

# Releasing a Tradition

## Diasporic Epistemology and the Decolonized Curriculum

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### Abstract

With educational campaigns that ask ‘Why isn’t my professor Black?’ and ‘Why is my curriculum white?’ there is a push directed towards institutions to provide an education that is diverse, inclusive and representative of the liberal ideals that many promote. This is being done primarily through a discourse of decolonization. In this article, I consider the formulation for a truly decolonized curriculum by first assessing what constitutes a ‘colonial’ education, especially one that is deserving of decolonization. I then discuss the parameters of educational decolonization, by thinking with decolonial and anti-colonial thinkers, to assess the tenability of a decolonized curriculum. Ultimately, I suggest what forms a decolonized curriculum might take by drawing on diaspora theory and by describing broader programmatic requirements within the framework of the Black Radical Tradition that offers decolonial epistemologies as a broad praxis for education.

**Keywords:** Black Radical Tradition, citationality, curriculum, decolonization, diaspora, epistemologies, modernity

In 1948 my grandfather made his way from Jamaica to London on the *Irpinia*, a ship that over its life had many routes and services, but from the late 1940s and 1950s served to carry many West Indians east to the United Kingdom. His arrival was a part of that great post-war migration that would become identified with a ship that arrived from the Caribbean in that same year, the HMT *Empire Windrush*. My grandfather went to pursue further education although there is uncertainty around precisely where he went to school – call it a product of his generation’s reticence. When my grandfather arrived in London, he had joined what by then had been an established and exciting community of Caribbeans for whom the city was the site of a new diasporic identity formation. Stuart Hall, citing George Lamming, notes that this era was when many of these travellers first became ‘West Indian’ (2017: 44).



This new collective identity, forged alongside the pursuits of economic opportunity through direct labour and education, produced thinkers, artists and activists who would go on to become luminary architects of political decolonization across the colonies. Two generations after many of the ideas of colonial liberation were seeded within the imperial institutions that attracted many like my grandfather to Great Britain's shores, those same universities remain central to an articulation of liberation through the political discourse of decolonization. However, with contemporary campaigns that ask 'Why isn't my professor Black?' and 'Why is my curriculum white?' the anti-colonial push is now directed towards those same institutions and the very heart of what had been their imperial imperatives: colonial curricula.

In considering what a 'decolonial' education is, I first think about what work a colonial education did for those who were, in fact, colonial subjects. After determining that what makes for a colonized curriculum is a rooting in Western epistemology, I discuss the parameters of educational decolonization by thinking with decolonial and anti-colonial thinkers to assess the tenability of a decolonized curriculum. Lastly, I suggest what forms a decolonized curriculum might take and describe its broader programmatic requirements by drawing on diaspora theory and Black epistemological thought.

### **The colonial curriculum: reconciling modernity through decolonization**

In his posthumously published memoir, *Familiar Stranger*, Stuart Hall writes, 'It was the colonial education system which, for good or ill, conscripted me into modernity' (2017: 109). Modernity, understood here as 'Western' modernity, has been inextricably tied to the Enlightenment for many. Moreover, the Enlightenment was itself the great facilitator of the industrial revolution, liberalism and, most relevant to this discussion, the development of discrete intellectual disciplines and of public education (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). The very idea of modernity has been 'woven into the teleological and triumphalist Western story, in which everything "progresses" to its pinnacle of achievement in Western enlightenment' (Hall 2017: 124). This telos of modernity was inherent in the code of colonial education and was readily recognized as the means by which Caribbeans could join the ranks of the modern. It was such a belief that brought my grandfather across the Atlantic to further his studies. However, family stories tell of how my grandfather was barred from becoming a schoolteacher in Great Britain, despite a first-class degree. Indeed, Hall speaks to that experience. In reflecting on modernity as represented by developed Western societies, he notes that 'Caribbean people could read about it; we could mimic it from afar, but it seemed we were destined to experience it second-hand' (2017: 221). Nevertheless, at least during his secondary and at the beginning of his tertiary schooling, education for Hall was among the "enlightened" elements of the colonial project' (2017: 109). Modernity through education involved an expansion beyond the limitations of life on a small island, and Hall states further

that, 'in the very moment of conscripting me, it [education] loosened the grip of that colonization of the mind' (2017: 109).

