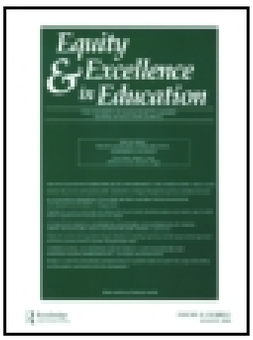

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Beyond the Fetters of Colonialism: Du Bois, Nkrumah, and a Pan-African Critical Theory

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explore the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. Du Bois (1868–1963) and its interconnections with the Pan-African thought and practice of Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972) with respect to the capacity of education to serve as an engine of social transformation. The author contends that their ideas represent a liberatory philosophy of education, one that elucidates how education can serve the ends of social transformation. Additionally, the author discusses a conceptual model based upon the Akan notion of *nokware* ("truth"), which is proposed as the basis of a *Pan-African critical theory*, a philosophical model concerning itself with the transformation and liberation of the African world.

The context of crisis is a recurring theme in the intellectual productivity of African American scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois. Whether noting the "problem of the color line" (Du Bois, 2007b, p. 8), the "damnation of women" (Du Bois, 1995b), or that "there must come a vast social change in the United States" due to the ravages of rapacious capitalism (Du Bois, 1995c, p. 621), Du Bois was keenly aware of the imperiled nature of black life, the necessity of radical activism, and the forces which militated against the formation of a liberatory mass-consciousness in U.S. society (Du Bois, 1973a). Thus, in Du Bois' view, ideational processes, that is, processes of knowledge construction, are inherently political in so far as they are embedded within a larger political-economic context.

These arguments retain their significance in the context of the present where social institutions, such as schools, continue to reflect their dualistic capacity—to support freedom or oppression (Watkins, 2001; Woodson, 1990). In fact, Du Bois asserted that "education means ambition, dissatisfaction and revolt. You cannot both educate people and hold them down" (1986b, p. 1139). Here he underlines the political context of education and the role of schools in either servicing the dominant structural arrangements or in providing the fuel for revolution. In this sense, he challenges us to consider a broader conception of not only education, but also of equity.

As such, a Du Boisian treatment of the sociology of knowledge would necessarily concern itself with the political structures that serve to legitimize knowledge construction and the economic structures which commodify knowledge and facilitate or constrain its diffusion. Therefore, knowledge does not exist in some abstract form, unmoored from the exigencies of the day. On the contrary, knowledge can be the scepter of dominion or the fuel that compels revolt (Du Bois, 1986b). Knowledge is the intangible catalyst that potentially transmutes ideas into action. This energetic capacity was not lost on Du Bois.

The breadth of Du Bois' intellectual work is borne of a need to both understand the social-historical realities of African people and to utilize such knowledge to overcome the myriad systems instrumental in their collective subordination. Thus, his scholarly, journalistic, and artistic

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productions, as well as his life's journey offer a rich narrative of the complex history of people of African descent.

Du Bois' contributions to the study of African history were notable, and his concern with the past was linked to his concerns about the present and future. This is most clearly expressed in his authorship of *Black Folk Then and Now* in 1939, which attempted to chronicle the broad arcs of African history (2007a), his publication of *The Brownies' Book* in 1921–1922 which was an attempt to cultivate in African American youth a broader African cultural and historical understanding (Lewis, 2009, p. 384), and his advocacy for a grassroots, African-centered education in the 1960s—due to a burgeoning concern that the abolishment of de jure racial segregation might also mean a disintegration of African American cultural institutions (Du Bois, 1973b). Another example of this was Du Bois' eventual emigration to Ghana in 1961 to live under the government of President Kwame Nkrumah, where he lead the *Encyclopedia Africana* project—an effort to chronicle the history and culture of the African world (Biney, 2011, p. 121), a project that was itself the culmination of scholarly work that began as early as 1909 for Du Bois (Du Bois, 1985). Thus, Du Bois was a key contributor to the formation of Africana Studies, as his work was indelibly informed by a deep concern about the inextricable bonds connecting the African world (Stewart, 1984).

The Ghanaian phase of Du Bois' life represents both a new apex of his criticism of the American social order, that is, its intractable racism. This is in addition to his and Nkrumah's belief in the need to construct a new paradigm of African knowledge construction aimed at dismantling the lingering and withering effects of European colonialism as a major tool in the process of decolonization (Lewis, 2009, pp. 707–712). For Du Bois, Africa's independence movements represented a new chapter in African history, an attempt to reach beyond the malformations of colonialism to a historical paradigm that might inform the emergence of a new future possibility (Du Bois, 2007c). It offered a *redemptive moment*, one whose sensitivity could not be overstated, and whose ephemerality was only equaled by the climatic rise of nominally independent nations out from colonial subjugation.

