

Black Studies in the 21st Century: Resistance to Colonization, Globalization, and Genocide

by

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Abstract

This article provides a historical backdrop of the racist colonial system that enslaved and exploited Black people for the past five centuries and exterminated millions in the process of such subjugation, a genocide whose aftermath lingers into the present structures of the contemporary globalized world that ravages Mother Earth, annihilates the ecology, impoverishes marginalized women and working classes in the underdeveloped world and communities of color in the West, intensifies the prison industrial complex especially in the United States where Black people continue to be held in abject slavery behind bars by the hundreds of thousands, and poisons food, water, and air by ruthless capitalist trans-national corporations steeped in insane industrialism. Thus, this discourse on Black Studies highlights the urgent need for the expansion of Black Studies in schools, colleges, universities, and communities so that the anomaly of Black enslavement can be arrested by an educational program of liberation that corrects the historical record that denies Black civilizations, transforms the existing educational status quo that distorts the reality of Black life and culture, and necessitates a return to the wellspring of African ancestral wisdom, language, and culture.

Introduction

Given the turn of the twentieth century 15 years ago and the crises facing the Earth and all life on the planet, Black Studies is one of the few remaining indispensable disciplines that provides an illumination of the history of the world through the epistemological lens of African people on the continent of Africa and the Diaspora that speaks to the condition of the intensified decimation of impoverished humans, the annihilation of the ecology, and the obliteration of life itself through protracted extinction of plant and other forms of life and relentless wars against Mother Earth.

The progressive alienation and marginalization of young people from working class communities, especially those of color, from strong ancestral roots that has sparked a sense of embedded nihilism, depression, and devaluation, induced by a high-tech electronic culture that forcibly submerges 2 billion youth around the world in an illusory world fabricated by television, computer, iphone, ipad, and tablets, is another critical dimension warranting earnest interrogation and subversion by the field of Black Studies that has been historically concerned with the radical liberation of the oppressed and the transformation of a colonized, capitalist, and imperialized globalized world into one humane, just, and peace-loving. (*The Times*, South Africa, February 12, 2015).

The unprecedented escalation of the institution for the incarceration of youth, again particularly of color, that has grown 700% over the past three decades in the U.S., and now locks away close to a million Black women and men, is a sub-discipline within Black Studies that all Black Studies educators are called to analyze. Further, the intensification of the impoverishment of the world's women maintained, institutionalized, and enforced by the system of colonial patriarchy and globalized capitalism, the majority of whom are persons of color, sharpens the thrust of Black Studies in the 21st century that sparks a powerful nexus with womanist, women's and gender studies. Women, the bearers and reproducers of life, can no longer afford to be silenced or made invisible by any academic discipline, including Black Studies.

One of the noted developments in the last two decades has been the momentum in Black women's and gender studies where issues of culture, sexuality, and mutuality of women and men have come to the fore. Scholars like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Toni-Cade Bambara, Paula Giddings, Patricia Hill Collins, Audrey Lorde, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, Barbara Ransby, Darlene Clark Hine, Nell Painter, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, and others, have drawn on the works of revolutionary Black women freedom fighters like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Nzingha, Nehanda, Yaa Asantewa, and other warriors, and have developed important scholarship in the Black women's liberation movement, all of which are integral to the Black Studies movement today (Aidoo, 1993; Amadiume 1987; Bambara 1970; Bell, Parker and Guy-Sheftall 1979; Clark-Hine 2005; Davis 1983; Giddings 1984; hooks, 1981; Hudson-Weems 1984; Hull, Scott and Smith et al 1982; Collins 2000; Lorde 1984; Morrison 1987; Nnaemeka 1998; Ogundipe-Leslie 1994; Oyewumi 1997; Painter 1996; Ransby 2005; Steady 1994; Terborg-Penn 1998; and Walker 1985).

Black Studies in the 21st century ineluctably assumes a formidable holistic character, demanding the resistance to the interlocking evils of racism, classism, gender colonization, and cultural oppression that continue to dehumanize Black people and all impoverished people in a globalized world.

Black Studies is essential to educationally expose the biological warfare foundation of the AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) epidemic (and the fallacy that the AIDS virus causes AIDS) that is responsible for the "...toxic poisoning of young people in the West and the industrial poisoning and social disruption of Africa...pure insanity..." in the words of medical scholar, Nancy Turner Banks (Banks, 2010). In the same vein, Black Studies is concerned with the return to ancestral ways of living and knowing, in harmony with the rest of the natural world and the cycles and circles of nature, including with natural ways of cultivating, growing, and eating food.

This article will illuminate the radical calling of Black Studies in the 21st century, as a leading cutting-edge discipline that challenges the foundations of academia and the social structures of globalized oppression, so that African and other indigenous and colonized people can be impelled towards praxes of resistance and wholeness in the deliberation towards liberation from every form of genocide, given the historical and contemporary persistence of colonialism and imperialism toward eradicating Black people from the face of Mother Earth by the obdurate refusal to recognize the humanity and cultural integrity of Black people.