For West Indians, and especially for those like Hall who were born and came of age in the interwar period, education in the Caribbean was paradoxical in that it was an oddly liberating mechanism that promised an open horizon of opportunity. However, it simultaneously reproduced the peripherality of the colonies and their inhabitants. With its overwhelmingly Anglo-centric worldview, such education was biased in favour of Victorian values, with a pedagogy focused on English literature, English history and the classics (Hall 2017: 113). Nevertheless, this education was foundational for the Caribbean middle class. Hall's generation were closest to the promise of independence, which openly contested racial and class dynamics, and they had become increasingly troubled by the 'coloniality' of formal education, particularly its class bias. However, for the previous generation, colonial education remained the means by which respectable and therefore upwardly mobile Caribbean subjectivity was made.

For thinkers of that generation like C. L. R. James, whose Marxist and radical credentials remain unquestioned, this fact seemed to have been neatly reconciled, with his open relishing of the colonial qualities of his education provided to him by headmasters in Trinidad directly out of Oxford and Cambridge. In fact, James wrote, 'Thackeray, not Marx, bears the heaviest responsibility for me' (2013: 32). Although James had always struggled to balance his two loves of literature and sport, he wrote that by the time he had left school, he had educated himself into 'a member of the British middle class with literary gifts' (2013: 32). His education was comprised of Thackeray, whose *Vanity Fair* James read several times over his life, as well as Dickens, George Eliot and the poetry of Shelley, Keats, Byron, Milton and Spenser (2013: 28).

Students who are new to James are always baffled by his admiration for the colonial system of education. They are critical of how an anti-colonial thinker of James's stature could be so enamoured with colonial education. James argued that each system of education 'suited its time' (2013: 32), and he did not see this as merely an uncritical position towards colonial education. Rather, as a historicist, he thought that it served a purpose. In a reflection on his education and work, James offers some clarification:

I want to make it clear that the origins of my work and my thoughts are to be found in Western European literature, Western European history, and Western European thought. To avoid misunderstanding, I must say that I think the people of the underdeveloped countries accept me and feel that I have had a lot to say that is valid about the underdeveloped countries. That is important. But what I want to make clear is that I learnt this quality in the literature, history, and philosophy of Western Europe. I didn't *have* to be a member of an underdeveloped country, though I know a lot of people who are, and yet don't know anything about those countries. I didn't *have* to be an exploited African. It is in the history and philosophy and literature of Western Europe that I have gained my understanding not only of Western Europe's civilization, but of the importance of the underdeveloped countries ... We live in

one world, and we have to find out what is taking place in the world. And I, a man of the Caribbean, have found that it is in the study of Western literature, Western philosophy and Western history that I have found out the things I have found out, even about the underdeveloped countries. (James and Anthony 1969: 73–74)

One way of interpreting James here is to say that he is arguing that an apparatus of comprehension exists beyond the European qualities or commitments of that education, and that this is mediated within, or at least through, colonial education. Furthermore, James recognizes the painful fact that European prescriptions and orders have organized his world. Therefore, in order to know the world, it may be necessary for one to enter it through a European framework. The Caribbean intellectual historian Paget Henry believed that thinkers such as James had answered the demand of anti-colonial action through the colonial context of education by way of ‘signifying systems that had been semiolinguistically reorganized and deeply influenced by the imperial relationship with European culture’ (2000: 49). This approach, Henry suggests, allowed for a deconstruction of European colonial thought through appropriation, and enabled the production of original alternatives for Caribbean liberation (2000: 50). Today we might think of the colonial order as being the complete foreclosure of freedom and liberation. However, for James and his generation it was the only resource from which they could will and produce them, or at the very least, their ideation.

