy often used to address how the production of knowledge, social identities, and social relations might challenge practices that inform a variety of cultural sites, including but not limited to the public and private spheres of schooling (Giroux, 1997). Thus, education must be understood as producing not only knowledge but also political subjects. Rather than rejecting the language of politics, critical pedagogy of decolonization in this context links public education to the imperatives of critical democracy (Giroux, 1991). I do not think in the present day Africa, we have the luxury of separating the pedagogical from the political if we have to imagine transforming areas ravaged by chaos of war and conflict from Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo and other places on the continent. In Africa, it is as if the

pedagogical is political, and the political pedagogical by default. The main question is: where does this enormous task begin?

Colonialism involved control of the mind of the subordinated in an imperative to “civilize” and keep them in a perpetual state of psychological subordination. While physical controls of territories may have ended after independence, the process of colonial cultural production and psychologization persisted. (Kanu, 2006). To defeat colonial cultural production, Smith (1999) reckons that there is need for indigenous people “to decolonize [our] minds, to recover ourselves, to claim a space in which to develop a sense of authentic humanity” (p.23). The assumption that formerly colonized people may be inauthentic is the most intense indictment of a dependent mentality. Thus, a colonial or a dependent mentality is a form of a psychological blinder which hinders critical and reflective thought through which people may discover and interrogate subjectivities produced by colonization. Mamdani (1996) explains that colonial rule sorted people into Native Authorities to enforce customs through customary law. The the State enforcement tended to rob a native custom its diversity, to homogenize it, and to equate it with the boundaries of a tribe. Thus, tribalism “was the very form that colonial rule took within the local state...the customary form of the local state made for a simultaneous reproduction of ethnic identities in the tribally based system...” (p. 183). Although this phenomenon was widespread why then after the December 2007 elections ethnic groups namely the Luo, the Kikuyu, the Kalenjin, and the Masai blamed each other instead of condemning the process that produced and reinforced tribalism? Do the natives even know that tribalism was originally another person’s project? Had they ever employed reflective and critical thought about the colonial experience through pedagogy of decolonization to understand their ethnic subjectivities? If Kenyans have this knowledge through education and other avenues it may soften and temper blame games that exacerbate into murder and savagery against people of the “wrong” tribes.

According to Smith (1999), pedagogy of decolonization demands that “we have an analysis of how we were colonized, of what that has meant in terms of our immediate past and what it means for our present and future (p. 24). People in Kenya's villages and towns continue to live their lives without resolving issues pertaining to identities

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fragmented and fractured by colonial oppression. There are scholars who think that it is time to move on and ignore the subjectivities produced by colonialism. Those who subscribe to the ideology that people should ignore the subjectivities produced by colonialism should reflect on the violence of 2007-2008 in Kenya. Kenya's colonial history is a critical issue that should be used as tool for interrogating our identities; thus we cannot afford to ignore it. Colonial history is written in the very code of schooling and education; thus we can only ignore this fact at our peril.

I use Sicherman's (1995) description of schooling at Alliance High School and at Makerere University College to uncover the experiences of the civilizing mission and its consequent production of colonial or dependent mentality in educational structures. Sicherman writes "the present paper examines the mental subversion of Ngugi and his fellow students by the higher education system in late colonial East Africa" (p. 12). I favor Ngugi's story because as a renowned Kenyan author he experienced mental subversion and has written about it in his work.

Ngugi (1986) explains how colonial education failed to link African languages, thought, and lived experiences, a process that irrevocably broke the harmony between thought, language, and environment for African students. Thus colonial education process disassociated a native student's sensibility from the natural and social environments. To make it worse, a colonial student also internalized images of his world as mirrored in the written language of the colonizer as "slow status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow footed intelligence, and downright stupidity...non-intelligibility" (p. 18). We make ourselves in the world according to the way we have learned to think about society and our place in it. Students spend a lot of their waking hours in school and if their society is depicted as worthless and inferior what knowledge does a student have to mediate a positive construction of her society? According to Ngugi, colonial students learned to look down upon their authentic knowledge and the language that produced it; they also acquired a positive outlook of the knowledge obtained at school. The final triumph of the system of domination is when the dominated start singing the virtues of the dominating discourses as when a slave loses the knowledge of being a slave (Ngugi, 1986; Shengold, 1989).