Black Studies and the History of Black Genocide

Even though African people and peoples of the Mediterranean and the rest of what subsequently came to be known as Europe (Europe is a 200-year concept following the consolidation of colonial imperialist powers from that part of the world), had amicable relations for many centuries, however, the stripping away of the resources of "Europe" by monarchical and imperialistic powers from the medieval period in which Europe's forests, ecology, and coastlines were depleted of natural resources by the 14th century that resulted in a barren landmass devoid of any vital economic wherewithal, induced the aristocracy within countries like Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Italy, and Belgium to pursue the trade in African people from what was then called the Gold Coast (Ghana) in the 17th century (Crosby 1986; Jackson 1970; Harris 1987; Rodney 1980; Sale 1990). Thus, "Europe" itself has never contributed anything distinctive to the diversity of human civilizations save the plunder of the Earth and capitalist accumulation; in terms of "civilization," it was that part of the world that developed the "finer arts of civilization" *last* (using the Eurocentric linear sense of time!) compared to Africa, Asia, and the Americas. W.E.B. Du Bois accurately pointed out in this regard that, "...Europe has never produced and never will in our day bring forth a single human soul who cannot be matched and overmatched in every line of human endeavor by Asia and Africa..." (Lewis, 2005).

Europe itself was an ideological construction that is only two centuries old, fabricated to justify the “superlative” and distinctive “civilizations” of the European colonial powers so that European economic and political hegemony and white supremacy could be foisted down the throats of indigenous peoples of color around the world (Toynbee, 1987; Bernal, 1987, 1991, 2006).

The progressive decline of towering and formidable states like Ghana, Mali, and Songhay from the 9th through the 15th centuries left a swath of the African continent severely debilitated, socially fragmented, and economically vulnerable to external invading and eventual enslaving and colonizing forces. European slavers thus took advantage of the socio-economic decay on the continent and set into motion what would become the largest violent depopulation of indigenous people from their ancestral homelands in Africa through a process of chattel slavery in the western hemisphere—North and South America and the Caribbean—where indigenous peoples there numbering in the tens of millions were themselves subject to policies of systematic genocide as the result of Iberian conquest, colonization, and enslavement (Galeano, 1997). African people were kidnapped, brutalized, raped, maimed, and forcibly removed from their homelands in Africa onto slave-ships that began a torturous journey across the Atlantic into the already stolen lands of indigenous Indians in the Americas. That legacy of unprecedented cultural violence and chattel slavery that induced what came to be known as the “Black Holocaust.”

It was the very institution of chattel slavery that provided the foundations for the emergence of monopoly capitalism and the cultivation of the richest materialist European ruling class in history in the subsequent United States empire, now the most powerful economically in the world (Baptist, 2014; Chinweizu, 1974; Du Bois, 1946; Inikori and Engerman, 1998; Johnson, 2013). Yet for African people in the Diaspora, that legacy of enslavement and forced dispossession and cultural decimation from indigenous African ancestral roots on the Motherland, Africa, has generally produced a painful cultural inferiority in which the perceptions of racist Europeans that dehumanized Africans are continually reinforced through the historical and contemporary machinations and working of white supremacy in the 21st century. Though the evil of white supremacy in the world was predicated on specious claims of Western European cultural supremacy that ostensibly traced its roots to classical Greece (a civilization that itself was built on the cultures and civilizations of ancient Africa like Egypt, Nubia, and Ethiopia), the damage from continued white supremacist violence for four consecutive centuries has taken its toll on the world, particularly in the United States, where white supremacy has reached epidemic proportions and the vulgarity and ugliness of anti-Black hostility is boundless, witnessed recently for example in the spate of virtual daily killings of Black men by trigger-happy police officers.

The fact of white supremacy being reproduced daily within the curricula of the U.S. educational system, reinforced by a racist media establishment, a judiciary, a political order where whites hold the bulk of power even in predominantly Black settings, and most importantly, an economic system where Blacks possess just 1% of the nation's wealth though Black people are close to 15% of the human population—all intrinsic to 21st century racialized globalized capitalism and imperialism—has instilled a sense of Black cultural deficiency and the ineluctable internalization of the racist construction of Black people as “a problem.” Black people, particularly the poor and the working class majority, have never been recognized as *bonafide human beings* and *citizens* in the United States with proportionate rights as whites in every social, political, economic, and cultural sphere; instead, Black life and culture continue to be seen as an aberration from the norm of what it means to be human in the United States—white, male, middle-class, and White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. So long as Black people were and are perceived to be abnormal within the cultural diversity of humanity, Black Studies is urgently necessitated at every educational, social, political, economic, and cultural level.