Earlier I discussed the use of the apparatus of colonial education for material improvement in the case of my grandfather. Likewise, Hall demonstrates its capacity to open new intellectual and experiential possibilities, despite the troubling politics associated with it. The point made in these examples is the same point made by James, namely that a colonial education provides a ripe basis from which to mount a programme of intellectual decolonization. This is a move that astutely and subversively shifts the relations of power. Returning to the above quotation by James, a simple emphasis completely reveals its decolonizing potential, and indicates his intention: ‘It is *in* the history and philosophy and literature of Western Europe that I have gained my understanding not only of Western Europe’s civilization, but of the importance of the under-developed countries...’ (James and Anthony 1969: 73–74, emphasis added). James shows us with a single sentence, with a single preposition even, that the centrality of Europe in the European intellectual traditions and disciplines can be questioned, if not repositioned. There are also other traditions within them, and the foundations for other disciplines. Furthermore, he does this by emplacing himself geographically as ‘a man of the Caribbean’, a location from which he can also legitimately comprehend the world. What James is encouraging us to do, then, is to engage in an epistemological decentring. The question we face is how to advance this decolonial decentring that James inspires, particularly through a decolonized curriculum. In order to do this, we must first consider the process of decolonization.

## Decolonization and the decentring of coloniality

Challenging the colonial world is not a rational confrontation of viewpoints. It is not a discourse on the universal, but the impassioned claim by the colonized that their world is fundamentally different.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Following Frantz Fanon, decolonization is a programme of political transformation that has as its intention the remedying of an intractable, systematic and structural inequality. This is the fundamental difference that he refers to in the above quotation. In the first two pages of his seminal *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon defines the process of decolonization in almost a dozen ways. Over a few paragraphs, Fanon claims that decolonization ‘sets out to change the order of the world’, is ‘an agenda for total disorder’, should be understood as a ‘history-making movement’ in the ‘encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces’ that ‘never goes unnoticed’, and, by focusing on and fundamentally altering being, produces ‘the creation of new men’ and ‘implies the urgent need to thoroughly challenge the colonial situation’ (1963: 2). Despite this litany of definitions, his first and seemingly most categorical is that decolonization is ‘quite simply the *substitution* of one “species” of mankind by another’ (1963: 1, emphasis added). While it may be needless to say that much proverbial ink has been spilled over the many productive interpretations of this statement, there is great clarifying value in applying this particular definition of decolonization to the decolonization of education, particularly to the decolonization of the curriculum.

In 2014, the influential campaigns ‘Why isn’t my professor Black?’ and ‘Why is my curriculum white?’ enveloped the UK. They raised questions regarding who was teaching in higher education institutions, together with who and what was being taught, as crucial matters of not only employment equality on the basis of race, but also of pedagogical representation. The question of problematic pedagogical representation in the curriculum has deep roots in the Western epistemological tradition, especially in the project of the Enlightenment. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that this tradition is rooted in imperialism and operates using a ‘flexible positional superiority’. In it, both Western knowledge and knowledge gained elsewhere confirm Western ideals and representations by means of authorial authority ‘over the known, and yet to become known, world’ (1999: 60). Furthermore, Tuhiwai Smith states that colonial education was the primary agent for this positional superiority as schools, as a critical part of the historical processes of imperialism and colonialism, ‘were informed by a much more comprehensive system of knowledge’ that linked universities and imperial culture (1999: 64–65). In Fanon’s articulation, substitution was primarily rooted in the question of political transformation. Here the notion of substitution aptly serves to demonstrate how intellectual decolonization necessitates the epistemological substitution of one form of thought for another.