Ngugi graduated from the Alliance High School where “religion was central” (Sicherman, 1995 p. 14). Gutkind & Wallerstein (1985) argue that religion in the school context was a vehicle for indoctrinating the colonized into a cult of subservience. People could not be mobilized into colonial politics and they could not effectively wage war against colonialism so long as they were burdened by any sense of inferiority. The school systematically conditioned students to dissociate themselves from the very people who had brought them up. Instead of enlightening and liberating the minds and hearts of the African elite, education at Alliance High School and Makerere was a traumatic experience that resulted in emotional deprivation or “soul mutilation” (Sicherman, 1995 citing Shengold, 1989 ). Makerere and Alliance were synonymous with the best and brightest students; the graduates of these schools produced the elite who took up leadership positions in the independent Kenya. However, I argue, through the elite, colonial education was (re)produced in schools across Kenya and possibly across East and Central Africa the region from where Makerere students were drawn.

How did Makerere and Alliance produce mental subversion? Ngugi joined the English Department at Makerere University College in late 1950s. First of all, the English department curriculum was largely irrelevant to realities of the African students because it was composed of acknowledged Western classics implying that all western writing was great. The focus on Western classics discouraged any challenges to the British cultural hegemony by distracting attention from East African communitarian traditions (Sicherman, 1995). Sicherman cites Rubadiri's analogy that a Makerere education was a 'pot plant' able to grow in its confined boundary, but failed to take root and nourishment from mother earth itself. The curriculum excluded the verbal art most familiar to East African culture evidenced at funerals, political platforms, by the fireside during the moonlight dances, and at weddings.

Regurgitation of facts and ideas were as prevalent at Makerere as they were in classrooms across East African. After the regurgitation of facts students went through a “filtering process” that selected very few students from “thousands... discarded during the rough and almost arbitrary sequence of examinations” (Sicherman, 1995 p. 31). Although the colonial filtering process is described here in the past tense, this system has yet to change, thousands of students in Kenyan schools today are still sorted yearly



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through an examination machine that constructs many students as dropouts and only a few are selected to join higher education institutions. To uphold colonial structures of education, Kenya and Uganda maintained a close link with Cambridge Overseas School Certificate Examinations even after these countries became independent states (Bagunywa, 1980).

The high school curriculum should have radically changed to enable students to critically link thoughts, language, and authentic knowledge about their communities; unfortunately school curriculum remained as disconnected from lived realities of students after independence as it was in the pre-independence days. Perhaps this is how the “colonial legacy worked its way back to the imperial center” (Tikly, 1999). How much of a school and cultural transformation could Alliance High School and Makerere graduates be expected to undertake in Kenya and anywhere else in East and Central Africa? Education in these schools constructed colonial subjects; thus, education was not perceived as tool for critical interrogation of the world. Following Berlin (1996), school curriculum undertook the creation of consciousness and became a device for encouraging the production of a certain kind of graduate. In this sense, graduates of Alliance High School and Makerere University College reproduced their identities and subjectivities in the independent states of East Africa after they returned to their home countries to develop the post-colonial states. I cannot recall any critical reflection about colonial education; I was fascinated to learn the Scottish folk dances and Shakespeare. I do not recall any comparison that was made between the foreign knowledge with the indigenous knowledge. I would argue that although there have been some changes in the curriculum lately; there is still a lot that needs to be done.

Kenyan education is based on high stakes testing following the colonial school model. Examinations are still giant sorting machines. In this high stakes testing environment students and teachers are monitored and scrutinized by a testing body so that “no one dares deviate from the approved behaviors” (Graham & Neu, 2004 p. 306). Students learn to sit still at a desk for hours each day and to listen to their teachers who reveal the secrets of how to pass the Kenya Secondary Certificate Examination (KSCE) tests. Consequently, a cottage industry of coaching students how to pass these tests has been established everywhere in Kenya. In the end, the education system produces not

just graduates but docile and governable citizens. This examination – driven curriculum cannot develop students with a critical sense of their world (Wrigley, 2007) and so when students react against this system increasingly through violence and riots in secondary schools, Kenyans are stupefied, they fail to understand why students do not want to comply with their teachers in exchange for valued scores and grades of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KSCE). The education these students receive is therefore neither transformative nor emancipatory. In fact, as Tikly(1999) observes “in many parts of the colonized world, governments are still grappling with highly contested and complex process of developing curricula that are suited to the cultures and histories of local populations” (p. 613). In Kenya, students endure regurgitation of facts and high stakes testing with little opportunity to develop a critical view of their world or the world of the other.