Black Studies, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1950s and 1960s, and Black Struggles in the 21st Century

I am reminded of the necessity of humor, even in the midst of the heat of struggle. Dick Gregory's response to his rejection when he sat at a restaurant in the South during the heyday of segregation. “We don't serve negroes,” the white waiter informed him. To which Dick Gregory, in his customary artful wit replied, “That's fine. I don't eat Negroes.” Black Studies also has its witty and subversive edge—particularly in the face of the absurdity of racial suspicion and hostility toward Black people and other people of color and when many whites still have no idea about how best to interact with or what to say to Black people in some contexts of meeting even in 2015!

The 1960s marked a turning point in the history of Black resistance to oppression and the edifice of white supremacy in the United States, principally because Blacks were successful in mobilizing millions of people in cities and hamlets across the country in the demand for racial and social justice that saw thousands of marches, protests, sit-ins, picket-lines, and demonstrations at businesses, stores, educational institutions, transportation carriers, and other social venues. When Kwame Ture (then Stokely Carmichael) from the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) upped the ante in the sweltering heat of Mississippi in 1966 and emphasized that what Black people desired was *Black power* for economic, political, and social self-determination of the Black nation, SNCC member Willie Ricks (now Mukasa Dada) followed and urged the crowd to respond and the crowd chanted in unison, “Black Power!” (Carmichael (Ture), 2003). The status quo was horrified at this radical shift in the Black liberation movement moving away from traditional appeals to moral suasion as the civil rights movement had hitherto embraced.

The U.S. ruling class interpreted the call for Black Power as a radical call toward Black nationalism and a rejection of the integrationist orientation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) led by Martin Luther King Jr. and sparked by Rosa Parks refusal to take a back seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955 (Carmichael (Ture), 2003). This call echoed the incisive statement by Malcolm X who fearlessly declared, "...our right on this earth...to be a human being, to be respected as a human being, to be given the rights of a human being in this society...by any means necessary" (X, 1992). Black Studies highlighted the anomalous contradiction within the socio-economic and cultural contours of United States society: the U.S. was quite unashamedly accustomed and comfortable using forced and free Black labor for almost two and a half centuries and made trillions, yet unwilling to accord the Black descendants of enslaved Africans "equal rights", as Bob Marley, the Jamaican reggae artist so beautifully sung in the 1960s and 1970s.

Black Studies after all, was conceived in the crucible of relentless and tireless struggle against white supremacy and white racism, nurtured in the womb of Black womanist, youth, and working class rebellion, and sprouted in the revolutionary movement against the contemporary American slave industrial and human sacrifice industrial complexes, incarceration and the murderous execution of poor men by the colonial state... now manifest in resistance to the late capitalist military-prison industrial monstrosity with the objective of precisely making capitalism late, dead....so that it is buried forever, never to be resurrected by the ghosts of colonial Europe anywhere in this world.

The radical Black protests demanding justice at college campuses like Howard University, San Francisco State University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Chicago, Cornell University, Harvard University, and Yale University in the late 1960s all set into motion the apparatus for the institutionalization of Black Studies departments on many college campuses (Akalmat and Associates, 1986; Asante and Mazama, 2005; Biko, 1978; Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick, 1971; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967; Carson, 1981; Cone, 1969; Delores and Young, 2003; Edwards, 1970; Frye, 1976; Glasker, 2002; Hayes (1992); Kynard, 2013; Norment, 2007; Orum, 1972; Quinn, 2014; Rojas, 2007; Wheeler, 1980). It was none other than Frederick Douglass who reminded us of "No Struggle, No Progress!" And none other than W.E. Du Bois, who so plainly and perspicaciously who asserted, "Either the United States will destroy ignorance, or ignorance will destroy the United States..." (Du Bois, 1905). The question of the future of Black Studies resides in a preceding question: Why Black Studies or Africana Studies or African American or Pan African or Diasporan Studies in the 21st century? I want to respond to these questions as lucidly as I can by situating them to as close to home ground as possible.

Black children need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum that is supposedly designed to empower students to learn and enhance their knowledge and broaden their epistemological horizons. As indigenous scholars, Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson from the Micmac nation in Canada explain in their classic work, *Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*:

For most indigenous (and we can include Black students) in Eurocentric education, realizing their invisibility is like looking into a still lake and not seeing their reflections. They become alien in their own eyes, unable to recognize themselves in the reflections and shadows of the world. In the same way that Eurocentric thought stripped their grandparents and parents of their wealth and dignity, this realization strips modern indigenous (and African) students of their heritage and identity (Battiste and Henderson, 2000).