The decolonization of curricula therefore requires an expropriation of the long-standing bases of Western educational traditions. Questions such as those asked by the campaigns noted above strike at the very heart of those traditions. These campaigns were encouraged by the globally successful impetus of Black Lives Matter, and while resentment regarding the most recent austerity measures that seemed to be crippling their futures was still fresh. It is appropriate to say that these campaigns evoked the imperative of Paulo Freire's philosophy of education as a political praxis for liberation from oppression (1970). They were fighting a similar form of oppression to the one Freire had recognized, which could be considered an iteration of Carter G. Woodson's idea of 'miseducation', in which education is tantamount to an indoctrination that supports subjective notions and practices of inferiority (1990). These campaigns recognized the absence of diverse narratives and inclusive epistemologies in the higher education curriculum. This was particularly true in places like London with multicultural populations, which had been brought together through the harrowing history of colonialism that required recognition.

These campaigns demanded what Catherine Walsh has termed 'pedagogical actions' that move beyond defensive claims to those of 'offense, insurgence and (re)existence circumscribed in/by the continuous construction, creation, and maintenance of the "otherwise"' (2015: 11). Walsh's 'otherwise' proffers 'other ways of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, feeling, doing and living in relation that challenge the hegemony and universality' of those of Western modernity and its educational logic. They exist in 'the borders, edges, fissures and cracks of the modern/colonial order that which continues to be (re)molded, (re)constituted and (re)shaped both against and despite coloniality' (2015: 12). They not only demand the recognition of their absence or their marginality, but their charged cries declare a non-right for the existence of the system as it has been. In doing so, they discursively (at least) subvert the universalisms of Western scholarship (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012: 49).

The centrality of Europe in Western theoretical knowledge has brought its colonial and postcolonial trappings into posterity. Efforts at decolonizing education thus necessarily have to tackle how to reconcile the place of Europe within curricula. Indeed, it is the very conceptual assignation of Europe and its coordinate conceptual value and power that the aforementioned campaigns and even this volume are at pains to address. However, there is a danger that even in the subversion of Western, European epistemological dominance, its centrality remains constant. The key decolonial dilemma is the necessary persistence of the colonial referent. This dilemma is similar to the paradox of cultural innovation under colonial conditions that Fanon details in his essay on 'National Culture' (1963: 177). Therefore, we must aim our efforts at more than a 'conceptual reformulation that seeks little more than an inversion of the colonial habit of deploying "Europe" as the universal subject of all history' (Scott 1995: 192). However, if disciplines control the production of discourse (Foucault 1972: 224), how do we then move

beyond disciplinary constructions of knowledge in a manner that is affirmative of narratives beyond Euro-centric formulations?

Meditating on the decolonization of anthropology, Allen and Jobson (2016) suggest that we dispense with discrete disciplinary claims to expertise or specialism in favour of inter- or trans-disciplinary breadth. They recommend this as a means of countering the normalized attempts to 'preserve a Eurocentric canon of hallmark thinkers' through acts of omission and occlusion (131). They argue that the founding and proliferation of Black Studies departments in the United States has done much to advance this endeavour (137). Furthermore, they claim that such departments help to question the boundaries of formal disciplines by embracing a 'broader discursive matrix' that opens the possibility of including thinkers that would otherwise be overlooked in disciplinary historiographies and traditions (136). There is a danger, however, that such departments move beyond their founding imperatives, which importantly have been driven not only by intellectual pursuits, but also at the insurgent political insistence of Black communities. Furthermore, as largely peripheral sites within Eurocentric universities, Black Studies departments face managerial discipline that in many ways circumscribes the study of Black life. While I am sure that the establishment of Black Studies programmes in the UK would go some distance to satisfying some of the structural racial and representative disparities inherent in the composition of the university, a deep consideration of the interrogative power of 'Why is my curriculum white?' begs the broader reformulation that David Scott recommends.

