

Cabral, Freire and Decolonizing the Academy in the 21st Century

Cabral, Freire e a descolonização da academia no século XXI

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Abstract: This paper interrogates the impact of the philosophy, ideas, and practice of two 20th Century decolonial scholars. It focuses on the writings of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire, particularly their use of national liberation and culture as a mechanism to *conscientize* the people. It provides a brief history of the movement to decolonize education in Africa from independence to the early 21st Century. The article examines Paulo Freire's *The Politics of Education* and Amílcar Cabral's *Unity and Struggle* as foundational texts for examining the decolonization movement. Culture is central to the ideas and philosophies of the writings of these two decolonial thinkers. Freire and Cabral intersect intellectually, philosophically, and practically through their examinations of culture and *conscientization*. The connection between Cabral and Freire extends beyond a mere academic exercise to on-the-ground exchanges. Paulo Freire's practical exchange of ideas, pedagogy, and practice in Guinea-Bissau from 1975-1980, as documented in *Pedagogy in Process* (1978), materialized the relationship between the ideas and philosophy of these two thinkers (Chianca & Ceccon, 2017). Finally, based on the writings of Cabral and Freire, the essay provides four key recommendations for advancing the movement for decolonization namely, embracing the people's culture as a site of struggle engaging in internal class dialogues, politically educating the academic community, and creating institutions to champion the decolonial debates beyond the academy.

Keywords: Decolonization; African University; Education for Transformation; Amílcar Cabral; Paulo Freire.

Resumo: Este documento interroga o impacto da filosofia, ideias e prática de dois estudiosos descoloniais do século XX. Ele se concentra nos escritos de Amílcar Cabral e Paulo Freire, particularmente seu uso da libertação nacional e da cultura como um mecanismo para conscientizar o povo. Trata-se de uma breve história do movimento de descolonização da educação na África desde a independência até o início do século XXI. O artigo examina A Política da Educação de Paulo Freire e A Unidade e Luta de Amílcar Cabral como textos fundamentais para o exame do movimento de descolonização. A cultura é central para as ideias e filosofias dos escritos destes dois pensadores descoloniais. Freire e Cabral se cruzam intelectualmente, filosoficamente e na prática através de seus estudos de cultura e conscientização. A conexão entre Cabral e Freire se estende além de um mero exercício acadêmico para trocas no terreno. O intercâmbio prático de ideias, pedagogia e prática de Paulo Freire na Guiné-Bissau de 1975-1980, como documentado em *Pedagogia em Processo* (1978), materializou a relação entre as ideias e a filosofia destes dois pensadores. (Chianca & Ceccon, 2017). Finalmente, com base nos escritos de Cabral e Freire, o artigo fornece quatro recomendações-chave para o avanço do movimento de descolonização, ou seja, abraçar a cultura do povo como um local de luta engajando-se em diálogos internos de classe, educando politicamente a comunidade acadêmica, e criando instituições para defender os debates descoloniais além da academia.

Palavras-chave: Descolonização; universidade africana; educação para a transformação; Amílcar Cabral; Paulo Freire

Received: November 11, 2021 Accepted: June 06, 2022

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The ideological deficiency, not to say the total lack of ideology, on the part of the national liberation movements— which is basically explained by ignorance of the historical reality which these movements aspire to transform— constitutes one of the greatest weaknesses, if not the greatest weakness, of our struggle against imperialism. We nevertheless believe that a sufficient number of varied experiences have already been accumulated to enable us to define a general line of thought and action in order to eliminate this deficiency (Cabral, 1979: 123).

Introduction

Decolonization as a concept and theory in Africa has roots in years of agitation against slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. The most pivotal period for the decolonization movement occurred between the 1950s and 1970s. The independence and liberation movements advocated for decolonization across the depth and breadth of the continent. Newly independent African nations began decolonizing their national institutions through an Africanization project. Higher Education institutions were central to this project, specifically colleges that colonial governments established for their citizens and a select African elite. Almost immediately, universities and colleges had to replace foreign staff with African faculty and staff. The curriculum and features were reworked to ensure that universities trained students to contribute to developing their newly independent nations.

