AUTHOR(S): HARMS SMITH, L. and NATHANE, M.

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Article

#NotDomestication #NotIndigenisation: Decoloniality in Social Work Education

Linda Harms Smith
orcid.org/0000-0003-4686-0906
Robert Gordon University, Scotland
l.h.smith@rgu.ac.uk

Motlalepule Nathane
orcid.org/0000-0002-0748-5683
University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
Motlalepule.Nathane@wits.ac.za

Abstract

This article argues that South African social work education, situated in Western modernism and broadly within the ideological project of colonialism and racist capitalism, should move from knowledge and discourses which are domesticating and oppressive, and do essential decolonising work. It explores colonialism and post-colonialism and the politics of social work knowledge, it describes the processes of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, and then it describes the work of decolonisation. In order to move from coloniality and domestication, which means neither indigenisation nor Africanisation, social work education must 1) reclaim and repossess truths and narratives about the history of social work in South Africa, 2) explore ideology underlying its knowledge and discourses, 3) facilitate critical conscientisation and cultivate a critical and anti-colonial approach, and 4) include anti-colonial theorists in the curriculum. It provides two examples of courses which facilitate such a process.

Keywords: decoloniality; critical social work; ideology; anti-colonial approach; anti-colonial theorists

Introduction

> What, fundamentally, is colonisation? To agree on what it is not: neither evangelisation, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. To admit once for all, without flinching at the consequences, that the decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies. (Aimé Césaire 1972, 32)

That the statement above from *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire (1972) is hardly known among social work students, underscores the indictment against social work education in an African context: a "failure to decolonise is an oppressive act".

South African social work education, situated in Western modernism and broadly within the ideological project of racist capitalism, requires an interrogation of its assumptions and discourses. If social justice, empowerment and dignity form the basis of the aims of social work (IASSW 2014), then it should engage with issues of ideology, power relations, oppression and decolonisation.

The "decolonial turn" is broadly evident globally (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2016) and not unique to the South African context, where it found particular expression in the recent "battle cry" of the student #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements of 2015 and 2016. Social work, a profession seeking social justice and liberation of peoples, itself stands accused of its own coloniality and domestication (Harms Smith 2013). Its epistemology and discourse, in the South African context, require a process of decolonisation (ASASWEI 2016).

Understanding the imperative for decolonisation resonates with the description of critical social work as being "concerned with the analysis and transformation of power relations at every level of social work practice" (Healey 2005, 172).

However, the unique South African context of colonisation and apartheid is a deeply manifested psychopolitical reality at both individual and structural levels (Fanon 1967; Hook 2004). It is not coincidental that social work education is re-examining itself at this particular moment. The neo-liberal world economic system, together with the post-colonial context, makes it impossible to achieve social justice if their ideologies of inequality and oppression are accepted (Ferguson 2008; Mullaly 2002; Sewpaul 2006).

Decolonisation of social work knowledge will by its nature form part of a broader decolonisation project. If the consequences of imperialist (and therefore colonial) reason were imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-liberalism and underdevelopment (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016), then a new form of reason must take its place. It is within this new form of reason that social work too, must find its decolonial turn. This decolonial turn occurs at three levels, namely decolonising being, decolonising knowledge, and decolonising power (Maldonado-Torres 2006; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2016; Wa'Thiongo 1986).

This article argues that the process of "decolonising" social work knowledge is as much a material imperative to break free from historical European domination, as it is an act of assertion of the right to repossess dispossessed intellectual spaces. Arguing that the "rightings of wrongs" and the "triumph of justice" require such "repossession", Soyinka (1999, 477) states "The essential is to establish the principle: That some measure of restitution is always essential after dispossession". Examining social work knowledge, acknowledging its past domesticating and oppressive nature and foregrounding critical and liberatory discourse, is just such a process.