A Du Boisian similarity of Double Consciousness! Black Studies is imperative because it is an essential means to eradicate the scourge of ignorance and the cancer of Eurocentric colonial arrogance so firmly embedded within the social, cultural, economic and educational contours of this society and the world. It is a corrective to the pervasive and hegemonic pathology of white supremacy and institutionalized racism deeply entrenched in all educational institutions in this country. It is a solution to the problematic of what I call mentacide that has wreaked havoc and lobotomized the mental intellectual entrails of Black childhood. It is a very necessary vehicle to arrest the ongoing onslaught of genocide that faces Black people: a million Black people shackled and confined in this country's jails and prisons, 77 percent of our young Black children are now being born into homes with one parent, and 44 percent of new AIDS cases among adolescents and adults in 2010 were Black (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

AIDS is indeed biological warfare against Black people in the U.S., Africa, Haiti, and around the world. As medical specialist Nancy Turner Banks explains, the cause of AIDS is not traceable scientifically to a particular virus, but is rather a concoction of various diseases resulting from a compromised immune system, poor nutrition, and environmental stress. Black people in Africa and the Diaspora continue to experience "ethnic stress" as the consequence of the legacy of slavery and colonization and living in situations of neo-colonially fabricated wars in Africa, induced poverty, police brutality, poor health and medical access, deprived educational systems, and entrenched social marginalization that reinforces Black dehumanization, all of which become internalized in Black psyches and Black perceptions of the world (Banks, 2010).

Similarly, the Ebola virus in West Africa that killed thousands from 2013-2014 did not have its roots in either “zoonotic transmission” as Eurocentric German “scientists” like Fabian Leendertz claimed or in “criminal activity” as racist ideologues like Robert Kaplan propagated, but in the greed of multi-national corporations for gold, diamonds, bauxite, and other precious minerals that paved the way for protracted environmental stress and social instability among vulnerable communities in the region that had already experienced relentless wars aged by neo-colonial forces (Bah, 2015).

The conditions from two centuries of Jim Crow in the U.S., for example, that evoke “Black Rage” have hardly changed; if anything they have become camouflaged in new but more subtle and lethal structures of dehumanization and oppression (Grier and Cobbs, 1968; Manganyi, 1973). In the results from students taking the AIMS (Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards) tests in 2007, 80 percent of Black students were unable to pass the Math section. We need not even get into the decimation of the Black poor, transmogrified in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, where over 250,000 people, mostly Black, mostly poor, were never able to return to their homes and eventually had to seek a home outside New Orleans or Louisiana, while corporate white New Orleans invested in riverboat casinos to convert the city of New Orleans into a tourist paradise, for rich whites only of course, now heavily served by Latino and Latina workers. As with the horror of legal enslavement of Black people through the prison industrial complex, so too the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina cannot remain marginal to Black Studies discourse in the early 21st century. The racism surrounding Hurricane Katrina, the consequential homeless of hundreds of thousands of Black people, and the media depiction of the same people, notwithstanding, their status as U.S. citizens, as “refugees,” underscores the need for Black Studies to challenge the edifice of racist capitalism in the U.S. that persists in seeing Black people, the same people whose ancestors toiled from sunup to sundown for no pay for 246 years, as a thorny problem and as a social and economic liability in this aeon of high-tech globalization.

The Future of Black Studies

The future of Black Studies is contingent upon what we as African people do about it and the energies and resources that we as Black people invest in it. It is our community, our survival. I firmly believe that Black Studies and its correlative of the shaping, construction, and maintenance of strong Black identity, can only occur in institutions where being Black is accepted as normal as opposed to an aberration and in institutions that consider Black life valuable, “Black Lives Matter!” in the words of the slogan of the tens of thousands of protesters who marched in cities and hamlets around the country.

Following the horrific police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York in 2014, and Freddy Gray in Baltimore in 2015, and most recently, Keith Scott, a disabled man murdered by police in Charlotte in September 2016, and Terence Crutcher, a stranded motorist in Tulsa killed in 30 seconds in the same month, to name just a few, the expansion of Black Studies curricula at all levels is urgently necessitated both as a preventative and corrective measure organizationally and institutionally.

This is precisely why I contend, along with indigenous scholars like David Wilkins and Daniel Wildcat, that indigenous Indian and Black people must continue to struggle and demand that we as *indigenous and Black people be accorded the right of recognition as humans*, given the legacy of Indian dehumanization until 1879 when a federal court ruled in the case *Standing Bear v. Crook* that Indians were “persons” who could sue for racial discrimination and the absurdity of the *Dred Scott* ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857 that declared that Black people had no rights that whites were bound to respect (Wilkins, 2005). Black Studies, American Indian Studies, Mexican American Studies, Asian American Studies and other Ethnic Studies areas need to be expanded given this legacy of persistent racism and white supremacy that denies the rights of humanity to all people of color in the U.S.

We are all familiar with the systematic and consistent financial, social, and political assaults on Black Studies programs at predominantly white institutions across the country, where Black Studies is generally denied the inalienable right of self-determination and the right to hold its own within the academy. Most institutions generally *tolerate* Black Studies as a form of window dressing, as a way of portraying such institutions as *diverse* so that grants and federal monies are received. The substance of Black Studies in most institutions of higher learning is not respected, reflected for instance in the low level of faculty hiring and departmental budgets for research, graduate students, internships, scholarships, and the like. If other academic programs and disciplines are being eroded by financial restraints and budget cuts, Black Studies programs are being *decimated*, precisely because of the relatively short history of the field and the fact that it has always been viewed as a political entity that can be manipulated for cynical ideological and financial and social purposes, often to the detriment of Black people and the welfare of the most vulnerable segments of the Black community.