Ghana gained independence in 1957 and began aggressive internal and external decolonization exercises. The government focused on decolonizing education as part of the national dialogue through formal and informal education, including primary, secondary, and tertiary education, cultural performances, youth programs, and the Ghana Young Pioneer Movement. At the Institute of African Studies (IAS) 's official opening, Kwame Nkrumah urged the faculty to adhere to the mandate of the IAS and champion decolonization. He said, “This Institute must help to foster in our university educational, institutions the kind of education which will produce devoted men and women with imagination and ideas, who, by their life and actions, can inspire our people to look forward to a great future” (Nkrumah, *African Genius*, 1963). Education was pivotal to decolonizing, developing, and liberating Africa to Nkrumah and other national liberation leaders such as Julius Nyerere, Sekou Toure, and Amílcar Cabral.

Neo-liberal policies followed these early calls for decolonization as the structural adjustment program swept the continent in the 1980s and 1990s. Economic, political, and social shifts interrupted the initial euphoria of independence and the decolonization of higher education (Dzvimbo & Moloji, 2013). These policies crippled several universities across the African continent and Global South. Despite the harsh conditions, several influential decolonial thinkers emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire are two prominent decolonial thinkers of the period. Although Amílcar Cabral was assassinated in 1973, his philosophy and ideas contributed posthumously to decolonial thought. The writings and philosophy of Freire and Cabral poses questions of national culture, transformative education, class struggle, and national liberation. These questions transcend the period in which they were engaged in these academic debates and discussions. Much of their writings are relevant in the 21st Century as we unpack questions of decolonizing the academy in Africa and the Global South.

The connection between Cabral and Freire extends beyond a mere academic exercise to on-the-ground exchanges. Paulo Freire's practical exchange of ideas, pedagogy, and practice in Guinea-Bissau from 1975-1980, as documented in *Pedagogy in Process* (1978), established the relationship between the ideas and philosophy of these two thinkers (Chianca & Ceccon, 2017). Contemporary debates, scholarship, and studies on decolonizing the academia in the Global South are directly or indirectly connected to the work of Freire and Cabral. This essay will focus on Freire's *The Politics of Education* and Cabral's compilation of speeches and writings *Unity and Struggle* as critical texts to demonstrate the linkages between their philosophies and contemporary debates on

decolonization. The ideas, philosophy, and critical pedagogy of Cabral and Freire provide historical context and practical examples of decolonization in action for contemporary decolonial scholars.

This paper interrogates how the ideas and philosophies of Amílcar Cabral, and Paulo Freire impacts the current calls for decolonizing the academy in Africa. It will examine the decolonization movement in higher education in Africa and will situate its history using the ideas and philosophy of these two seminal thinkers. Grounding the movement in the literary, practical, and ideological work of Paulo Freire and Amílcar Cabral this article probes how Cabral and Freire's writings are being used as foundational texts for activists, faculty, students and the community. The article has four interconnected sections—the first section focuses on decolonizing the academy in Africa, the second section highlights the contributions of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire to decolonizing debates, and the third section will focus on decolonizing academia in the 21st Century, and the fourth section is the conclusion.

Brief review of decolonizing education in Africa

Decolonizing the African academy is historically linked to the independence and immediate post-independence periods. The calls for independence included political, social, and economic independence. Newly independent governments were charged with Africanizing and decolonizing existing higher education institutions. The focus on expanding access to higher education and Africanizing faculty and staff was part and parcel of most development plans. Initially, the focus was on providing access to formal education, including primary, secondary, technical, and tertiary education. The solutions and approach to decolonizing education differed based on the nation's history, economic, political, and social conditions. The diversity of the continent ensured that the response was as varied as possible. Many nations like Ghana instituted rapid expansion of the education system, including ensuring that education was free and compulsory (Poe, 2004; Quist, 2003; Frehiwot, 2011).

In addition to providing formal education, many new governments created campaigns to eradicate illiteracy. Kwame Nkrumah and the Convention People's Party implemented a Mass Education Campaign in the late 1950s to "provide education by a socialist government to the 'mass of the people' in fulfillment of their right to education" (Sutherland, 2005). The campaign in Ghana tackled illiteracy and ensured that Ghanaians who could not read and write English were readied with the skills necessary to actively participate in the political process (Boateng, 2002; Sutherland, 2005). In East Africa, there were similar campaigns. In 1962, Kenya launched a Universal Primary Education campaign that provided free education for all students. Tanzania began its free and compulsory primary education program in 1967. In 1964, Uganda launched a Mass Literacy Campaign to improve access to primary education. (Oketch & Rolleston, 2007; Hanemann, 2015). The first step to decolonizing education and the academy in most African countries was to develop robust campaigns to ensure mass participation. The initial success of rapid school expansion revealed that the features and curriculum of these institutions needed attention as well.

