Race and Redress: Theoretical and Practical Insights

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Outline

1. Inequality and higher education in South Africa

2. The Study "Studying While Black"

3. The contours of the struggle for decolonised education

4. 11 theses on decolonising the curriculum

5. Recommendations dealing with race and redress

What inequality does

1. **Stunting** - physical and cognitive
2. **Psychic/social stress** - 5 to 15 more years of illness
3. **Social sundering -** distrust, fear, violence
4. **Economic squandering -** charity after accumulation
5. **Ineffective democracy** - no substantive participation
6. **Lessens educational outcomes**
7. **'Worse' (hierarchically low) jobs and unemployment**
8. **Shortens lives**
   - In US: no degree associated with 5 yrs shortened life expectancy for women, 3 yrs less for men
   - Lack of education (less than 12 yrs) **+ being black** = 12 yrs shortened life span
   - In South Africa by 20 years difference in life expectancy (HDI 15 white SAs and 116 black SAs)

4 Mechanisms of inequality

GÖRAN THERBORN — THE KILLING FIELDS OF INEQUALITY

1. **<u>Distanciation</u>** - a systemic process designed to discern 'winners and losers'
   - *Approximation – close the physical distance*

2. **<u>Exclusion</u>** - the division of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'
   - *Inclusion*

3. **<u>Hierarchisation</u>** - formal organisations of inequality
   - *Flattening power structures*

4. **<u>Exploitation</u>** - unfairly capitalising on the physical labour of others
   - *Protection, redistribution and rehabilitation*

Higher education

1. 55% failure rates among students

2. Low completion rates on time (only 1 in 4)

3. White completion rates 50% higher than Black students (CHE, 2013)

4. Inequity in enrolment rates (15% Black youth 18-24 enrolled versus 54% White in 2014)

Fee-free education will only fix this last figure.

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Social science that makes a difference

Black students struggles

Low enrolment and slow completion rates

Reasons given:

- Financial struggles
- Academic under-preparedness
- Challenges with course loads

Fanon: "The **white man wants the world**; he wants it for himself… the predestined **master of the world. He enslaves it. His relationship with the world is one of appropriation**." (p. 107)

Homi Bhabha: How inequalities have come to be and are represented - "We must not merely **change the narratives of our histories**, but transform our sense of what it means to live… [we must] interrupt the Western discourses of modernity… We need to **reinscribe other cultural traditions in narratives of modernity**… To **develop new dialogues** about the past… **new histories, new presents, new futures**"

The study

1. The study followed 80 students in 8 universities over 5 years (2013 to 2017)

2. Used a variety of engaging methods

3. Produced two accessible outputs:
   * **Book**: *Studying while black*
   * **Documentary**: *Ready or Not!*

4. Recorded struggles and obstacles, along with strategies and resources for success

Colonialism

1. "…a series of disjunctures" (Abrahams p.14)

2. "…control through culture of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others" (wa Thiong'o p.16)

Contd...

1. Production of wealth
2. Art
3. Dances
4. Religions
5. History
6. Geography
7. Education
8. Orature
9. Literature
10. Language

The domination of the mental universe of the colonised

1. **Dismemberment of Black people from the family of humanity**: dehumanising Black people through various means

2. **Alienation from community and a sense of self**: forcing Black people to separate themselves from their communities and sense of self

3. **Epistemicide through appropriation or erasure and destruction**: the erasure of knowledge systems that are not European in origin

4. **Linguicide as the deliberate destruction of other people's language**: the killing of languages & cultures of the colonized

5. **The theft of history**:- events of the past are constructed through the lens of the oppressor (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016)

Dismemberment of Black people from the family of humanity

"**I don't think this place was designed for me**… I think the language, the space, even just the way it's built. The structure of our courses, how we're graded and how your intelligence is sort of put on a scale. And there's sort of a lot of conceptions of who's smart and who's not… **I'm just fighting through it because that's the only way I can make some sort of life for myself**."
(BM_22_UCTSTUD5_BSocSc_2016)

"**If you are Black and poor, you are in trouble. This place is very brutal for Black poor kids.**"
(BM_22_UKZNSTUD9_LLB_2017)

Alienation from community and a sense of self

We are taught a White man's language at a young age. We're told that ours is not important therefore you have to bow down to a White person…they're more important, they're more intelligent than you because you're Black. (BF_23_UFHSTUD2_LLB_2016)

"The educational system of South Africa is an Afrikaner one, so if you talk about decolonisation you have to change the entire system and implement our own South African system. Whether we include the Whites or Blacks only it's fine, but the system that they use at universities is only for Whites … more advantages to only the Whites which is the minority, you know. This is not fair." (BM_23_UJSTUD9_BA_2016)