The future of Black/Africana Studies thus resides in the young of our community, since it was the youth of the 1950s and 1960s, and in the women, since it was the women whose culture of resistance and activism, low on rhetoric but high on action and organization, that made all the difference and resulted in the very emergence of Black Studies programs across this country. We must work concertedly with our Black youth as elders and teachers, as educators and the so-called intelligentsia, to reclaim our revolutionary Black collective and socialistic heritage, in the resistance to the edifice of capitalism, and albeit dying.

Yet, determined to wipe out our community through the toxicity of junk food and contaminated water and waste sites; and through the violence of the prison and war, or military industrial complexes, hence, the future of Black Studies rests in our ability as Black educators to maintain a revolutionary commitment to Black praxis, to action with and in tandem with the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of our community, our unabashed identification with the oppressed. We in Black Studies must work diligently and tirelessly to produce young Black intellectuals, young Black women and men, who will become the future knowledge leaders in our community. We must train these students as revolutionary intellectual cadres who can then enter Black schools and colleges and institutions and organizations, businesses and non-governmental groups, women's collectives and grassroots cooperatives, as radical change agents, as *animators*, as they say in Haiti (Aristide, 2000). The work of training Black intellectuals and professionals in areas of politics, economics, business, law, social work, public policy, public health, education, law, journalism, and the aesthetics of the performing arts (in line with Harold Cruse's argument about the central role of theater in Black Studies as community praxis) of media, art, music, and dance, is ours (Cruse, 1967). We cannot leave the most decisive role of the education of our community, our most precious resource, our children, to those who either wish them harm, or view them with contempt and disdain, or those who refuse to accord them the respect and recognize their potential as children of the Creator, of the universe, who have every right to be here, to be respected as human beings, and who are descended from people who are the earliest of human civilizations, of the wellspring of human knowledge. It is time too, for those of who are men, to move over and accept our inherent limitation of often being the *largest talkers and the smallest doers*, unlike so many of our women folk. We must elevate and propel Black women's culture and history to the fore of Black Studies if we intend to have any future, for it is Black women, women of color who uphold this world, who labor tirelessly so that we can all eat, and yet who reap only *one* percent of this world's wealth even though women are half of the world's human beings, and produce half of all food in Africa, for example (Kunnie, 2015). Black Women's Studies must be centralized in the future of Black Studies because women know how to meager resources so that it multiplies and supplies needs for all of the community, wonderfully expressed for instance in the pots of Haitian women that feed poor children and youth, and everyone in the slums of Port au Prince in Haiti. We alone as Black educators, in collaboration with other positive and radical educators of other stripes, *will make the difference*, by pouring our souls into the advancement of Black Studies, and not in assimilating into the melting pot of Eurocentric American capitalism that has burned so many people of color, and continues to do so with a vindictive vengeance, refusing to learn from the catastrophic tragedies of genocide and slavery from history.

The continued unjust incarceration of Black women and men in the United States and tacit acceptance of and national silence on Black imprisonment by the ruling class powerstructure of the country highlights the gravity of racism and its being firmly entrenched in the body politic of the nation, like a tentacle of cancerous cells that has become suffused with an internal body organ. In 1995, Paul Butler, a professor at George Washington University Law School, shocked legal scholars when he advocated that African American jurors should engage in jury nullification and refuse to convict Black defendants arrested for non-violent crimes because the ruling class system “creates and sustains the criminal breeding ground, which produces the black criminal...” and “rehabilitation is no longer a goal of the criminal justice system.” (Harris, 1997). It is this same justice system that robs the Black community of vital potential breadwinners and is a major factor contributing toward Black familial economic deprivation.

Black Studies and Liberation Today

There are a few important measures that are needed to arrest the unjust globalized system--surgical steps that are designed to excise the cancer of racism and impoverishment, including the pandemic of AIDS, which remains a killer of Black women between 35 and 50 in the U.S. and of people on the African continent, where over 3 million people are afflicted.

First, our children right from birth in the U.S. and in the African Diaspora, must be taught in ways that are rooted in ancestral cultural ways of learning and knowing, recognizing the Spirit of all things as manifestations of the infinite Creator who is omnipresent in the infinite Universe. Our new-borns and all children from K-12 must be nurtured and taught that Africa is beautiful and the source of all scientific knowledge like mathematics and astronomy, medicine and veterinary science, and that African ancestral continental and Diasporan cultures in the world are all powerful, resilient, and accurate reflections of the creative design in the Universe, neither aberrations or “mistakes” of the Creator, nor deficient, with which Eurocentrism persistently poisons our minds globally, but in fact are absolutely adequately rooted, unlike the rootless and inevitably ruthless “industrial” cultures of Europe (Boyer and Merzbach, 1991; *Cosmic Africa*, 2003). All life is sacred and we must find ways of reclaiming ancestral cultures that lived this principle. In this sense, we must *return to the source* as the scholar Amilcar Cabral recalls us, along with being conscious of the need to consistently reconnect with our ancestors and struggle to restore African lands dispossessed by colonialism and neo-colonialism, and to re-anchor Black identities in the wellspring of indigenous Africana spiritual traditions and cultural practices as iconic writers like Ayi Kwei Armah, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and Frantz Fanon remind us (Achebe, 1958, 1964, 1966; Armah, 1969, 1973, 2000; Cabral, 1973; Fanon, 1963, 1994; wa Thiong’o, 1964, 1967, 1986, 1987).