Nationalist and Pan-Africanist leaders realized they had to be proactive in decolonizing education content. During this period, there was a shift in the strategy of nationalist leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Touré. They soon began highlighting the need for an ideological shift in formal and informal education. Universities became the site of the struggle to decolonize education. Ghana and other African nations, such as Tanzania, focused on building university institutions that could transform students' ideas, philosophy, and practice. In an address to the World University Service at Dar es Salaam University, Julius Nyerere reiterated the importance of decolonizing African universities. He stated:

I have no doubt in my mind, therefore, but that the university function of extending the frontiers of knowledge is very important for humanity. I will go further, and say that in the course of

time universities in developing countries must also make their contribution to the world of knowledge in this direction. We must not establish in our new young countries institutions of higher learning which simply receive. They must give as well. (Nyerere, 1969: 180)

The universities established immediately after independence, particularly in countries that embraced Pan-Africanism, were viewed as vehicles for creating a new Africa. The University of Cape Coast and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, The Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania are few examples of such universities (Poe, 2004; Frehiwot, 2015; Serra & Gerits, 2019). In Guinea-Bissau, the mass literacy campaign that Paulo Freire was a part of was a political project used to empower the people of Guinea-Bissau (Winfrey, 2018). Across the continent, as countries gained independence, new universities and political education projects sprang up shortly afterward. Nevertheless, the period of state-sponsored decolonizing activity was short-lived; as governments transitioned, so did the ruling class's ideology. The second and third cohorts of African presidents in the 1970s and 1980s faced new economic challenges, including the complications of economic aid packages, and many were more committed to western approval.

During the 1980s, development programs such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) required decreased public spending. Education was hit hard by the new policies, including tertiary education (Kapoor, 2009). The policy of defunding public institutions forced African universities to lose faculty and research funding and to look towards the west for academic and financial handouts (Alidou, *et al.* 2008). The privatization of higher education in Africa due to a market-driven economy (Mamdani, 2008) impacted the quality and quantity of education at universities. During this period, there was a push-pull effect—one side was pushing for the destruction of the University through a neo-liberal approach to education, and the other resisted this takeover while teaching, researching, writing, and speaking about the need to decolonize the University in Africa.

The call for decolonizing education took on a new form after the SAP swept through the continent. Despite the transformation in higher education, many prominent scholars advocated decolonizing the curriculum and features. Ngugi Wa Thiong's work throughout his career as an academic and activist focused on the need to decolonize language, including the language of instruction. Thiong suggested that language and culture are intertwined and should be at the forefront of teaching. Ngugi outlines a dialectic relationship that is both historical and communal, an intertwining of sorts and a cyclical relationship, as language can be the result of culture while at the same time shaping and defining culture (Bandia, 2006: 373). Decolonization of the African university has been championed by leading scholars such as Issa Shivji, Horace Campbell, Takiyaa Manuh, Molefe Asante, Zizwe Poe, Amina Mama, Akosua Adomako Ampofo, and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni. These scholars have spent most of their careers challenging the elite nature of the neo-colonial academy through their research and interactions with these institutions. In addition, to individual scholars, several crucial institutions across the continent whose mandate obliged that they were in the forefront of this movement have served as safe spaces for these conversations.

The Institute of African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ghana and Mwalimu Nyerere, Professorial Chair in Pan African Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam are two institutions that have contributed to the deliberations about decolonization. The IAS has been the site of many conferences, workshops, symposiums, and debates about decolonizing the academy. In 2017, the Institute hosted the 2nd Kwame Nkrumah Intellectual and Cultural Festival under the leadership of Professor Horace Campbell. The theme was "Global Africa 2063: Education for Reconstruction and Transformation". This festival and the 2021 version hosted by Professor Amina Mama have been pivotal events in decolonizing higher education in Africa. Although, this section focuses on contemporary manifestations of decolonial work. Many of these institutions and individual scholars

consider the work of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire as foundational to their calls for decolonization.