Europeanizing of the students had been a goal of educators in East Africa acting on the premise that European civilization was the highest known scheme of relationships. As Sicherman (1995) reports, the consequences of this goal were far reaching. Students at Makerere's English department felt inferior to the only beings that seemed to matter – their European teachers. These students bent over backwards to understand the nuances of western values and struggled to unpack the conversational etiquette when they interacted with their teachers. In the end, a Makerere education produced young Africans ashamed of their ethnicity and also very sensitive to European contempt. A close examination of the teaching-learning process at Makerere reveals how social, cultural, and other inequalities were legitimized in both the formal and in the hidden curricular.

Bush (1999) underlines a similar struggle in a different context. She illustrates how Blacks in England were deemed “equals” because they were ‘cultured’ and educated and had passed the ‘civilization test’. Just as in Makerere, white patronage was dependent on conformity to white standards, political moderation, and students’ dissociation with the culture of their people. Bush observes that even the most pragmatic reformists genuinely dedicated to the improvement of race relations were unable to transcend an ingrained belief in black inferiority. These realities point to a complex colonial hegemony that cultivated a pathological sense of longing and admiration in Africans for things European (Fanon, 1986).

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Gutkind & Wallerstein (1985) assert that every assault on the colonized person was defended as a necessary concession to the realities of his state of development. In the meantime, the assault on his way of life and on his dignity became the very tools used for creating these realities. In this sense, Makerere produced some graduates who assumed the identity of the other in exchange for academic success, a strategy commonly referred to as passing. Holland et al (2003) suggest that too much passing can result in a potentially subversive self where the person can no longer speak or even think in his native voice. Such persons lose their creativity because they are compelled to assume the identity of the others. They cannot represent themselves, they are forced to masquerade as the authentic, idealized other. These comments highlight and underline the need for pedagogy of decolonization particularly where Smith (1999) asserts that the purpose of pedagogy of decolonization is to “develop a sense of authentic humanity (p.23).”

According to Sicherman (1995) the lack of true revolution and transformation of the education system is a strong evidence of the subversion of the African mind. A transformative education would have created an authentic African proud of her heritage and her history, a backdrop to a liberating pedagogy. A transformative education for Kenyan students in particular would have allowed students to know their identities, languages and build a sense of their worth and authenticity that is often silenced in both secondary and college education curricula. Even if the curriculum were to be rigorously examined, the content should have been familiar, meaningful, and reflective of students' realities. Additionally, the curricula should have interrogated the African inferiority complex or what Sicherman refers to as mental subversion.

I recently visited a high school located in Mount Kenya where peasants grow tea and coffee. As I was walked to the school, I engaged a former student of the school in a conversation and asked him if he knew where the tea factory was located. This former student of a fairly prestigious school told me he did not know where the factory was and had never visited it. I am talking about a student who had been in the high school for four years and had never gone for a field study to see one of the region's sources of livelihood! Talk about disconnection, students in Kenya are likely to sit for hours cramming material that will be regurgitated in the examination set by the all powerful Kenya National Examination Council and are unable to connect their curriculum to the

world immediately outside their school. What is the value of knowing the geography of the rest of Kenya and world when you do not have a clue about the economic life of the region your school is located?

A transformative education could have also addressed the multicultural and multiethnic nature of Kenya and tried to heal the divisions created by what Mamdani (1996) describes as decentralized despotism created during the colonial rule. Pedagogy of decolonization would reveal the underlying nature of tribalism and the colonial rule that produced it in order to maintain its divide and rule policies. This pedagogy would also reveal how the indirect rule manipulated ethnic groups to hate and malign one another on the basis that they were culturally and linguistically different. The world has seen how the politicization of the cultural differences of Hutu and Tutsi bears responsibility of the genocide that the world witnessed in Rwanda in 1994. To a large extent, the politicization of ethnic differences also played a big part in the 2007-2008 violence in Kenya.