Conceptual Frameworks for Decoloniality in Social Work Education

Politics of Social Work Knowledge and Discourse

Knowledge, discourse and practice pursuits are both an outcome of and determined by hegemonic ideologies and social reality (Harms Smith 2013). In the South African context, this has meant that social work education featured against the background of the state's pernicious project of social engineering (Noyoo 2003) and its ideology of white supremacy and racist capitalism. This context, together with its current neo-liberal economic policies, extreme levels of poverty, inequality and ongoing manifestations of the consequences of

colonialism and apartheid, has produced the conditions for the recognition of the need for a social work education decolonisation process.

Payne (2005) argues that social work knowledge and theories are contested politically, and as such may be understood as reflecting the various ideological paradigmatic positions of their theorists and practitioners. The nature of social work knowledge and discourse may be characterised as a continuum, ranging from domesticating and oppressive knowledge and practice through to radical and anti-colonial practice. The positioning of a decolonised social work education therefore appears at the critical and transformative end of the continuum as shown in Figure 1.

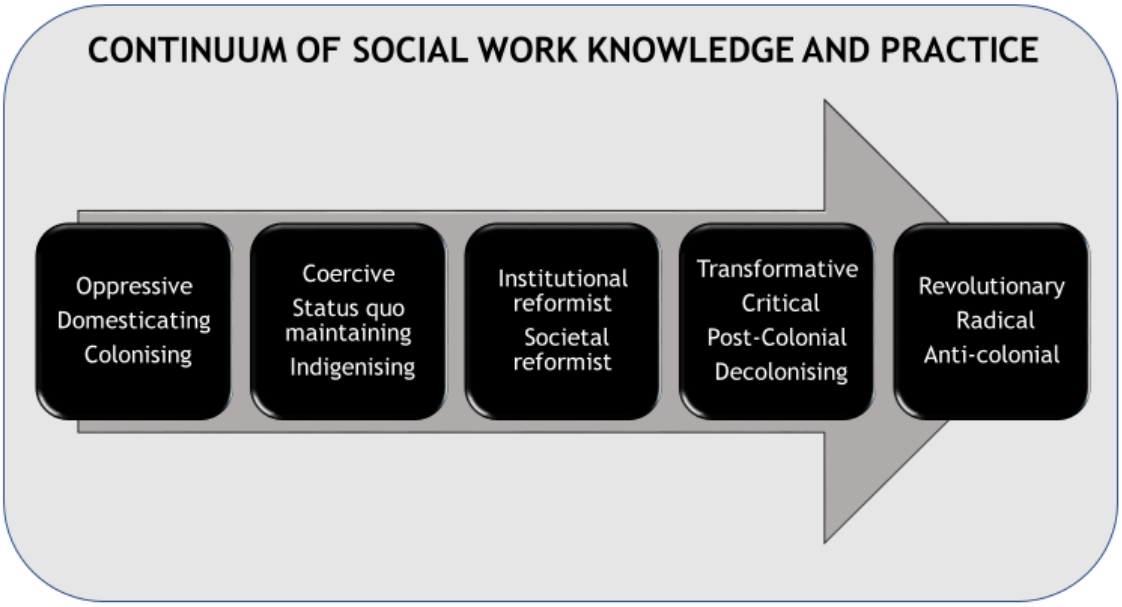

Figure 1: Continuum of social work knowledge and practice (Harms Smith 2013)

Colonisation and Post-Colonialism

Revelations of facts quickly repudiate views of colonisation as useful and of imperialism as a source of pride (McQuade 2017). An immediate problem is that largely, "colonial violence and plunder was deemed a benevolent act, absolving those who engaged in it, such as Rhodes" (Mbembe 2015, 13). Its darker narrative was seldom heard as clearly as in the statement by Cecil John Rhodes, British businessman, mining magnate and politician in South Africa, who served as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896:

> I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimen of human being, what an alteration there would be in them if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence ... if there be a God, I think that what he would like me to do is paint as much of the map of Africa British Red as possible. (South African History Online 2017)

Various writers have described the destructive and brutal nature of colonialism and coloniality at intrapsychic, interpersonal and structural levels (Césaire 1972; Biko 1978; Fanon 1963). As argued by Wa'Thiongo (1986), colonisation of people's land, livelihood and culture is in fact a colonisation of the mind, which leads to shame about and inferiorisation of their history, language, art and beliefs.