Epistemological decolonization, culture and class struggle

The conceptual considerations for this paper draw linkages between three key concepts: epistemological decolonization, culture, and class struggle. The concept of decolonization is regarded on the macro and micro levels. Historically decolonization has occurred with every act of resistance. Decolonization can be exercised and realized at the micro level in families, communities, institutions, and ideologically. According to Sékou Touré, decolonization is a manifestation of culture, which is the driver of all societies. This article adopts Sékou Touré's definition of culture in his text *Revolution, Culture and Pan-Africanism*. More contemporary definitions of culture may have been used, but this definition incorporates elements that supports the work of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire. Touré defines culture as,

Culture is the sum of gains, knowledge and modes of action enabling man to regulate his conduct, his relationships with other men, and his relationships with nature; it is through culture that society creates and develops and expresses itself; it defines the level of general consciousness, technical and technological capability, the modes of organization, the principles of action, and the objectives which guide society in its struggle for an ever new and brighter future (Touré, 1978: 9).

This definition situates the calls for decolonization by Cabral and Freire as part of a holistic approach to transforming society. Since Africa's liberation and independence era, there have been talks of decolonizing everything from education curriculum to government offices. However, the historical moment, political economy, and the Global South's relationship to the global education system have impacted the decolonization movement's effectiveness. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) connects epistemic freedom, knowledge production, and decolonizing politics. He contends that there is a need for epistemological decolonization, which is evident in the works of Freire and Cabral. Epistemic freedom, therefore, is connected to the decolonization movement. Ndlovu-Gatsheni states that, "In the co-constitution of political, economic, cultural and epistemological decolonization, epistemic freedom should form the base because it deals with the fundamental issues of critical consciousness building, which are essential pre-requisites for both political and economic freedom" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018: 17). Epistemological decolonization is central to decolonizing the academy in the 21st century. The academy in this framework encompasses the university and the surrounding community, physical and intellectual.

Lastly, questions of class and class struggle in the works of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire can be attributed to their study of Marx and Marxism. However, they both engaged Marxism from their own cultural and historical reality. This conceptual framework leans on Kwame Nkrumah's examination of class struggle in *Class Struggle in Africa*. He contends that,

Class struggle is a fundamental theme of recorded history. In every non-socialist society there are two main categories of class, the ruling class or classes, and the subject class or classes.....There is conflict between the ruling class and the exploited class. The nature and cause of the conflict is influenced by the development of productive forces. (Nkrumah, 1978: 17)

To Nkrumah, the class struggle was crucial to developing and decolonizing the African continent, and he contends that ignoring the class struggle in Africa would have disastrous results. This article is rooted in Nkrumah's view of class and the class struggle because it aligns closely

with the ideas and philosophy of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire. The conceptual framework underpins the interconnections between the work and philosophy of these two great scholars, but it supports their philosophical views on culture, decolonization, and class.

Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire as decolonizing thinkers

Amílcar Cabral (1924-1948), born in Bafatá, Guinea-Bissau, and Paulo Freire (1921-1978), born in Recife, Brazil, are notably the most influential decolonial thinkers of the 20th Century. The philosophy of Cabral and Freire is futuristic, human-centered, and confrontational. Freire and Cabral were born and raised geographically and culturally different; however, their ideological alignment suggests otherwise. As intellectuals, one an educator and philosopher and the other an agricultural engineer, Pan-Africanist, and political organizer, their writings interrogate national culture, transformative education, class struggle, and liberation. The connection between Cabral and Freire extends beyond a mere academic exercise to a hands-on practical exchange of ideas, pedagogy, and practice in Guinea-Bissau as documented in *Pedagogy in Process*, a collection of letters about Freire's collaborative decolonizing work with educators in newly liberated Guinea-Bissau. This section will not be a complete history of Freire and Cabral but a critical review of Cabral's *National Liberation and Culture* and Paulo Freire's *Education for Transformation* as examples of decolonizing work in the 21st Century.

National Liberation and culture

Culture to Cabral is the foundation of all societies and is a fundamental component in developing society. He characterizes it as, "Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence it exerts on the evolution of relations between man and his environment and among men or human groups within society, as well as between different societies" (Cabral, 1979: 141). According to Cabral, the masses of people are the makers and guardians of culture.