When Jomo Kenyatta became the president of Kenya in 1963 he took a position that would have been applauded by colonial educators. He asked Kenyans to forget the past and move on (Elkins, 2005). If Kenyatta did this to reconcile people and to avoid strife, his action was commendable, on the other hand, one wonders why to this day there are “no monuments for Mau Mau, and children are not taught about this part of nation's past in school” (Elkins, 2005 p.367). The failure to include the Mau Mau stories in the curriculum amounts to the greatest silencing of an indigenous paradigm. Kenyans are still waiting for a museum that would open spaces for people to express realities of this struggle. What is not appreciated is that people who lost so much need a space to document the stories of colonialism told from their own perspective; stories about losing land, of oppression and denigration, of immigration to Rift Valley as forced labor, and finally the stories of Mau Mau rebellion and the horrific stories that Elkin (2005) eloquently documents. Isn't it interesting and ironic that it would take an American to take interest in the horrific stories of the Mau Mau detention camps and at least have them documented?

A campaign for critical pedagogy of decolonization is consistent with the long overdue critical evaluation of colonial education. It acknowledges that Africans should

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acknowledge the deprivation and impact of the colonial mentality as long as the purpose of the acknowledgement is to build authentic indigenous knowledge and experience. The view that colonial mentality demands a process of decolonization is supported by Nandy's (1983) perspective that Colonialism colonizes minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all. In the process, it helps generalize the concept of the modern west from a geographical and temporal entity to a psychological category. The West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structures and in minds. (p. xi).

Those who led the vicious killing and violence in the December elections in Kenya are educated and graduates of high schools and colleges. So to focus on the personal attitudes of these people is to fail to consider the magnitude and enormity of the suspicion and hatred that has simmered and seethed over the years without any attempts to consider some of the roots of these problems. I see the pedagogy for decolonization as a project to understand the foundation of our past, present and future. I see it as design to restore and heal identities, a way of producing local solutions to complex problems rather than expecting answers from some imagined "international community." After all, some of the ideologies that are grounded in the so call international community do not match African or Kenya's socio-political contexts. The process of decolonization would recognize new imperialism and its devastation because it would empower people to question any foreign discourse before engaging it in the cultural milieu. In his description of new imperialism Harvey (2003) likens it to financialization symbolized by World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The goal of new imperialism is to force the opening of markets throughout the world by institutional pressures exercised through IMF and WTO backed power of United States.

### **New imperialism and neo-liberal theories**

Thus, world is witnessing the emergence of a new form of western imperialism that has its purpose to incorporate the formerly so-called 'Second' and 'Third worlds' into a regime of global government" (Tikly, 2004 p. 173). New imperialism is characterized by political, diplomatic, and military strategies by which a state or groups of states operating as a political power block asserts its interests, including economic interests, to achieve its

goals. The economic interests, often articulated in the neo-liberal ideology, are increasingly thrust upon low income countries as part of the new global order. Neo-liberalism proposes economic practices that position the well being of a human as best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within the institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005). Harvey suggests that the neoliberal project negates social justice because it assumes social good is fully realized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions. Thus, neo-liberalism seeks to bring all human actions to the domain of the market. In this context, the role of nation-state in this new global order or new imperialism is to guarantee by force if need be the proper functioning of markets and to secure by any means necessary private property rights.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank are point guards in the task of policing and enforcing neo-liberalism to low income nations. These low income countries become easy captives of the IMF sermons and sometimes coercion because they are often desperate for loans and grants. Using punishment, the IMF forces some of these nation-states to eliminate trade barriers, however, the Western countries or as some would say, the imperial center keeps its own barriers effectively preventing poor countries from exporting their agricultural products and so depriving them of desperately needed export income (Stiglitz, 2004). These practices underline the force of new imperialism and the unequal power relations through which economic, political, and military strategies are enforced in the new global order.

As an example of unequal relations, when Ethiopia failed to open its banking system to global competition it was summarily suspended and denied loans by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2000; it did not matter that Ethiopia's entire banking system was smaller than that of Bethesda, Maryland whose population is 55,277 (Stiglitz, 2004). That a sovereign nation like Ethiopia has to get IMF approval for every economic decision it makes smacks of imperialism or is it new imperialism? In 1980s, Rivatex was a thriving fabric factory in Kenya, however, the ideology of free market dictated by IMF drove Rivatex over the cliff; the company could not withstand the competition with cheaper fabric that flooded the Kenyan market. These kinds of actions and consequences make Stiglitz's argument that the low income countries should have

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been given a chance to nurture their industrial infrastructure plausible. He compares poor countries to small boats and capital market liberalization as a big wave. Poor countries are pushed by storms before holes in their hulls have been repaired or before the captains have received training, and before life vests have been put on board. There is no doubt; market liberalization often spells disaster and catastrophe for low income countries.