"**Basically, the curriculum that we have right now is mostly Western. The content we learn, everything is based on Western culture and we don't learn about our own environment. We're basically taught to be Western you understand? And I think it's really a problem because if we want to develop our own country, why are we there learning about the Western culture, the Western way of doing things. Obviously their problems are different from ours. Their way of living is much more different from ours, so I think we should have a curriculum that best suits the students of the place, the environment.**"
(BM_23_ULSTUD4_BA_2016)

Epistemicide through appropriation or erasure and destruction

"…**Majority of students at UJ are Black.** **We need some sort of Black empowerment****. We just go there for Afrikaans History. A friend of mine… she's a BA Law student so they choose a new language every year. She did isiZulu last year. In isiZulu they literally just learnt the language and it was translations. They did translations the whole year. In Afrikaans - she's doing Afrikaans this year - she was so annoyed she was telling that me firstly they started with Afrikaans History, where it came from and all of that. She's like** **why didn't they learn about Shaka Zulu in isiZulu before getting into the language**…"
(BF_24_UJSTUD8_BA_2016)

"Look at our law system, commercial law is based on Roman law and English law, Dutch Roman law… **Customary law is very little, you understand? So basically we are living according to how the West says we should live. And law is basically the basis of everything…** **Even our country's law system, it does not really regard customary law as a sort of law, it's just one of those things that they say that is there you know?"** (BM_23_ULSTUD4_BA_2016)

"Well the thing is **I know more about Hitler, than Robert Sobukwe****, and** **I know more about the French revolution than I know about Dingaan****. So I am for the decolonisation of the curriculum."** (BF_22_NWUSTUD7_LLB_2016)

Linguicide as the deliberate destruction of other's language

"**Include indigenous language as a medium of instruction**. If it can be done by Afrikaans speakers, why not isiXhosa, isiZulu, etc.?" (BF_34_UFHSTUD6_BCom_2017)

"**In your home language you get to understand better.**" (BF_22_UJSTUD4_BCom_2016)

"I don't think it's going to be practical… having to teach Xhosas, Sothos, Pedis, you know – because we have so many languages. So I think it would be a bit of a challenge… I can speak three languages, but I can only write Xhosa… It would be frustrating… It would be nice in the long run, but for now I don't think it would be practical for now, ya, but it would be nice. I think we'd do much better. We'd relate much more to concepts and things." (BF_24_UJSTUD8_BA_2016)

Theft of History

I think it's – excuse my language, it's bullshit… **Because if we want to decolonise the curriculum, we don't have any knowledge of our own**… in terms of the Science we learn, the Maths we do – none of that is from South Africa... Unless I don't understand the term 'decolonising'. But from what I understand from it, it is basically… not doing things the western way. Doing things our way. Learning our own things... **as far as Engineering is concerned this whole decolonising of education will not work.** Unless, of course, they want to learn this work in a vernacular language then, OK, ya. But now **as far as having our own knowledge is concerned, we don't really have much.**"
(BM_22_UJSTUD1_BEng_2016)

"…what are you going to call a "force" in Xhosa or Sotho? Maybe there is a word for it, or "alternating current". **There's no word for that, because we didn't experience that. We didn't come up with it.**" (BM_22_UJSTUD5_ElecEng_2016)

"Ya, **we need to learn about our country and even if it's like the dark stuff** or - we must know about stuff like that. If you want to prevent deaths, **you must teach the children - listen, this is where we went wrong**. If you don't, if everyone just keeps hearing about, oh it's apartheid's fault, **if we don't learn about apartheid, if we don't learn what happened, then it's just a circle**, again and again and again." (WM_22_NWUSTUD2_BEd_2016)

Eleven theses on decolonising the curriculum

While curriculum studies is an area of expert inquiry, the topic of decolonising it needs the **INPUT AND EXPERTISE** of those who are experts in the understanding of exclusion, oppression, marginality, and history.

The GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION from where you teach/learn is critical and central. We are not merely part of a globalised world on an equal footing but in different power relations to each other. Knowledge is power. Power dictates knowledge.

2

What is EXCLUDED and elided from, and silenced in the curriculum is as important as what it contains.

3

WHO TEACHES is of enormous importance to a decolonised curriculum, so that students can be exposed to a multiplicity of views from different kinds of people, and also be able to identify with people like them, since so much is 'caught rather than taught'.

4

Decolonised education should start with the <u>BIOGRAPHIES AND HISTORIES</u> of who teaches and who is taught and who is being taught.

5

The 'hidden curriculum' must be **MADE EXPLICIT** in decolonised education – from the values of the institution, both its explicit and tacit practices, and it ultimate vision and mission. This offers an opportunity for reflexivity on the part of those who teach, and increases scope for critical thinking from students.