The deep trauma wrought by colonisation must be acknowledged. Hook (2012, 17), writing about Fanon's contribution, argues that what Fanon's writing impresses upon us is "that the colonial encounter is unprecedented; the epistemic, cultural, psychic and physical violence of colonialism makes for a unique type of historical trauma."

The psychological and physical impact extended to the negation of the "native's" being, culture and personality, to the destruction of humanness, and to the production of disabling psychosocial effects (Gibson 2011). The move towards decolonisation cannot begin without an understanding and acknowledgement of the damage of the colonial project and its ongoing burden. This is achievable only through a conscientisation process (Freire 1972) around its psychopolitical consequences.

The chronological ending of the geopolitical arrangements of colonisation did not mean the end of colonialism or coloniality. The "post-colonial" is not about the end of colonial rule. Rather, it is a form of analysis exposing the violence of colonialism (Mbembe 2015). This violence extends to the intrapsychic level through the intergenerational transmission of trauma and feelings of inferiority as well as to the interpersonal. A feature of colonialism was the racism, denigration of indigenous ways and paternalism that were imposed on traditional societies (Patel 2005).

Although the historical period of colonialism is over, the enduring nature of the impact of colonialism must be recognised. Regarding the post-colonial, Askeland and Payne (2006) also maintain that rather than being understood as the chronological period after the end of colonial rule, post-colonial thinking is a critique of the colonial conception of reason, humanism and universalism. As such, an anti-colonial approach must be embraced if these enduring forms of domination and oppression are to be challenged.

However, acknowledging the ongoing impact of colonisation evident in the post-colonial, requires an anti-colonial position to confront and challenge these dynamics. The praxis of anti-colonialism therefore arises from post-colonial thinking calling for the identification of and resistance to all forms of domination and oppression (Dei and Kempf 2006). Dei and Kempf state (2006, 5):

> The anti-colonial challenges any form of economic, cultural, political and spiritual dominance. It is about identifying and countering all forms of colonial domination as manifested in everyday practice, including individual and collective social practices, as well as global interactions.

It is clear therefore that coloniality represents domination and abuse of power and it is this engagement with its power which achieves the position of decoloniality. In his "ten theses of coloniality and decoloniality", Maldonado-Torres (2016) states that those who seek to resist coloniality should think, create and act together in various forms of community, to disrupt the coloniality of knowledge, power and being. In so doing change is possible. Such is the task of social work education.

Movement towards Decolonisation in Higher Education in South Africa

A synchronicity of various important processes during the past two years has characterised the process and move towards decolonisation of higher education. This has facilitated a similar process within social work education. These include the #RhodesMustFall (Pithouse 2015a) and #FeesMustFall movements and more specifically in social work, the various processes of consultation and discussion around a "decolonised social work education" (ASASWEI 2016; Nathane and Harms Smith 2017).

True liberation, for that is what a process of decolonisation really is, can only be achieved by those most affected (Freire 1972). The oppressive and racist history of colonialism and apartheid means that the process of decolonisation should be dictated by those most aggrieved. This was evident in the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements.

These movements are not new, but have a long history, and may be understood as being located in the unresolved history of the apartheid past (Langa 2016). The demand for free and decolonised education can be traced back to the 1976 uprising by and defiance of young people against an inferior Bantu education system that had a clear vision to turn black South Africans into so-called "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Kallaway 2002).

This is a vision clearly articulated by Verwoerd in his view that:

> There is no space for him [the 'Native'] in the European Community above certain forms of labor. For this reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim in the absorption of the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European Society where he is not allowed to graze (Soudien, Kallaway, and Brier 1999, 494).

The ambition to decolonise education and for universities to widen their curricula gave birth to the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements (known as the "Fallist" movements). The ultimate goal is for institutions of higher learning to adopt an inclusive philosophy that embraces all systems of knowledge.