### **Diaspora epistemology and decolonial praxis: releasing a tradition**

The questioning of why the curriculum is so white deploys the decolonial strategy of what Walter D. Mignolo calls 'shifting the geography of reason' (2010: 172). Mounted by subjects who are considered less human, this strategy, in turn, identifies the act of their dehumanization as an act lacking in humanity by 'imperial actors, institutions, and knowledges' (Mignolo 2010: 174). In other words, the question flags the perversion of the overbearing whiteness of the curriculum. To do so is a form of 'de-colonial thinking, de-colonial doing and the de-colonial option', which forms Mignolo's notion of 'epistemic disobedience', the 'point of non-return' of civil disobedience aimed at modern Western epistemology (2010: 173). While Mignolo's prescriptions are revolutionary in their capacity to undermine the 'logic of coloniality' (Mignolo 2011), their meaningful and direct application is difficult in contexts of decolonization in which coloniality is experienced as a vestige whose recognition is contestable, and exists within contemporary curricula. After all, one can argue that the whiteness of the curriculum is merely a reflection of the qualitatively determined makeup of any particular discipline. The decolonial process is one of 'de-linking' entirely from Western epistemology (Mignolo 2011). What is needed, then, is a means of reading, recognizing and reconciling the literature produced from the epistemologies of the 'otherwise'. Thankfully, there are a few examples of this.

Prototypically, we can look to the great era of Black or ‘new’ letters that swirled the world through such Black diasporic circuits of thought, performance and activism as the Harlem Renaissance and Pan-Africanism. These intellectual traditions supported separation from the predominance of Eurocentric epistemological influences. New letters wrote previously overlooked experiences into existence and ‘their very articulation signified protest directed against cultural repression on the one hand and racial self-hatred on the other’ (Clark 2009: 9). It is important to recognize that this period was brought to fruition during colonization. In fact, this period should be viewed as being at least a century long, beginning with the rise to prominence of the slave narrative form, as well as the burgeoning purchase and circulation of the Black novel in the United States and Europe, and the Black journalistic writing of the mid 1800s (Lee 2010). Cedric Robinson (1983) would call the thrust of this work the ‘Black Radical Tradition’, which continues to produce a tradition in its radically accumulative manner. Scott writes that ‘traditions are more than temporal modes of narrativization; they are also modes of authorization’ (2013: 3). What becomes authorized in the naming of a scholarly tradition is the basis for claims of participation in legitimate discourses. The mobilization of a tradition has a radical potential because, as Tuhiwai Smith notes, the primary justification of colonizers was that as the colonized,

we could not use our minds or intellects. We could not invent things, we could not create institutions or history, we could not imagine, we could not produce anything of value, we did not know how to use land and other resources from the natural world, we did not practice the ‘arts’ of civilization. By lacking such virtues, we disqualified ourselves, not just from civilization but from humanity itself. (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 25)

The formulation of a tradition is necessary against such a presumption, especially in the extant ways in which it continues to operate in academe, such as in the secondary designation and consideration of the work of scholars of colour. This designation occurs by way of discursive modifiers that emphasize, for example, that the ‘Black’ in disciplinary contributions to anthropology, philosophy and other disciplines is founded upon a primarily experiential or biological epistemology. Considering the analytic power of the Black body ‘as essential to alternative non-patriarchal–non-Eurocentric mappings’ in contemporary scholarship, or what she calls ‘embodied-black-situated-knowledge,’ Katherine McKittrick asks the important question: how is ‘knowledge tethered to an analytics of embodiment that can only posit black knowledge as biologic knowledge?’ (2016: 4). This mode of analysis is a foreclosure of the potential of Blackness as a distinct analytic, but also of the potential of Black scholars. What is required, then, is a Fanonian troubling of disciplinary thought, not only through a call to use the condition of blackness to ‘stretch’ Western analysis (1963: 5), but to produce a radical interdisciplinary form of study. How, then, do we release this tradition?