That is why the problem of a "return to the source" or a "cultural renaissance" does not arise for the mass of the people; it could not, for the masses are the torch-bearers of culture; they are the source of culture and, at the same time, the one entity truly capable of creating and preserving it, of making history (Cabral, 1973: 14).

Amílcar Cabral grounds his philosophy within the culture of African people in general and his relationship to his culture. He asserts that culture can be used as the oppressor's weapon. To Cabral, "The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation, on the ideological or idealist level, of the material and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated" (Cabral, 1979: 141). National liberation to Cabral is manifested in the people's culture. It is a form of resistance against colonialism and imperialism. He understood National liberation as an opportunity to fight for control of the productive forces of society (Poblet, 2013). Cabral draws linkages between National liberation and the productive forces of society. To him, freedom for African people is paramount to their liberation and security ideologically and materially (Ujomu; Olatunji, 2013). Freedom is an expression of culture; even with all its nuances, Cabral was convinced that culture was the key to a new Africa. He embraced the idea that colonialism and imperialism impacted African people's culture. This thought fueled his call for African people to "Return to the Source". In his text *Return to the Source*, he admits that imperialist domination aspired to squash the culture of African people through physical and ideological violence.

The notion of *Return to the Source* is often misinterpreted as a return to traditional Africa. This is the Africa that existed before slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Cabral argues that *Return to the Source* is,

It is the denial, by the petite bourgeoisie, of the pretended supremacy of the culture of the dominant power over that of the dominated people with which it must identify itself. The 'return to the source' is therefore not a voluntary step, but the only possible reply to the demand of concrete need, historically determined, and enforced by the inescapable contradiction between the colonized society and the colonial power... (Cabral, 1973: 63)

The antagonistic relationship between colonialism and the masses of people to Cabral was the root of cultural resistance (Nabolsy, 2019). He claimed that a "return to the source" was a form of opposition against colonialism, whereas the return is not necessarily an act of resistance (Idahosa, 2002; Da Silva, 2010). Cabral draws linkages between nationalist consciousness, culture, and the petite bourgeoisie. The petite bourgeoisie to Cabral had to commit class suicide and join the struggle for liberation through moral and political courage (Chabal, 2003; Da Silva, 2010). Cabral stated without reservation that culture was the linchpin of the transformation and decolonization of Africa. Culture represents society's totality, which includes relations between communities, groups, and nations. Culture to Cabral is responsible for society's functioning and labor production nationally and internationally. He asserted,

The mode of production, which at every stage of history represents the result of the ceaseless search for a dynamic equilibrium between the level of productive forces and the system of social utilization of these forces, indicates the status reached by a given society and each of its components before itself and before history (Cabral, 1979: 142).

The debates on decolonization are often silent on the role of the mode of production. Culture is narrowly defined and does not include economic and political systems. To Cabral, those who control the mode of production control the opportunity for liberation, unity, and development. Cabral declared that the aim of all National liberation struggles must be to ensure that all people have a right to their history and self-determination. "The aim of national liberation is therefore to regain this right, usurped by imperialist domination, namely: the liberation of the process of development of the national productive forces" (Cabral, 1979: 143). Cabral studied Marx in Portugal, influencing his views on the political economy and class's significant societal impact (Chabal, 2003; Poblet, 2013). Cabral embraced Marxism as a theory but recognized the limitations of transplanting Marxism from Europe to Africa (Rabaka, 2014). He strategically incorporated his Marxist teachings into his knowledge of culture as a form of resistance. He specifically discussed the internal class contradictions inside the National Liberation Movement. He argues,

In the general framework of challenge to imperialist colonial domination and in the specific circumstances to which we are referring, it can be seen that among the oppressor's most faithful allies are found some senior civil servants and assimilated intellectuals from the liberal professional, and a significant number of representatives of the ruling class in the rural areas (Cabral, 1979: 146).