Like his scholarship prior to then, Du Bois' work in Ghana was not a romantic appeal to the past, but one of synthesis, adapting historical knowledge to the exigencies of the present. In this vein, Du Bois' effort to contribute to the process of decolonizing knowledge was an effort to forge a dynamic future for Africa, as well as for Africans in the diaspora (Du Bois, 1973b, pp. 149–153). He envisioned a process of knowledge construction aimed at solving the problems of Africa and the African world. In this sense, his scholarly interest in the past was simultaneously a means of imagining and bringing forth the future. This was a vision shared by Nkrumah, for whom "new African centered ways" of knowing would facilitate a break from the colonial past, paving the way for the construction of knowledge necessary for Africa's future (Biney, 2011, p. 121), and for whom the contributions of Du Bois was a key basis—both symbolically and structurally—to such an endeavor. Furthermore, it would be Ghana, sub-saharan Africa's first independent nation, that would, under Nkrumah's leadership, become a focal point for Pan-Africanist discourse and mobilization from 1957 to 1966 (Milne, 2000; Poe, 2003).

Du Bois' concerns about the synergy between Africa's past and future, and the import of this for the African world was shared by a number of his contemporaries including Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, and Cheikh Anta Diop. Each expressed a concern with the future and endeavored to understand the role of the past in elucidating it (e.g., Diop, 1987; Garvey; 1986; Martin, 1976; Nkrumah, 1966). Additionally, each proposed varying degrees of unification either on the continental or global scale as means of erecting an economic and political structure capable of stewarding Africa and its diaspora into the future (Diop, 1987, 1996; Garvey, 1986; Martin, 1976; Nkrumah, 1963). This was apparent in Garvey's conception of the need for a globally integrated African world community and the formation of a powerful African nation-state, Nkrumah's insistence upon a united and socialist Africa, and Diop's advocacy for the formation of an African federated state.

Each of these thinkers' proposals held great implications for systems of knowledge construction. They collectively recognized that the struggle to usher a new and emancipatory political-economy into being required the emergence of a new social consciousness. This necessitated a reconceptualization of the past It

meant a decoupling of the socialization imperatives of the colonial order from those of the imagined sovereign future, and multifarious systems of socialization capable of marshaling the collective will of the African masses into the construction of a new society. Thus, whether formalized within the context of schools, or more broadly conceived as mechanisms of popular communication such as periodicals, broadcast media, books, or artistic productions, these educational processes were conceptualized as vehicles of social transformation (Anash, 1993; Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Diop, 1996; Hagan, 1993; Haizel, 1993; Martin, 1976).

This article seeks to explore the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. Du Bois and its implications for a reconceptualization of social development for African (and other postcolonial) societies. I maintain that Du Bois' thought and action pertaining to Pan-Africanism can be best understood when viewed in concert with those of other key thinkers. In this case, I look at him in the context of Nkrumah, wherein their views about the conceptual and the political-economic dimensions of social transformation will be examined. Ultimately, I contend that these ideas articulate a critical discourse of development, or more appropriately a *Pan-African critical theory of social transformation*, one whose absence contributes to the vacuity of mainstream development discourses, reinforcing the much-lamented condition of *neo-colonialism* that Nkrumah (1969) warned of so long ago. Further, I argue that these ideas are most pertinent in the present as African communities globally are forced to confront neoliberal social policies, recalcitrant racism, and varying forms of community instability due to violence and displacement. Therefore, in this historical moment critical educators, community organizers, institution builders, policy makers, and others must struggle to forge a new model of society, one that is finally divorced from the "catechism of impossibilities" (Karenga, 1997, p. 38) which seeks to suppress critical discourses and revolutionary praxis through an appeal to the banality of "cooperation" with hegemonic systems.

Pan-Africanism

The dawning of the twentieth century was characterized by the effective subordination of Africa under the aegis of European military power and the concomitant rise of Pan-African discourses in the Western hemisphere. Although these burgeoning currents of Pan-African sentiment were prefigured (at least in the American context) via the emigrationist proposals and the Ethiopianism of the nineteenth century (Delany, 1993; Moses, 1996), the turn of the century captured the vigor of a people slowly emerging from the yoke of chattel slavery, possessed of visions of community building (Painter, 1976), striving for the attainment of social liberties (Du Bois, 1986a), and searching for liberation from colonial subjugation (Harris, 1998; Zuberi, 2015). It is onto this stage that Pan-Africanism emerged; the child of those dispossessed of Africa, yet doubtless of its potential role in the redemption of her far-flung people.