In this latest chapter of new imperialism, the IMF casts itself as the sole supplier of “sound” advice. Even though the executives in the IMF and World Bank live in Europe and North America and have no qualitative understanding of the daily lives of people living in the slums of Nairobi or villages of Ethiopia, they position themselves as the experts of monetary issues arising anywhere in the world. It is no wonder that the actual numbers of people living in poverty has increased by almost 100 million people. This has occurred at the time when the total world income actually increased by an average of 2.5 percent annually (Stiglitz, 2004).

In an article published by Investor Relations Information Network (IRIN) on January 9, 2008, it was noted that the wave of violence that engulfed Kenya in 2007 pointed to basic economics as the true cause of the unrest. The IRIN author observed that Kenya practices a brutal, inhuman brand of capitalism that encourages a fierce competition for survival, wealth, and power. Those who cannot compete successfully are allowed to live like animals in slums. Most statistics suggest that about 60% of Nairobi residents live in slums and it is in the slums that post-election violence was most intense. I agree there is a causal relationship between poverty and the violence that occurred in December 2007 in Kenya, however, this is not the complete story. My view is that there is a complex combination of other factors that contributed to the intensity of the post-election violence among them poverty, ethnic hatred and suspicion, and a perception, especially among the most disfranchised that if a politician of their choice or ethnic group became president then their economic situation will improve.

Following Harvey (1996), new capital has a penchant of pulling everyone into its orbit. As Harvey suggests, this pull is accompanied with the beating upon socialists, welfare advocates, and nationalists. New capital also lends larger segments of world's population permanently redundant in relation to capital accumulation while severing them from alternative means of support. Indeed, African cultural values such as

communalism, a participatory, interdependent, cooperation, and a reciprocal obligation which provides a viable alternative means of support among the poorest in Africa's rural and urban communities. However, communalism and other such values have been disrupted by the taken-for-granted neo-liberal economic policies (Harvey, 2005; Gyekye, 1997; Tikly, 1999). Communalism is defined here as social relationships that are expressed in a community and are shored up by reciprocities, comprehensive interactions, mutual sympathies, and responsibilities. Advocates of communalism oppose neoliberal policies because they are informed by an oppositional paradigm that has qualitative knowledge of how poor people living in a village form interdependent relations through which they build infrastructure such as a communal well, because in such communities not everyone can afford her own material infrastructure. Other benefits of the communal order constitute a focus on the lives of individual members belied in the communal value that an individual's involvement in the interests, aspirations, and welfare of the group is a measure of that individual's worth. Life of one person is co-extensive with the lives of other people (Gyekye, 1997). The neo-liberal project's intent and purpose is to destroy values such as the communalism.

Global capitalism appears to have taken hold in the 1970s when most of the low-income countries were emerging from the denigration and oppression of classic colonialism (Harvey, 2003, 2005). African countries including Kenya were incorporated into the global government perhaps to legitimize former colonial master's continual extraction of value. It is in this spirit of master versus subordinate that the forces of new imperialism were unleashed to restore peace to Kenya after violence erupted. Forces of new imperialism insisted that Kenya occupied a vital link between the Indian Ocean and the interior part of East and Central Africa for trade and other services and that Kenya could not be allowed to sink like Somalia.

On October 17, 2008, Dennis Onyango a reporter for Standard newspaper (one of the major newspapers in Kenya) wrote in his column:

When US Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice joins Dr. Kofi Annan for the peace talks in Nairobi tomorrow, the full force of the world will have landed in Kenya in a way that the government never seems to have anticipated. Rice's



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arrival, together with that of coming and going of world leaders has *globalized* ... what appeared ... a minor internal affair that would fizzle out.

As if to praise the idea that the force of the world was landing in Kenya, Onyango paraphrased a comment made by the France's ambassador to Kenya Ms Elisabeth Barbier in which she stated that a battle that the international community was fighting in Kenya was 'bigger than Kenya.'

Annan announced to Kenya parliament on February 12, 2008 that Kenya's political violence and other problems would be resolved through a grand coalition between the Party of National Unity (PNU) led by Kibaki and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) led by Odinga. There is evidence that the idea of a grand coalition came from Annan himself and most likely from the world powers that he was representing when he boldly announced a power sharing government was the way out of the crisis (Agence France-Press (AFP) report of Feb 14, 2008). AFP report clarified that someone of Annan's caliber would not make such a weighty statement without having some indication that it was plausible. The announcement appeared to be a shock to the Kibaki camp; in fact Karua who led the camp in the negotiations attacked the decision publicly. Who made Annan's statement or decision plausible?