Most societies have internal silent class struggles that emerge due to economic, political, and social resource allocation. The leadership of most liberation struggles in Africa had access to higher education, were in the elite class, and linked to urban centers. Cabral argued that recognizing the class character of liberation struggles increases the likelihood of success. Ignoring the class differences hamper movements, organizations, and nations. Cabral stated,

We must, however, take into consideration the fact that, faced with the prospect of political independence, the ambition and opportunism from which the liberation movement generally suffers may draw into the struggle individuals who have not been reconverted. The latter, on the basis of their level of education, their scientific or technical knowledge, and without losing any of their class cultural prejudices, may attain the highest positions in the liberation movement (Cabral, 1979: 145).

Cabral argued that without actively combating the class nature of culture, there was a chance that the national liberation struggle would not be successful. Class divisions are part of the material reality of African nations and should be interrogated with as much zeal as development (Lo, 2013). Cabral offered a six-point plan for achieving cultural resistance. The first point was the development of the people's culture, while the last recognized the importance of humanist solidarity, respect, and devotion to the human beings. Amílcar Cabral was influenced by his study of Marxism as can be witnessed by the way he treats class in his writings. However, he diverged from Marx on the question of culture and nationalism but found a way to incorporate the philosophy of Marx that was relevant in Guinea Bissau and Africa.

Cultural Action and Conscientization

Paulo Freire is a transformative educator whose “Banking Education” is the subject of many academic, activist, and community debates and publications (Beckett, 2013). Dale & Hyslop-Margison (2010) contend that Freire's philosophy is as important if not more important than his contributions to ‘Banking Education’. There is significantly less scholarly research on his philosophy and ideas of cultural action for liberation. His study of Karl Marx influenced Freire's writings and philosophy much like Cabral. However, he also integrated the components of Marxism that he believed were culturally and historically accurate (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010; Kress & Lake, 2013). He and Marx specifically diverged on the question of religion. Marx identified religion as an anti-thesis to the people's liberation, whereas Freire embraced it as a component of culture and incorporated it into his thinking (Kress & Lake, 2013). This section will focus on Paulo Freire's ideas on the role of culture and conscientization in the transformative process. His text *The Politics of Education* tackles questions of culture, transformation, and critical consciousness. The section on Cultural Action and Conscientization is particularly relevant to recent calls to decolonize African education. Roberts (2002) contends, “Essentially, conscientization represents the movement toward “critical” consciousness from a state of either “magical” consciousness” or “naive” consciousness” (Roberts, 2000: 138). Much like Cabral, he focuses on using culture as a revolutionary tool with a particular focus on conscientization. Freire suggests that the conscientization of man (woman) can be used to either oppress or liberate a people. His definition of conscientization is,

The starting point for such an analysis must be a critical comprehension of man as a being who exists in and with the world. Since the basic condition for conscientization is that the agent must be a subject (i.e., a conscious being), conscientization, like education, is specifically and exclusively a human process. (Freire, 1985: 68).

Freire underscores the point that man (woman) must be in and with the world making them both a subject and able to use their capabilities to manipulate the environment for their benefit. Engaging with the world is crucial to understanding formal and informal education (Veugeler, 2017). The historical relationship of African people to slavery and colonialism impacts their ability to be positioned as a subject. These systems transform the subject (someone in and with the world) into an object (someone in the world) without any agency. Freire contends that women and men of the

world who are subject to oppressive conditions have the innate ability to liberate themselves from bondage. He suggested that,

Men (woman) can fulfill the necessary condition of being with the world because they are able to gain objective distance from it. Without this objectification, whereby man also objectifies himself, man would be limited to being in the world, lacking both self-knowledge and knowledge of the world (*Ibid*: 68).

This quote indicates that men who are enslaved physically, economically, politically, or socially can free themselves with the knowledge that they are in the world. Freire's critical pedagogy focuses on using education as an agent of liberation for the masses of people, particularly the poor (Shih *et al.*, 2018). Unfortunately, formal institutions often reject the inclination that the oppressed are in the world as subjects. To Freire, the discussion was never about the worth of people in the Global South, but rather about using their resources to liberate themselves. "Only beings who can reflect upon the fact that they are determined are capable of freeing themselves" (Freire, 1985: 68).