Adi (2018), in his history of Pan-Africanism, discusses the various contours of this idea and movement. He succinctly captures its most salient aspects via the African Union's definition.

> Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encouraged the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African descent. The ideology asserts that the fates of all African peoples and countries are intertwined. At its core, Pan-Africanism is "a belief that African peoples both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny" (Adi, 2018, p. 1).

To this Adi adds that Pan-Africanism has taken on a variety of forms and political and economic struggles (Adi, 2018). Via various organizations and movements it has been a means of championing the reconstruction of African history, advocating anti-racist struggles, serving as a basis of political and economic cooperation, and so on. There are two principle forms of Pan-Africanism, each of which envisions a particular scale of social organization and theoretical focus; these are global and continental Pan-Africanism, respectively.

Kwame Nkrumah and the dream of a united, socialist Africa

Perhaps most notable to the formation of *continental Pan-Africanism*, an approach to Pan-Africanism centered on the unity of the African continent, was the work of Kwame Nkrumah. While Garvey's *global Pan-Africanism* offered a sweeping and lofty vision of a liberated world whose movement was sabotaged before the fullness of its flowering (Martin, 1976), Nkrumah benefitted from the confluence of a burgeoning African decolonization movement, a global diffusion of socialist and communist discourses, and the fervent yearnings for a new reality that was being expressed by the masses of the people in many parts of the world.

Nkrumah recognized that the decline of European colonialism did not necessarily guarantee the rise of a truly free Africa. Rather, the indeterminate nature of such a transition necessitated either the evolution of new forms of Western hegemony or the institutionalization of structures requisite for the establishment and maintenance of African sovereignty (Nkrumah, 1963, 1969). Thus, the liberation of Africa was both inevitable and ill-fated; inevitable in the sense that the old colonial model had become untenable, and ill-fated in that true freedom could not be confined to the territorial boundaries. This was so deftly delineated at the Berlin Conference, which was organized in 1884 to 1885 for the partitioning of Africa, the political and economic structures that facilitated Africa's exploitation under colonialism, and the developmental models endorsed the Western powers and their agents.

As such, Nkrumah made two proposals. One was for the formation of a united Africa a political and economic structure that would allow for the integration of the continent's vast resources, human and material. This would create a polity capable of resisting a painful and, ultimately enfeebling slide into neo-colonialism with the requisite means of projecting itself into the future (Nkrumah, 1963). This model was an essential call for a Pan-African state formation, that is, an African Union. The second proposal was that such a society be devised along socialist lines. Driven by a view that capitalism left to its acquisitive nature is insufficient to create a society that reflects what Anderson Thompson has termed the *African Principle* With an ideal that emphasizes "the greatest good for the greatest number" (Thompson, 1999, p. 14), Nkrumah argued that a system predicated upon the sharing of resources, the prioritization of human welfare over profit, the execution of a planned economy, and the cessation of European dominance via economic dependency was the only system viable to create the high standard of living and social egalitarianism that would propel Africa into the future (Nkrumah, 1963).

Like other advocates of Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah articulated a concern with the past, a vision of a collective future, and an egalitarian political economy. In many respects, his concerns echo those of Du Bois, whose vision of a Pan-African destiny was born of a preponderance of crises that he feared threatened to envelop the future of African people.

The confluence of crises

Crisis can be defined as a tumultuous event that threatens to rend asunder order and tranquility. Crisis can be a product of nature or born of human design. Regardless, crisis is the instantiation of a disruptive phenomenon. It is a juncture in space and time that precludes the easy succession of subsequent events. In short, crisis can be conceived as a spectacular departure from what is hoped for and to that which is neither desirable or avoidable.

While *a* crisis can be cause for alarm, the coalescing of multiple crises is likely to overwhelm the responsive capacity of any given system or unit. Failing that, such a convergence often signals the inescapability of disaster. Thus, a confluence of crises is the cascade of catastrophic events that loom both imminently and ominously in a given social milieu.