Reflecting on the manner in which the new letters movement produced the construct of the African diaspora as a generative referent for Black displacement in the New World, literary theorist Vèvè Clark offers a means of reclaiming a tradition of Black thought and scholarship. For Clark, new letters embodied a world of cultural difference that required a facility for what she called 'diaspora literacy'. Diaspora literacy allowed textual comprehension from within an original cultural frame of reference that expands well beyond Western signification (2009: 10). This comprehension arises from a multicultural and multilingual familiarity, in which referents release their mnemonic capacity of a 'learned tradition' through cross-diasporic recognition in names such as 'Popol Vuh, Legba, Belain d'Esnameuc, Nanny, José Martí, Bigger Thomas, and Marie [Vieux-]Chauvet' (Clark 2009: 11). Therefore, diaspora literacy implies an intimacy between the language and folklore of diasporic regions. Clark admits that this form of literacy demands a breadth of knowledge. However, given its position within lived and textual diasporic experiences, it can be drawn on through already established historical, social, cultural and political pathways. It might be thought that such a necessity, or even the request, to gain diasporic fluency exceeds reason. However, Mignolo (2011) reminds us that the codification of Western epistemology was born out of a similar comparative, heterogeneous and discursive formation. The 'Western code', which has been in operation since the Renaissance, was generated from six European imperial languages: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German and English. Each language has taken its turn, with the most recent being English, at preserving the conceit of the superiority of Western knowledge. While the Western code 'serves not all humanity, but only a small portion of it' (Mignolo 2011: xiii), diaspora literacy is a narrative and reading skill. As a discursive strategy, it provides a capability for comprehension through what Clark proffers as the 'mastery of form', the 'deformation of mastery' and the 'reformation of form' (2009: 11). This reformative approach deconstructs the claim of mastery by radically rejecting its teleology through the recognition of the unending process of becoming. Clark provides the following example of music:

Black music has provided examples of contextual and formal re-presentations by mastering form/deforming mastery and reforming form. John Coltrane's [recording of] 'My Favorite Things' masters the text by replicating its melody, deforms that same text by sounding on it and the listener's implied identification with Broadway fantasy, and through improvisation reforms the conflicting registers it has established in the process of their articulation. (Clark 2009: 11)

The decolonial power of Clark's theory is that it pushes us to 'defamiliarize our tidy, binary constructs' (2009:16). This defamiliarization occurs through her counter-dialectical formulation of 'marasa consciousness', which is based on the Haitian Vodoun sign for the divine twins, or the marasa, and invites a textual and therefore philosophical analysis 'beyond the binary' (Clark 2009: 12). This analysis occurs by conceiving reading, thinking and theorizing as a cyclical, spiral

relationship, rather than one that follows a Hegelian formula and is invested in the constant production of oppositional binarism. Through the *marasa*, improvisation encourages originality. We have seen this in practice within the various examples of diasporic cultural formation, such as in creolized formulations that in their improvisational character produce endlessly generative configurations. Returning to Black music, we can see the impact of improvisational production in the multitudinous genres that continue to influence the global sonic aesthetic, which we can easily trace back to jazz, hip hop, reggae and techno, and which are all musical forms born out of Black diasporic reason. By reason, I mean the philosophical empirics from which theory is born.

In his *Development Arrested*, Clyde Woods beautifully articulates what he calls a 'blues epistemology', which poor African-Americans in the Delta and Black Belt South formulated as a 'system of explanation that informs their daily life, organizational activity, culture, religions and social movements' (2017: 16). For Woods, the blues necessarily extends beyond its position as a widely recognized musical tradition to a social and economic form of theorization. This transformation is possible by appropriately locating the blues as a tradition of criticism through artistic production, which is traced back to life on the plantation (Woods 2017: 20). The blues, as representative of Clark's model of diaspora literacy, then opens up seemingly endless possible arrangements for scholarly intervention. It releases a tradition of recognizing intellectual forms that can be read across genres, and ultimately across disciplines, enabling a formula for gleaning insight that skips easily between epistemological frames. This capacity is what I can only define as being truly 'decolonial'.

The prescriptions of Clark and Woods noted above suggest that rethinking the categories of form and recognition, respectively, does much to reframe the qualification of valid epistemologies. However, the advancing of diaspora epistemology as praxis requires methodologies for its implementation. Here I want to suggest that we consider the use and power of citation.