Reflecting upon one's position or place in the world is particularly relevant for the decolonization movement. Freire suggests that an individual's consciousness is central to their ability to free themselves from bondage. To him, "consciousness is never a mere reflection of but a reflection upon material reality" (*Ibid*: 69). The material reality of one's consciousness is rooted in their critical reflection and transformation. Freire used his ideas and philosophy in many literary campaigns, particularly during his 'Africa' years. Between 1975 and 1980, he worked in São Tomé, Príncipe, Mozambique, and other African countries. In São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) he was part of a literacy campaign titled, *A Luta Continua Cadernos de Cultura Popular*, where he used popular culture as a vehicle to engage the popular classes (Stańczyk, 2019). This literacy campaign attempted to encourage students and teachers to decolonize education and the process of acquiring and transmitting knowledge. Freire often used the environment, history, cultural, economic, and social conditions to determine the type of intervention he would employ (Grioux, 2010).

Freire notes that men's (women's) relationship with the world is historical, for they make history and recount the history of the world. The role of men (women) in making and recounting history is not subject to certain men (women) or classes of men (women) but to all men. Freire affirms that even the most oppressed men (women) make their history and thus rewrite or amend it. Henry Grioux (2010) contends that Freire insisted on solutions evolving from historical conditions. Moreover, individual, and collective educational solutions must arise from critical pedagogy. The culture of silence is particularly relevant for the debates on decolonization in academia. He stated,

This culture is the result of the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators. Thus, understanding the culture of silence presupposes an analysis of dependence as a relational phenomenon that gives rise to different forms of being, of thinking, of expression, to those of the culture of silence and those of the culture that "has a voice" (Freire, 1985: 72).

The culture of silence is an integral part of the continued positioning of Africa to the world as a continent that must be recipients of political, economic, social, and political aid. The culture of silence rules the relationship between the Global North and Global South. "The silence of the object society in relation to the director society is repeated in the relationship within the object society itself. Its power elites, silent in the face of the metropolis, silence their own people in turn" (Freire, 1985: 73). The internal silence is more deadly than the external culture of silence. The divide between elites and the rest of society creates an impression that the nation fundamentally lacks the human resources necessary for development. The overdependence on the metropolis's political, economic, and social support creates an environment that presupposes the African as the object, not the subject. "The dependent masses become the silent masses- they develop a weak voice to

reiterate the values and live out the ideals of that which is presented as legitimate by the strong voice of the dominant social group” (Gibson, 2006: 321). Freire insinuates that the only way for the culture of silence to be eradicated is through popular resistance based on popular consciousness.

Popular consciousness rooted in culture must be revolutionary. Its nature and form must transform the masses from being an object to a subject. The crux of Freire’s text about cultural action and conscientization is the notion that societies change through a revolutionary process and dialogue. Freire emphasizes the importance of the revolutionary process in the transformation of society. He argues,

Revolution is a critical process, unrealizable without science and reflection. Amid reflective action on the world to be transformed, the people recognize that the world is being transformed. The world in transformation is the mediator of the dialogue between the people, at one pole of the act of knowing, and the revolutionary leadership, at the other (Freire, 1985: 84).

Both Cabral and Freire highlight the use of culture to combat the oppressive nature of the culture of silence.

Decolonizing the academy in the 21st century - (The way forward)

The movement to decolonize the academy in the 21st century looks very similar to that of the 20th century. Despite the extensive anthology of published materials, speeches, reports, conferences, and workshops, institutional decolonization is creeping at a snail’s pace. This section seeks to contribute to the scholarship on decolonizing the academy in Africa and the Global South. It, however, diverges from the usual debates on decolonizing the academy and suggests that the process of decolonizing will only occur through active work. Finally, the recommended strategies stem from the philosophy of Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire to leap toward decolonization.

Decolonization Must be Rooted in Culture

Culture, to Amílcar Cabral, is the central driver of every society. Culture manifests through interactions, institutions, political systems, and the mode of production. Culture is dynamic and evolves based on the people’s relationship with the environment and each other. Grounding the decolonization movement in the culture of the people (wherever the movement is rooted) can be a game-changer for local and international decolonizing efforts. To Cabral, the decolonizing project in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde was a collective project that relied on the people’s political consciousness and dedication to the revolution. Integrating culture in the decolonizing movement is not a call to return to ancient Africa. Instead, Cabral contends, it is a call to “Return to the Source” of the people’s power and culture. His understanding of culture as a return to the African renaissance is rooted in the culture of struggle and collective expressions of resistance (Vambe & Zegeye, 2008). Returning to the people’s culture at the local, national, and international levels would require a re-examination of decolonization based on history. This includes engaging oral history and traditional institutions to tease out relationships and forms of collective expressions of decolonization. The academy should build relationships with multiple communities as an extension of the University. Grounding decolonization in culture will transform the academia and community in which they operate into subjects in control of their destiny.