Du Bois, race, and structural crises

The work of W.E.B. Du Bois was enlivened via his perception of a myriad of crises which imperiled not only the African American community to which he had been born, but also the world that stood at the precipice in his view. The instantiation of these crises can be linked to the horrors of enslavement, the predation of colonialism, the barbarity of racism, and the dispossession of capitalism. These crises issue forth from the imperative of the West to place Africa and its far-flung diaspora underfoot. This confluence of crises required a departure from the necessarily limited craft of disengaged scholarly inquiry, an intensification of the political impulses imbued through the production and dissemination of propaganda, and a degree of strategic mobilization beyond the conventions of social protest. These crises required interventions outside the epistemic limits of isolated domains of knowledge production. They necessitated instead the *pluridisciplinary specialists* called for by Cheikh Anta Diop (Carruthers, 1999), or scholars whose expertise is sufficiently varied that they are poised to address not merely a crisis, but crises conjoined. This orientation is exemplified by Du Bois, whose scholarship spanned several domains—sociological, historical, philosophical, and so on.

In his assessment of the centrality of racial subordination as a feature in the global political-economy in the 1890s, he posited that "the problem of the 20th Century will be the problem of the color line" (Du Bois, 2002, p. 110), not only in the U.S., but around the world (Du Bois, 1995a, 2004b, pp. 68–69). In Du Bois' view, the process of racialization—the social construction of race as a system of signification and power—was a mechanism for the maintenance of exploitative systems that were simultaneously highly profitable, profoundly violent, yet morally self-absolving in their professed *civilizing* missions (Du Bois, 1965). Yet the maintenance of racialized systems of oppression, he argued, would prove costly to the Western powers. Hence, future crisis assured.

Nkrumah, Africa, and the crises of the future

Like Du Bois, Nkrumah was deeply concerned with crisis. In particular, he was troubled by the *crisis of disunity* and its impact as a corrosive force on the African continent. This is especially so in his appraisal of the coup in Congo that resulted in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. This coup was troubling for Nkrumah in many respects. Not only did it result in the toppling of a democratically-elected and allied regime, it also resulted in the full realization of neo-colonialism in its aftermath with the installation of a dictator who enjoyed the backing of the Western nations (Nkrumah, 1963; Zuberi, 2015).

As such, the tenuous nature of the newly independent African state and the ensuing Western campaigns of destabilization that wreaked myriad crises upon them was another source of concern for Nkrumah. This highlights Nkrumah's concern with *institutional crises*, that is, the dismantling or undermining of the state apparatus, often under the aegis of neo-colonial interests, and the ensuing chaos that this produces.

Lastly, one might argue that Nkrumah was concerned with the *crisis of consciousness* instantiated by the persistence of foreign cultural domination. He writes:

> Over and beyond this, we needed to plan an educational system that will be more in keeping with the requirements of the economic and social progress for which our new development plans are aiming. Our pattern of education has been aligned hitherto to the demands of British examination councils. Above all, it was formulated and administered by an alien administration desirous of extending its dominant ideas and thought processes to us. We were trained to be inferior copies of Englishmen, caricatures to be laughed at with our pretensions to British bourgeois gentility, our grammatical faultiness and distorted standards betraying us at every turn. We were neither fish nor fowl. We were denied the knowledge of our African past and informed that we had no present. What future could there be for us? We were taught to regard our culture and traditions as barbarous and primitive. Our textbooks were English textbooks, telling us about English history, English geography, English ways of living, English customs, English ideas, English weather. Many of these manuals had not been altered since 1895 (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 49).

Thus, for Nkrumah, the decolonization of the African mind and the development of the African personality, that is, the general patterns of social organization and behavior found across African cultures, was the most certain basis through which this continued colonization of the mind, this crisis of consciousness, could be averted. He writes, "We should nurture our own culture and history if we are to develop that African personality which must provide the educational and intellectual foundations of our Pan-African future" (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 49). His concerns for the condition of the African mind was shared by a number of African intellectuals including Diop (1987, 1996; Carruthers, 1999), Cabral (Cabral 1973; Karenga 2016; Rabaka 2009), Biko (2002), Chinweizu (1987), and others. These thinkers argued that Africa and African people's liberation was a matter of political and economic organization and consisted of the decolonization of the mind via the restoration of an African consciousness.

The Pan-African praxis of Du Bois

The color line belts the world

Du Bois lived for nearly 100 years. If one can expect a degree of variation in the orientation of a thinker over the passage of time, doubtlessly Du Bois' journey from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries makes this even more apparent. Thus, it is not an oversimplification to state that Du Bois moved from a more moderate to radical stance over time. What was once hope in the inexorable resolution of the crisis of the color line turned to conviction. This was a line soaked in the blood of those sacrificed to satiate the avaricious appetites of Western civilization, and it would only be erased via greater human sacrifice but in this instance for freedom.