From my vantage point, the purpose of Annan's mission and international communities was essentially to undermine Kenya's sovereignty by unleashing the well crafted strategies of new imperialism. The answer to the problems that Kenya experienced was not made in Kenya by Kenyans for Kenyans. The action taken by the 'international community' to solve Kenya's political violence is unconscionable and outrageous. Why didn't any Kenyan politician discover the outright hegemony in the arrangement? Isn't it ironic that the resolution advocated by Annan undermines the very essence of democratic rule and a balance of power, the very elements the political process had abused?

Where did Annan get the power to change the course of Kenya's political framework? Upon arrival on the Kenyan soil, Annan declared that he had come to represent the United Nations, United States, and European Union. For the sake of protocol, he added that he also came to represent the African Union. The power behind

Annan was both political, and economic. Kenya's political establishment panicked at the prospect of losing IMF and World Bank funding. The prospect of becoming another Zimbabwe was inconceivable and this fear was exploited by the international community. However no one appeared to have concern that Kenyans did not participate in the creation of the “grand coalition” form of government that Annan and his powerful allies imposed on to Kenya. How will the idea of grand coalition be integrated in the body politic and become part of the country's culture? Isn't this another quick fix of an intricate and a complex problem? Isn't this one of the ideas that we borrow from the West and adopt without a serious critical reflection? I would argue that the imposition of a coalition government on Kenya indicates that new imperialism is not just an idea; it is a phenomenon that affects everyday life of regular people.

I have tried to construct a story of Africa using Kenya as the unit of analysis. Kenyans live not only with scars of colonialism but also with the story of pre-colonial modalities that inform our habits and existence as a distinct people. We Kenyans also live in the new global world order that makes our subjectivities complex and entangled. Social boundaries created by language and culture intermingle with the modern structures of a nation-state and globalization policies underlining struggles for personal subjectivities. We are forced to learn how to weave a collective story that tells these histories as part of our cultural and national identities as we move back and forth from our local, national, and global realities. Our past, present and future is part of this collective story and it is critical to rethink the knowledge that produced us and continues to reproduce colonial subjects through the framework of critical pedagogy of decolonization.

Kenyan politicians produced a “grand coalition” in our political establishment but did not question the motive of the “international community” for influencing the overhaul of a political structure. Does it mean that an opposition party is not good for our political system? I would argue that problems in Kenya’s politics, education, and economics can only be resolved by Kenyans themselves; having said that, it is fair to conclude that without linking learning to social change, the Kenyan public will fall prey to doctrines such as neo-liberalism and some forms of globalism which have very little positive value to offer us.

### **So what are Kenyans going to do?**

It is problematic for post-colonial scholars to argue for a hybridity of the discourses of the former colonizers and the colonized in Homi Bhabha's sense (Huddart, 2006) when the playing field is still so unequal. How can we homogenize any discourses including history, education, economics, or the so called development when Africa's history is still appropriated and interpreted by Europe (Dirlik, 1997)? Here Dirlik appears to suggest that perhaps native people in former colonies should be given an opportunity to tell their stories: how they were disconnected from their histories, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world (Smith, 1999). In other words, they should frame their being-in- the- world in the Merleau-Ponty sense from the native perspective. This does not mean rejection of Western knowledge rather it is centering the native people's concerns and worldviews. I am arguing for a systematic and scholarly research of the past, both the embodied and the written history.

After these histories are excavated, members of civil society including churches, trade unions, schools should deliberately appropriate this knowledge to re-build a Kenyan identity grounded in the language of hope and possibility. Imagining a new identity constructed out of understanding and human concern and not the myth, hatred, and suspicion that Kenyans live with today. It is ironic that we can only move forward after we come to know and understand our past. I would like to read the history of the Turkana side by side the history of the Kalenjin, the Kikuyu, and the histories of all Kenya's 40+ ethnic groups etc. It is a shame this was not seen as a priority forty years ago.

The imagined Kenyan identity is the only plausible anchor for a future critical education or a problem posing education that critically examines a native's authentic existence in new global order.

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