Black Studies' perennial task is to illuminate the path for us *returning to the source* so that our children may live and eventually grow into adults who will set us all free! The formation of grounded and rounded identity of Black children is a primordial occupation and vocation of Black Studies so that children don't grow up becoming dysfunctional adults with abysmally low self-esteem, depression, concealing a baseless shame from the horror of historical chattel slavery, self-degradation, and a pessimistic outlook on the world. Slavery is the shame of Europe, not Africa and African people since Africans did not initiate it as a principal mode of economic production, and did not benefit from its existence and legacy. Europe and its diaspora did, particularly in the wake of capitalism, developing after slavery and colonization.

Second, while mass incarceration in the U.S., including private prisons, escalates in the present time, we need to significantly step up efforts that are engaged in "prison-prevention" as opposed to "prison-correction."¹ For the many who are victims of drug addiction and resort to petty non-violent crimes that often result in incarceration, intervention measures need to be implemented at all levels, starting with family intervention, counseling, and support. Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and social support non-governmental organizations all need to become involved in these interventionist and prevention programs. Elders, along with enlightened youth from the community, need to be recruited in a voluntary capacity to mentor and work with young people who stray from family and social networks and who join gangs in urban communities that lead to inevitable violations of the law and arrest and conviction. Self-sacrifice is a pre-requisite for reversing and transforming the condition of personal and social alienation, depression, and frustration that lead to such situations and community responsibility is key. Black Studies is key in fostering this spirit of self-sacrifice and Black Studies educators need to personify such self-sacrifice in the spirit of Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Malcolm X, Kwame Ture, and the like. And for persons being released from prisons, counseling and support networks need to be enhanced so that such persons can be provided with opportunities for decent housing, educational training and support, and gainfully employed, much of which is practical and part of social outreach ministries in many Black churches around the country, like Trinity United Methodist Church in Chicago and Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, for example.

Third, it is critical that Black Studies educators work closely with all of our children regardless of race, class, and ethnicity so that they understand right from pre-school the fundamental nature of globalization and incarceration and that we take all the necessary steps as parents, elders, teachers, and relatives to raise the social and personal consciousness of our children on the working of the system. Children growing into adults should live with the knowledge of the truth about this world and under no illusions as to what life is really all about living in a peaceful community and in harmony with the rest of nature as opposed to viewing the world as a place for essentially making money.

Black and other multi-ethnic preschools led by conscious women and men from diverse backgrounds need to become an everyday institution in our communities. The curricula of these schools must not only be working-class centered but also deeply analytical in its essence, in exposing our children to the dysfunctional nature of the economic and social system. The instilling of values and behaviors that reflect respect for the sacredness of life and shield our children from being active consumers in a capitalist and globalized society is imperative. An adult's disposition in life is generally shaped within the first nine years of life, and as Ethnic Studies educators in particular and educators in general, we are obligated to provide our sisters and brothers teaching at pre-school and subsequently at K-12 levels with the intellectual resources in global histories and epistemologies, in diverse approaches to mathematics and science, reading and writing, history and sociology, economics and culture, and in other relevant subject matter. We must ensure that our children are protected against the normative educational system that prepares them for either prison or the military, or for participating in the system of insatiable greed and consumption innate to the capitalist system that has impoverished peoples around the globe and decimated the fragile ecological systems of creation. In this sense, our children and youth need to follow the *asili* of our ancestors of Mother Africa (for African people) and not the dualistic and hierarchical Western cultural prototype held as the norm for humankind and foisted on all of us (Ani, 1995). Similarly, all children need to be schooled in their respective ethnic histories and multi-cultural histories so that children from indigenous nations and communities of North America, from the African American community, from the Chicano-Mexicano/Latino/community, from the Asian American community, and from the European American community can understand their authentic histories of struggle and resistance to injustice and cultivate genuine mutual respect for all cultures. Chinese Americans, for instance, will come to understand the history of their communities resisting restriction of Chinese immigration laws and Japanese Americans will recall the horror of the U.S. government placing Japanese Americans in internment camps during the Pearl Harbor military conflict. European Americans will be able to reclaim their indigenous roots where women and men fought for social justice against colonization of the Irish by Britain and the Celts who struggled to preserve Celtic culture in the face of Anglo-Saxon dominance, for example.