Class is central to Decolonization

Nations that operate using a vertical hierarchy risk competing class interests and divisions. These class divisions are transferred in tertiary institutions and impact the relationship between faculty, students, and the community. For the decolonization movement to progress, it must address the internal and external class and race complexities. Many vital actors in the decolonization movement are part of the middle or upper class based on their professional positions. This class position can skew one's relationship to liberating education. The class position of some upper and middle-class educators can inadvertently create allegiances to a capitalist economic system. The University professor who advocates for the University's total decolonization may hesitate to suggest equitable pay across all faculty and staff. Advocating to decolonize the curriculum may be a safer approach and more palatable to university officials and sponsors. Addressing these differences openly without judgment will help to consolidate the movement.

Develop a Political Education and Critical Consciousness Process

Freire and Cabral emphasize the necessity of education being a location of political consciousness and revolutionary education. "If we don't transcend the idea of education as pure transference of a knowledge that merely describes reality, we will prevent critical consciousness from emerging and thus reinforce political illiteracy" (Freire, 1985: 104). Developing critical consciousness is a decisive step in promoting a decolonization agenda. This consciousness should not be limited to a small elite number of people connected to the University but must include the entire academic community. Building a critically conscious public should be the goal of all activists and scholars. "One of the important points in conscientization is to provoke recognition of the world, not as a "given" world, but as a world dynamically "in the making" (*Ibid*: 106). Developing a political education process that includes students, faculty, and the community as equal partners is necessary for decolonizing academia. Transformative educators could carry decolonial debates that originate at the University to every community, including urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, to expand decolonial liberated zones. This simple act would transfer the center of the movement from elite institutions to the masses.

Creation and linkage of institutions across the Global South

Creating and linking existing organizations and institutions in the Global South engaged in decolonization work is essential to building lasting coalitions. Cabral and Freire were both engaged with institutions that operated outside the mainstream. In contrast, this may be conducted differently in the 21st Century; nevertheless, neo-colonial institutions are not capable of being the locus of decolonization. Connecting institutions with similar experiences, principles, and theories will create spaces that form a liberated zone across the Global South. These institutions could be coalitions, centers, organizations, or ideological institutes, such as the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute, established in 1961 under the guise of the Convention People's Party and Kwame Nkrumah (Frehiwot, 2015). They would be safe spaces where activists, academics and community members could organize and build decolonization strategies without fear of retribution. Neo-colonial institutions are not sites of liberation and can be dangerous for academics and activists. Instead of completely reforming higher education, the emergence of independent radical institutions should be the bedrock. The Amílcar Cabral Ideological School (Nigeria), the La Conferencia Nacional de Organizaciones Afrocolombianas (Colombia), the United African Alliance Community Center (Tanzania), and Tshisimani Centre for Activist Education in Cape Town (South Africa) are examples of institutions currently undertaking this work. Individually, these institutions are contributing to the collective decolonization movement. Increased collaboration across the Global

South, such as the Afro-Solidarity Movement, may strengthen the forward march toward decolonizing academia. Kwame Nkrumah, in his text *The Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: A Guide to the Armed Phase of the African Revolution*, identifies three territories corresponding to varying levels of popular organization (Nkrumah, 1969). The three categories are the Liberated areas, Zones under enemy control, and Contested zones. In the case of this article liberated zones are areas that are materially or ideologically safe spaces for organizing around decolonization.

Conclusion

Decolonizing the academy in the 21st Century is directly linked to the ideas, practice, and philosophy of 20th Century decolonial thinkers. The 20th Century produced an overabundance of scholars who produced radical scholarship on decolonizing academia. Paulo Freire and Amílcar Cabral's contribution to decolonization fundamentally shifted the narrative. The writings of Freire and Cabral have relevance in the 21st Century due to their holistic examination of education, culture, and decolonization. The writings of Cabral and Freire use culture as a medium to transform society through engaging in internal class conversations, debating decolonization and politically educating the larger academic community.

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