The Fallist movements are collectives of university students, support staff and academics, mobilising against institutional racism and inequality to create transformation that is inclusive of the majority of South Africans. They also intend rewriting history with the resolute determination of bringing to light institutional racism. This desire for decolonised education has long been awaiting such articulation and confrontation of a system that subjects most black South Africans to invisibility.

This feature of invisibility of Africans in universities manifests in marked spaces in the form of names of buildings mostly after white European males. Despite South Africa's transition to

democracy, there is still strong Eurocentrism in operations. This is also interpreted as marking territory with whiteness to serve a gatekeeping function for inclusion of the few and exclusion of the majority. There is very little African about them. The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements achieved the renaming of at least two such buildings, namely the Bremner Administration Building at the University of Cape Town now named Azania House (Langa 2016) and the University of the Witwatersrand's Senate House administration and management building renamed as Solomon Mahlangu Building (after the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) cadre wrongfully accused and hanged on charges of murder and terrorism in 1979).

These renamings indicate the Afrocentric positions on national identity and the rejection of the Eurocentric symbolic. For Mbembe (2015), this speaks of the "realm of the common" and of "demythologising history" and putting it to rest. The versions of whiteness on which modern South Africa was built, represented by statues of people such as Rhodes, should be recalled and "de-commissioned".

Social Work Education and the Work of Decoloniality

The decolonial turn, according to Maldonado-Torres (2006, 114), is the "decisive recognition and propagation of decolonisation as an ethical, political and epistemic project in the twentieth century". It emphasises scepticism towards colonialism and to bring about a new conception of the world. It is about seeking to bring to account historical and current injustices.

Decolonisation is a process. It may be seen as a programme of the complete overturning of order from the bottom up (Fanon 1963) and an embodied self-activity and "self-bringing forth of liberty". It includes "demythologising whiteness" (Mbembe 2015) so that white normativity and its associated privilege may be acknowledged and understood. It is certainly not the same as Africanisation (Fanon 1963) or indigenisation, which is deemed to be indicative of colonial discourse (Gray, Kreitzer, and Mupedziswa 2014). Claiming that indigenisation is decolonisation fails to acknowledge the oppressive and racist nature of colonisation. Helpful distinctions are made in the ASASWEI Report on Decolonisation of Social Work Education (ASASWEI 2016, 4), where

> ’Indigenisation’ implies taking something from the Global North … and reformulating it in indigenous terms, so that it takes on an indigenous ‘look and feel’, [while] ‘indigenous practice or … indigenous knowledge systems’ were understood to be practices or knowledge (or ways of doing, knowing or being) that emerge from within the indigenous context. … ‘Africanisation’ was understood to be equivalent to ‘indigenisation’, but specifically within an African context.

In the context of social work education, decolonising work requires critical conscientisation and cultivation of a critical theoretical and anti-colonial approach. In order to achieve such a shift towards decoloniality, some specific processes include:

- reclaiming or “repossessing” truths and narratives about the history of social work in South Africa;
- exploring ideology in social work discourse and knowledge; and
- including anti-colonial theorists in social work discourse and knowledge.

Historiography of Social Work and Reclaiming Narratives

Part of the decolonising process is about revisiting the discourse and knowledge of the history of, in this case, social work in South Africa. Mbembe (2015) refers to the importance of demythologising history and putting it to rest. It is therefore important that the historiography of social work, based on a critical examination and analysis of sources, is presented as part of developing an authentic and demythologised version.

The very nature of the early development of social work has its origins in the prejudices of the Victorian middle and upper classes as a philanthropic, liberal movement “problem of the poor” threat to social fabric. For example, the attitude and language of its early formation is evident in the title of an essay in 1851: “Reformatory schools for the children of the perishing and dangerous classes and for juvenile offenders”. Such social work ideology and knowledge were internalised through hegemonic discourses. It is important that a “counter-history” comes to displace such “common understandings”, and develops alternative narratives (Harms Smith 2013).