Our children must be *conscientized* around the truth that the real crime in the world is the war against the Earth and her children, the four-leggeds, the birds, the trees, mountains, plans, rivers, oceans, seas, and creatures that walk on their bellies of the face of the Earth, and the poor and vulnerable of the world. Our youth must be taught that imprisonment is one symptom of greed by the rich in punishing the poor and that they must be educated and conscientized so that they do not end up as grist either for the prison industrial or military industrial complexes.

Our children and youth need to understand in carefully crafted discussions that those corporate tycoon millionaires and billionaires like Bernard Ebbers, Arthur Anderson, Martha Stewart, and Bernard Madoff who benefit from the parasitic exploitation of the impoverished are *not* the role models of success as the media establishment depicts them. They have made millions and billions from an unjust capitalist, imperialist, racist, and sexist system that generally employs outsourced cheap and underpaid labor in the sweatshops and assembly plants of trans-national corporations in countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Wall Street thrives on drug-laundering money, as do the largest banks in the world like HSBC, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America (Ruppert, 2004; Kunnie, 2015). The deaths of 1,000 Bangladeshi garment workers, some of whom earned \$50 per month, at the Rana Plaza in Dacca on April 24, 2013 is a shaking reminder that the clothes we purchase at huge department stores like JC Penney, Dillards, Macys, Target, and the like, all derive from slave labor where workers are forced to work under the most dangerous of conditions, including unreliable buildings (Blake and Hossain, 2013). The garment industry in Bangladesh is one of the largest in that country and the world, some \$20 billion in value, and has now been exposed for being an industry based on the sweat and blood of impoverished workers. *Not all that glitters on the outside is gold or god!*

We must teach our children that the Black Panthers were not criminals, but freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives and vocations to advance Black liberation and other liberation struggles and to resist capitalism in a spirited manner, for which they were murdered, like Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, or imprisoned for life like Al Washington and Eddie Conway. Despite personal differences and contradictions, the Black Panthers signified a positive symbol in the Black community in the 1960s and 1970s that stood tall to demand justice for the Black community, and who provided breakfast programs and medical clinics for the Black poor (Foner, 1995; Morrison, 1995; Jones, 1998; Cleaver and Katsiaficas, 2001; Abu-Jamal, 2003). Similarly, Latina resisters to capitalist and racist injustice like Delores Huerta and White resisters to slavery like John Brown at Harpers Ferry and White women like Dorothy Day who sacrificed their personal security for justice for the impoverished should become standard reading literature for our young people.

All educated children cannot afford to be shielded from the truth. At the University of Arizona, Africana Studies in conjunction with the African American Studies Department at the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) formulated a weekly Saturday Success School, in which diverse teachers, students, and community members in math, writing, and reading, with parental involvement, mentored 60 diverse students. The program ran from 2005-2008 and was eventually dissolved due to the downgrading of Ethnic Studies within TUSD in 2009.

Black Studies educators must become involved in enabling and empowering working class African communities, particularly our youth and women, in supporting people who are on death-row and unjustly incarcerated with life sentences or excessively long sentences like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Jamil Abdullah Al Amin, Jalil Muntaqim, Herman Bell, Kevin Cooper, Eddie Conway, Sundiata Acholi, Cinque McGee, Douglas “Chief” Stankewitz on death row for 39 years, and many at San Quentin Correctional Center in California especially, and in organizing and mobilizing all freedom and justice-loving people against the prison industrial and the military industrial complexes.

Fourth, it is imperative that we as educators underscore the class antagonisms and contradictions within the Black community and other communities that the Black, Brown, Yellow and White poor are most vulnerable in the enslavement project of the state so that we can identify with the aspirations of the working class and the poor. We need to “de-eliticize” and “de-bourgeoisize” our philosophical disposition and personal academic and social cultures so that we are not beholden to the designs of the bourgeois classes in our communities, which generally reflect the propensity toward affirming and advancing within the status quo of capitalism, patriarchy, and militarism. The most significant leaders in the Black community are behind bars, and we need to demand their unconditional release. More classes on the prison industrial complex and the military industrial complex and the concatenation of enslavement implicit within these sectors at high school, college, and university levels are necessary. As an Africana Studies educator in a college and university setting, I receive regular mail from incarcerated people of color in Arizona, requesting legal assistance and resources that women and men can study about the truth of this system and the world, and the role that the prison system plays in furthering the enslavement of people of color. Educators need to become involved in offering classes within the prison system itself and volunteer their time toward empowering the disfranchised and voiceless behind bars since it is this suppressed and enslaved class that provides us with a candid picture of real life in the shadows in our society and world.

Malcolm X, Huey Newton, George Jackson, Angela Davis, Elijah Muhammed, Kevin Cooper, Jamil Abdullah Al Amin, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Jalil Bottom are some of the persons who have been the most articulate spokespersons in exposing the true nature of oppression from behind bars. It is critical that Black and other working class women and persons oppressed for their sexual orientation be at the center of these educational programs so that the evils of sexism, patriarchy, and homophobia are practically expunged from our community.