Citation is a critical exercise in the politics of epistemology. Citation is a technology of exclusion and inclusion that actively delimitates disciplinary belonging and reproduction (Mott and Cockayne 2017). Moreover, the curricula charged with being colonial demonstrate a citational praxis of exclusion and non-recognition. Drawing on McKittrick's (2014) work on the citation of Black violence in scholarship, we can extend her analysis to consider the broad use of citation as a decolonial methodology. Where citation serves as a form of certainty and accountancy that compiles and confirms scholarly composition, decolonial scholars must think citationally as a means of exercising acknowledgement, reclamation and recuperation in identifying forms of dispossession in colonial curricula. Doing so 'reveals the limits of our present order' and opens the imagining of new modes of thought (McKittrick 2014: 19). In other words, we must recognize the violence of colonization, not just as the abuse and exploitation of territory and human beings, but in the actual making of Western knowledge through omission. By making, I am referring not only to the disciplinary foundations of past centuries, but also to

the mundane contemporary formulation of syllabi, thus making clear the epistemic violence inherent in what is often thought of as the most anodyne objects of university curricula. This, I would argue, is a most disobedient epistemology that declaratively states that curricular decolonization, like all decolonization, is not merely metaphorical (Tuck and Yang 2012), but is rooted in actual material claims of expropriation, disenfranchisement, lasting inequality and, to quote Woodson again, 'miseducation'.

In practice, this charge will more often than not be either vehemently rebuffed or responded to with protestations of honest, innocent ignorance regarding the existence of otherwise overlooked scholars. In her famous 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House', Audre Lorde recognizes such a move as an 'evasion of responsibility' and a 'cop-out' (2007: 113). Another response might be the unimaginative, even perfunctory, inclusions of overlooked scholars in subjects that constrict or flatten the breadth and full extension of their intellectual contributions through sequestered existences in syllabi themes and weeks (queer, indigenous, feminist, Black) that speak only to their most obvious dimension of identity. Such are the epistemological 'tools' to which Lorde refers, namely intellectual and organizational strategies that mean 'that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable' (Lorde 2007: 111). Therefore, if we are to conceptually disrupt the principles of curricular discourse as a politics of intellectual inquiry and scholarly production, we must view curricular decolonization not only as a calling of attention to epistemic violence and its spectacular intensity. We must also, perhaps more controversially, put working academics on notice for what I can only call epistemic incuriosity.

The matter of citationality is not simply one that illuminates the gaps of recognition or knowledge among the purveyors of Eurocentric Western academic references. There is also the simultaneous responsibility of the decolonial scholar (and activist) to make the most productive use of their scholarship. This is important to note as the central demand to decolonize the curriculum may possibly indicate a sense of ignorance due to a structural lack of exposure to 'decolonial' literature. Furthermore, for scholars invested in epistemological decolonization who also happen to be located positionally, physically and reputationally within the West, it is essential to acknowledge that they continue to uphold, and even dangerously benefit from, the inheritance of the same Western privilege that they claim to denounce.

## **Conclusion**

What I have offered in this article is ultimately a means of moving towards a praxis of decolonial epistemology. The aim is that this epistemology produces a means of enacting scholarship that is not simply a response to colonial circumstances, but a genuine process of transcending them. This occurs by first recognizing the openings that have always existed in colonial constructs. If colonial epistemologies had truly been proprietary, then the decolonial forebears that I have discussed here

would have experienced little more than existential and epistemic despair. That they were able to theorize from their respective positions of subjugation has meant that a tradition, for one a Black Radical Tradition, was able to be born. In recognizing that tradition, it is essential that methodologies be established for its reproduction and circulation. What this requires is a decolonial de-linking that explodes the boundaries of disciplines, but is mindful to recall that decolonial epistemologies are unlimited with regard to where their contributions may take hold.

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