In South Africa, the roots of social work are to be found in colonial, apartheid, white supremacy. Various narratives exist, however, formal texts tend to represent the taken-for-granted discourses of the white, liberal position, beginning with white poverty of Afrikaners in the early 19th century with the establishment of the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the "poor white problem". This in turn led to the establishment of the Department of Welfare and formal social work training institutions. Social work activities also developed around the eugenics movement and issues of "social hygiene" in cities (Harms Smith 2014).

Decolonising social work education would therefore mean acknowledging the racialised, white supremacist goals of the apartheid era South African welfare system (Patel 2005), as well as the emphasis on social control and status quo maintenance. It would involve exploring the common understandings of histories of social work that are merely accepted without question to develop counter narratives (Althusser 1971). In this way, both a Liberal and an Afrikaner Nationalist discourse and interpretation of history may be challenged by a narrative that acknowledges the significant role of colonisation, capital industrialisation and racist, exploitative relations of production. This would also need to recognise relations of power, conflict and exploitation and imagined freedoms of choice (Harms Smith 2014). The absence of formal narratives and discourses of the liberation struggle, social action and radical social work contributions would need to be acknowledged, explored, foregrounded and celebrated.

Uncovering Ideology in Social Work Theory and Discourse

Ideology may be seen as a system of ideas and representations which maintains power asymmetries and class relations of domination, and is reflective of social reality, or a partial understanding of social reality (Therborn 1980). Simultaneously, ideology also structures social reality (Thompson 1990). It is important to explore how ideology establishes and sustains relations of domination (Thompson 1990, 56). As such, the way in which social work knowledge and discourse have developed in the South African context, will shape the nature of the curricula of social work education. Social work educators and practitioners must examine the various ideological positions into which they are interpellated, in order to become critically aware of how they see reality, how they see the ideal and what they believe is possible (Therborn 1980). The politics of social work theory is a contested terrain, with many various ideological positions taken by those contributing to its knowledge development and discourse (Gray and Webb 2013; Harms Smith 2013; Payne 2005).

Important contested ideological areas that need to be explored in order to uncover and engage with the issues include the problem of structure versus agency in understanding the causes of problems, various political positions such as individualism, liberalism, nationalism; racist discourse and racism in its various forms (Stevens 2003), politics of recognition versus politics of redistribution (Fraser 1997), power and privilege, and choices about paradigms of knowledge and theory such as neo-liberalism, paternalism, social development and postmodernism (Harms Smith 2013).

Adopting a sceptical stance towards ideology also requires a critical approach. Critical theorists emphasise social change and collective action and also the important intersections of human agency and structural change (Adams, Dominelli, and Payne 2009; Ferguson and Woodward 2009; Garrett 2013).

It is imperative therefore to revisit the explanatory power of the theories informing traditional social work and to develop the critical discourse that serves the project of social change and social justice. Such knowledge and discourse, in order to achieve social change goals, will be informed by post-colonial theory, and to understand the entrenchment of racist capitalism during the colonial apartheid era. Key presuppositions of the critical social science paradigm described by Healey (as cited by Ferguson 2008, 103), are that

> Macro-social structures shape social relations at every level of social life;
> The world is divided between 'haves' and 'have-nots' and that these interests are opposed and irreconcilable;
> The oppressed are complicit in their oppression;
> Its emphasis is on empowering oppressed people to act, collectively and achieve social change.

Theorists for Decolonised Social Work Education

According to Maldonado-Torres (2011), decolonial thinking was evident from the times of modern colonisation, however, a more substantial "decolonial turn" was announced by W. E. B. du Bois in the early twentieth century, followed by a number of other important figures. Among others, theorists that would find a significant place in a decolonised social work education include Aimé Césaire (1972); Franz Fanon (1963, 1967); Ngugi Wa'Thiongo

(1986); Paulo Freire (1972) and Stephen Bantu Biko (1978). Some of these (Biko 1978; Césaire 1972; Fanon 1963; Freire 1972) are briefly discussed here, because of their coherence with one another in respect of their critique of colonialism and concepts such as Negritude, black consciousness, humanisation, liberation and emancipation and the critical contribution that these offer to social work education in the African and South African context.