Fifth, Black Studies educators and other Ethnic Studies educators must organize in conjunction with other oppressed segments of the nation and world, with indigenous people, with the Chicano-Mexicano movements, the radical labor movements in North America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America, the Venezuelan and Cuban revolutionary movements, the Haitian revolutionary movement, the Puerto Rican independence movement, *Abahlali base Majondolo*, the Landless Peoples Movement in Azania/South Africa, the Maasai Movement for Ancestral Lands, the San people struggling for restoration of dispossessed lands and protection of their culture in Africa, the Palestinian liberation movement, the Aboriginal Liberation movement in Australia, the indigenous Maori liberation movement in Aoteroa (New Zealand), the Dalit liberation movement of the “Untouchables” in India, the indigenous Adivasi struggles in Nepal, the Dayak struggling to protect their ancestral lands and forests in Sarawak, Malaysia, the indigenous Saami struggles in Scandinavia, and the movements of oppressed and colonized people around the world, so that as fragmented and oppressed people we realize that we are not in this struggle *alone* (Kunnie, 2015). The system that incarcerates the poor under the globalization regime is the same system that is bent on maximizing profits at the cost of forcing the impoverished children, women, youth, and men of this world to go hungry. Education must always maintain a radical humane and life-affirming edge, and even while assuming a pro-working class, gender-complementary, anti-elitist, anti-colonialist anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic posture, be constantly internationalist in its work and connections. In this vein, educators need to be involved in the movement for reparations and justice for enslavement of Black and other oppressed peoples, particularly restoration of dispossessed lands of indigenous peoples in North America known as Turtle Island to many indigenous peoples. Most importantly, Africa must become decolonized and its lands and resources returned unconditionally, accompanied with reparations to the teeming millions of indigenous Africans in Africa and the descendants of Africa in the Diaspora (Kunnie, 2000).

Finally, Black Studies must concern itself with nutritional education for the transformation of the current status of unhealthy Black life, given the very unhealthy effects of processed food in the U.S. that continues to take a lethal toll on all children, especially, and the human population in general. Food is a commodity within a capitalist system and produced for the maximization of profits by trans-national corporations with little concern for nutrition, well-being, and holistic health.

The toxicity of genetically modified organisms (GMO) that has enveloped food production in the U.S. and in many other parts of the capitalist world, where 80% of the corn, soy, and cotton produced in this country is now genetically modified, is seriously problematic, because GMO-food is generally cultivated with the infusion of lethal pesticides and insecticides that have been known to cause serious health effects, including cancer, tumors, obesity, digestive problems, and other debilitating ailments.

Given that almost a third of Black people in the U.S. (along with the rest of the human population) suffer from obesity and almost 60 percent are overweight just as the rest of the society is, Black Studies is called upon to educate children particularly and the community generally on the evils of GMO-produced food and the need to radically change course and diets so that the Black community engages in healthy eating lifestyles and habits, cultivates more family and community gardens with non-GMO seeds, and shifts away from eating processed food, an endemic to the U.S. national food diet while refraining from heavy meat consumption (where cattle, chickens, and pigs are generally injected with destructive growth hormones) (Null, 2013). Equally important is the need for Black people and all people living in the U.S. to walk each day to school, to work, to the store, to visit others, and the like, and to break the cycle of dependence on fossil fuels that has wreaked havoc on our global climate and is dumping twice the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that Mother Earth can recycle—32-34 gigatons--when Earth can only absorb 16 gigatons of such gases (Kunnie, 2015). Global warming and climate change threaten our very existence as humans and all life on the planet. Walking and refraining from driving is the simple manner to reconnecting with our dear original Mother Earth, and our ancestors, exemplified in the life of John Francis who walked for 22 years in respect of the Earth and in challenging the use of the automobile and motorized transportation (Francis, 2008). This is the only manner that future generations of Black families will become healthy and live fuller and more meaningful lives in ways that the ancestors of African people intended for us all.

Conclusion

Black Studies was born from the resistance to cultural genocide evoked by white supremacy and the brutalization of capitalism for over four centuries. As an academic discipline, it has always been rooted in Black radical and revolutionary praxis geared toward the total liberation of oppressed and colonized African people and others dehumanized by slavery, colonization, and global capitalism. It can never waver from this core vocational calling or be seduced by or bought off by the pathological capitalist system.

It must continue to courageously engage in research that disseminates the Black truth about this world of economic and social injustice, ecological annihilation, and the rape of Mother Earth and the ongoing destruction of lands of cultures of indigenous peoples the world over. Black Studies must remain true to its roots of liberation...by any means necessary. In this manner, the ancestors of Black people will always be honored and find a resting place...in a truly liberated, truly decolonized, and truly re-spiritualized Africa and African Diaspora.

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