6

WHAT IS TAUGHT needs to be thought of over a continuum – beginning with what needs to be <u>untaught</u> from schooling, through to undergraduate basics, and on to graduate education. Should we teach local/indigenous/Southern knowledge first, second, not at all? How does this change if you're in the North, or in the South?

A key question to ask is what is the role of **THE 'CANON'** in our disciplines, and in fact what needs to change about disciplinary study.

8

ARIATI, ALI

SHIVA,

FANON, FRANTZ

FREIRE, PAULO

GLISSANT, EDOUARD

GORDON, L

VAK, GAYATRI C.

V

HALL, STUART

JASANOFF, SHEILA

LORDE, AUDRE

LUGONES, M

WYNTER, SYLVIA
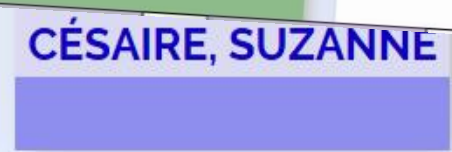
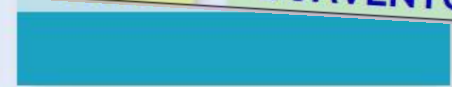MAXIMIN, DANIEL
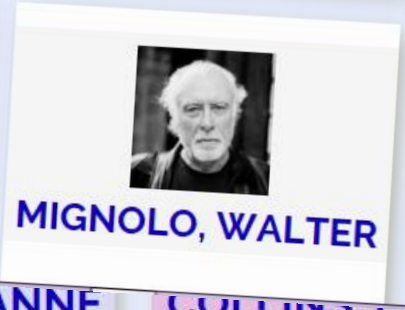
MIGNOLO, WALTER

PATEL, SUJATA

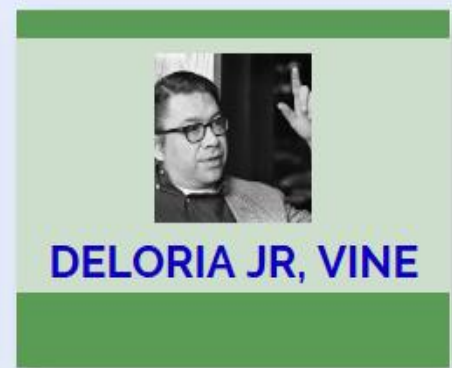SANTOS, BOAVENTURA
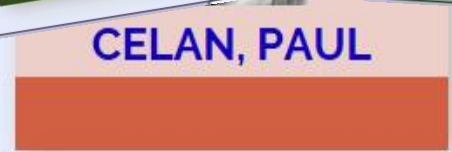
CELAN, PAUL

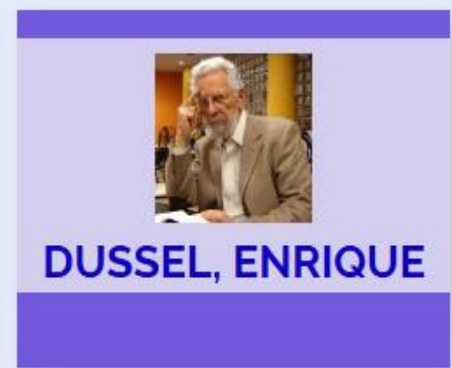CÉSAIRE, SUZANNE

COLLINS, PATRICIA HILL

CONNELL, RAEWYN

COX, OLIVER CROMWELL

DELORIA JR, VINE

DUSSEL, ENRIQUE

HOW TEACHING is conducted – our pedagogies - is helpfully articulated as a choice between problem solving and banking education from Brazilian educator, Paolo Freire. This is especially critical as we move into a more technologically astute future.

SOUTHERN KNOWLEDGE should be seen as having relevance for the global context rather than only for the South. Theory from the South is for the South AND for the World.

10

BUILDING SOUTHERN THEORY is of critical importance so that decolonised education can endure and take its place in shaping new practices and realities. This is something we have to intentionally teach students to accomplish.

11

University leadership

1. Symbols
2. Race/gender ombud
3. Diverse lecturing experience
4. Diverse management
5. Translanguaging
6. Writing centres
7. Compulsory African language
8. Formal mechanism to complain about lecturer conduct

9. Technology proficiency capacity development
10. Improved mental health facilities
11. Institutional justice processes
12. Resources for student self-management
13. Family events part of student orientation

Lecturers and support staff

1. Formal course on the social history of SA

2. Relevant Southern material

3. Accents

4. Lecturers trained to communicate

5. Translanguaging

6. Lecturers accessible

7. Faculty to act as mediators between students and management

8. Academic credit for reflections on transformation

Social science that makes a difference

How else might we take the debate about race and redress forward?