Aimé Césaire

Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1972) is "central to the project of decoloniality. It is a critical reflection on the European civilization project that gives expression to the disenchantment with European modernity that began to be felt in many places after the Second World War" (Maldonado-Torres 2006, 111). Césaire (1972) a poet, philosopher and politician from Martinique, a French colony, produced the key text on anti-colonial literature, describing the material and spiritual havoc and dehumanisation caused by colonialism. His work is said to have had a significant influence on Fanon as an Antillean intellectual and, as well as being his teacher, was his intellectual mentor (Kelly 1999). Césaire made powerful arguments against the vicious destruction of colonialism and, according to Bulhan (1985, 26), had, with characteristic eloquence, declared that "a nation which colonises, that a civilization that justifies colonisation – and therefore force – is therefore a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased". His writing elucidates the impact of colonisation on the colonised and is cited (1972) by Fanon (1963, 1) as stating: "I am talking of the millions of men who have been skillfully infected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, debasement."

Three useful themes in his writing firstly include that of "Negritude" which is seen as a resistance to the politics of assimilation, a struggle against alienation (interview with Césaire 1967) and a celebration of black culture and its forms of expression.

Secondly, embracing a stance of "surrealism" is recommended, described as a "permanent readiness for the marvelous" (Kelly 1999, 15) in order to envision the possibilities of change beyond the colonial condition.

The third theme is that of an "extension or revision of Marxism", which implies the complete and total overthrow of racist, colonialist systems that would open the way to imagine a whole

new world (Kelly 1999). It is evident that in order to understand colonisation and the concomitant need for a project of decolonisation, social work education would benefit from a foundational exposure to the work of Césaire (1972).

Franz Fanon

Fanon's combination of psychology and politics provides an important perspective for social work knowledge and discourse in the South African post-colonial context. "Psychopolitics" (Hook 2004, 116) "is the critical awareness of the role that political factors (i.e. relations of power) play within the domain of the psychological. An understanding of how politics impacts upon the psychological and how personal psychology may be the level at which politics is internalised, individually entrenched". It is this understanding of the internalised as well as structural psychopolitical impact of the colonial and apartheid legacy that heightens critical consciousness (see the section on Paulo Freire later here below) in order to resist and change these.

Franz Fanon, as an anti-colonial author and psychiatrist from Martinique, and having been influenced by the writings of Césaire, was in turn an important part of the intellectual formation of Biko and the black consciousness movement. According to Pithouse (2015b, par. 12), Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) offers a "brilliant illumination and critique of colonial society, the struggle against colonialism and the pathologies of postcolony." What is often forgotten is that it also deals with the damage wrought by the violence that structures the colonial situation. His key texts include *Black Skins White Masks* (1963) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), on post-colonial theory and criticism.

Themes from Fanon's writings include "racist objectification", whereby race is the essential determining quality, "colonising the mind", where cultural values are hostile to those of the colonised subject and there is a consistent devaluation of own culture, "cultural dissonance" between ego and culture, self and society, "internalisation", where the external socio-historical reality is assimilated into subjective reality, and "intrapsychic violence" as a result of colonial oppression. "Among the contribution of Fanon was the obligation placed on Western scientists to consider their role in the creation, perpetuation, and consequences of racism and colonialisation" (Pierce, as cited in Bulhan 1985, vii).

Steve Biko

Biko's (1978, 92) statement that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor, is the mind of the oppressed", speaks directly to the decolonisation of social work education. A "decolonial attitude" enables a shift to occur from an epistemic position that arises from internalised and material oppression (Sithole 2016). According to Sithole (2016, 196), the decolonial turn is "affinitive to Biko's black consciousness philosophy in that the decolonial turn further explores how decoloniality opens new vistas of thought to understand the possibilities of another world outside of coloniality".

Biko (1978) argued that psychological liberation was essential for political liberation. His view that external institutional oppression (racism) together with a state of internalised alienation, leads to the situation that "[The Black man] (sic) rejects himself, precisely because he attaches the meaning White to all that is good" (Biko, as cited in Hook 2004, 105). "Black consciousness" was therefore seen as a process towards the final stage of "integration" and equality for all: "At the heart of true integration is the provision for each man, each group, to rise and attain the envisioned self" (Biko 1978, 21).

The importance of "black consciousness" for decolonisation, furthermore speaks to the importance of reclaiming history and correcting false self-perceptions developed through the power of colonial and apartheid education and culture (Biko 1978).

Paulo Freire

The contribution of Freire to pedagogy and learning is well known. However, it is not only in the field of education and literacy training that his enormous legacy is evident. His concepts and philosophies, grounded in post-Marxism and critical theory, speak directly to social change and liberation processes.

Through his approach of radical and critical pedagogy, Freire (1972) argued for a philosophy of education and development, which aims at developing new levels of consciousness and liberation among oppressed people. He argues that "no education is neutral" and describes principles of radical transformation, empowerment, dialogue, reflection and action (Hope and Timmel 1995).

Central to Freire's (1972) thinking is the importance of processes of "humanisation", which in the context of the psychopolitical understanding of the consequences of colonisation, speaks to the process and approach required for the decolonial position. He states: "While the problem of humanisation has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern. Concern for humanisation leads at once to the recognition of dehumanisation, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality" (1972, 27).

The process of "critical conscientisation" (Freire 1972) is of exceptional relevance to social work education and practice. Through this process of reflection and action, people become critically aware of structural and socio-political realities. This is the recognition of the oppressive reality. The need for critical thinking in social work education curricula cannot be overemphasised, especially in post-colonial contexts of oppressive inequality and unequal power relationships.

Freire (1972) also deals with the complexities of "false generosity", a concept which he explores in relation to the way in which the oppressor maintains the distorted power relations through the dispensing of charity. This false charity maintains the status quo because it is said to soften the conditions of the oppressed. He argues that it is only through "true generosity" that those who are oppressed can achieve true liberation.

Freire (1972, 57) states that liberation and humanisation "… affirm people as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead … for who looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are, so that they can more wisely build the future." It is this ability for looking and reflecting on the past and turning to the future which is demanded of social work education, in order for students themselves to become more humanised and in turn for them as social work practitioners to work towards humanisation among those with whom they work.

Examples of a Decolonised Curriculum

Decolonising the social work curriculum will require an intentionality among social work academics in their efforts to embrace an anti-colonial stance and teach a curriculum that affirms all South African groups, particularly black Africans. The historical colonial and

apartheid context has denigrated black people as intellectual beings who possess rich knowledge systems (Patel 2005). This intentionality requires commitment and vision in adapting prescribed curricula. It is clear, however, that there is an imperative for institutions of higher education (Mbembe 2015), and simultaneously social work education (ASASWEI 2016) to transform and engage in decolonisation processes. These require more than superficial additions of so-called indigenous African knowledge and practices. The oppressive and inferiorising nature of colonisation requires processes of humanisation, conscientisation and transformation towards a position of decoloniality.

To illustrate the efforts and evidence of decolonising the curriculum, the Critical Social Work course (SWIV) and Human Rights course (SWII), offered in the social work curriculum at the University of the Witwatersrand will be described. These courses were initially developed during 2008/9 by Linda Harms Smith and are currently taught by Motlalepule Nathane. The aim is to foster critical conscientisation and critical analysis and to develop an anti-colonial stance in their intervention with individuals, groups and communities. Ongoing contextual realities such as the events of Marikana and other socio-political events are incorporated regularly.

In the Human Rights course the emphasis was not only from the perspective of human rights and the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa 1996, chapter 2), which emphasise the rights of individuals, but also from the localised perspective of the Banjul Declaration of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR 1981) and the Freedom Charter of 1955, which include freedoms and rights of collectives and cultural groups. The Freedom Charter of 1955, embraced by the Congress of the People (South African History Online 2016), resonated with the lived reality of contemporary students and fostered a strong element of localisation and inclusivity. Two principles that particularly reverberated with students were the principles: "the doors of learning and culture shall be opened" and "the people shall share in the wealth of the country". This provoked a deeper reflection and debate in relation to the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall decolonisation movements challenging the status quo of massive exclusion of the majority of black South Africans. Similarly, in keeping with the decolonising approach to education, historical, lesser known human rights violations were included, namely the Namibian genocide also known as the Hidden Holocaust (Steinmetz 2005) and Haitian Slavery and Revolution (1791–1804).

The introduction to the Critical Social Work Course Outline (University of the Witwatersrand 2014) states:

> Critical social work is an approach to practice which transcends specific forms of practice and attempts to analyse and transform power relations at every level of social work practice (Healey 2005, 172). Social work theory and practice finds itself positioned on a continuum ranging from oppressive and domesticating practice, through to radical and revolutionary practice. Given the post-colonial and post-apartheid context of South Africa, together with neoliberal economic policies, extreme levels of mass poverty and increasing wealth accumulation among the few, a critical response is required. Theories and practice must be interrogated, ideologies underlying these theories and practice must be uncovered, and hegemonic discourse challenged. In this course, a radical and critical social work is proposed as an appropriate response to this South African context. The work of various anti-colonial and anti-apartheid theorists (Biko 1978; Fanon 1963, Fanon 1967; Freire 1972; Hook 2004) and radical and critical social work theorists (Ferguson 2008; Garret 2013; Healey 2005; Sewpaul 2006) will form the basis of this course.

In addition, Singleton's (2015) *Courageous conversations about race* is included. Substantial time (five three-hour seminars) is devoted and, at the more mature level of fourth year study, students in this course are able to challenge each other and grapple with issues of race, gender, inequality and social justice, based on their own and their families' experiences. One of the strengths of this course is to help students adopt an anti-colonial stance, uncover ideologies and adopt a critical perspective. Consequently, this informs their practice in ways that fosters a strong element of advocacy and activism for future practice.

Conclusion: Embracing Decoloniality in Social Work Knowledge and Discourse

In order to achieve a position of decoloniality through a process of decolonising social work education in South Africa, courageous, critical and collective attempts are required. These must begin with the acknowledgement of the destruction wrought on peoples subjected to centuries of colonial and apartheid rule. However, the synchronicity of decolonisation processes of the past number of years, such as those expressed in the #FeesMustFall and

#RhodesMustFall movements, has provided the impetus for social work education in South Africa to self-reflect and commit to such efforts.

Historically, social work in South Africa is indicted with a focus on status quo maintenance and colonising knowledge and practice. The voices of resistance and challenge among social workers and educators were furthermore silenced during the apartheid era, thus contributing to the ongoing colonising nature of social work itself. Despite efforts at transformation towards a developmental approach and community engagement, formal knowledge and discourse have been shown to be centred on neoliberal and liberal ideologies at best, and conservative, oppressive ideologies at worst. It has been argued here that efforts at indigenisation and Africanisation merely obfuscate the underlying conservative and colonial nature of social work knowledge and discourse. What is required is a transformed curriculum committed to a position of decoloniality.

It is critical that the continuum of knowledge and discourse in social work education is reflected and acted upon to achieve the liberating and transformative aspirations of a decolonised curriculum. Such transformative processes towards a decolonised social work education will support students through processes of their own critical conscientisation and humanisation, and equip them to work for these processes among those with whom they work. In order to achieve this, social work education must reflect on and reclaim truths about the impact of colonisation and apartheid in South Africa, revisit the history of social work in South Africa and explore the ideologies that underlie its knowledge and discourses, as well as the hereto silenced voices of resistance, facilitate critical conscientisation and cultivate a critical and anti-colonial approach among educators and learners participating in social work education, and incorporate valuable and important anti-colonial theorists, such as Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, Steve Biko and Paulo Freire, in the curriculum.

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