This change of ideology is evident in Du Bois' writings and in the solutions that he came to embrace. Both his reflections upon the quandary of diasporan and continental Africans evidences a movement away from beliefs in the reformability of existing structures. He slowly concluded that a much more radical solution was required if people of African descent were to attain rights of self-determination.

There are two premises that guide the analysis of Du Bois' advocacy of Pan-Africanism which follows. First is his view that the domestic malaise of Africans in America represented "the local phase of a global problem" (Du Bois, 1995a, p. 42). Thus, Pan-Africanism was not only about the freeing of Africans on the continent. Rather, it was the redemption of African humanity in the world, as the indignities of colonialism mirrored the subject state of Africans throughout the Americas. In this way, one cannot separate his views of Pan-Africanism from his critique of colonialism, and the reliance of this upon his view of the *color line*. Second is the fact that Du Bois' Pan-Africanism did not exist in a vacuum, as his thinking was stimulated by the social milieu of its conception, reflecting all of the promises and contradictions therein. This included developments within the global politicaleconomy, emergent phenomena within the independence movements in Africa, and the various thinkers whom Du Bois encountered along his journey. He illustrates the idea that social consciousness is borne of a complex confluence of factors which are both intrapersonal and interpersonal, and that his final perspective on Africa and freedom were inseparable from the broad contours of African life and history.

Du Bois and the critique of colonialism

Central to Du Bois' views of the colonial enterprise is the recognition that it has not been incidental to the greatly expanded economic and political power of the West over the past five centuries (Du Bois, 2007c). He argued that colonialism has been central to this as it facilitated the hyper-accumulation and overdevelopment of the West (Rodney, 1974). He stated, "Extreme poverty in the colonies was the main cause of wealth and luxury in Europe" (Du Bois, 2007c, p. 23) as the subjugation of black labor in the Americas (Du Bois, 2007c; Williams, 1994), followed by the exploitation of black labor and resources in Africa (Du Bois, 2004a), provided the fuel for Europe's expansion and modernization.

Colonialism has accomplished the aggregation of humanity into supposed superiors and inferiors (Du Bois, 2007c), facilitated the degradation of African humanity via the hyperexploitation of African labor and lands (Du Bois, 2004b), impoverished the vitality of the cultures of the colonized (Du Bois, 2007c), and orchestrated the *subintegration* (Baruti, 2005) of the world into the politicaleconomy of Western hegemony. This meant the incorporation of states within a hierarchical world system wherein the majority are subordinate to the minority. In effect, Du Bois refuted of the existing world order, and the attendant idea of incessant progress resulting from the ascent of the West and the *universalization* of its culture and civilization into an assumed "universal culture" or "global civilization." Instead, it resulted in the unremitting plunder of the non-Western world.

The magnitude of the structural reconfiguration of the world, via the march of Europe's armies during the colonial era, was only matched by the work of European intellectuals to forge a conceptual buttress to support the imperial mission. This process, beginning during the era of enslavement, facilitated the racialization of Africa and Europe, wherein intrinsic qualities and capacities were imputed to arbitrary phenotypic traits.

> In order to establish the righteousness of this point of view, science and religion, government and industry, were wheeled into line. The word "Negro" was used for the first time in the world's history to tie color to race and blackness to slavery and degradation. The white race was pictured as "pure" and superior; the black race as dirty, stupid, and inevitably inferior; the yellow race as sharing in deception and cowardice, much of this color inferiority; while mixture of races was considered the prime cause of degradation and failure in civilization. Everything great, everything fine, everything really successful in human culture, was white (Du Bois, 2007c, p. 13).

The role of European intellectuals therefore was critical in the representation of the mass of non-European humanity as being in possession of a vastly inferior nature. Hegel's authorship of a history of the world offered a succinct, but telling treatment of Africa:

> At this point we leave Africa not to mention it again. For it is not a historical part of the world; it has no movements or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European world. Carthage displayed there an important transitory phase of civilization; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world's history (Carruthers, 1999, p. 8).

Hence, while Europeans stood as fully-formed humans prepared to exert their mighty will over nature, rendering it in service to industrial civilization, the rest of humanity was imagined as part of that nature —undifferentiated from the flora and fauna, the minerals or water—mere features of the natural landscape subject to exploitation (Du Bois, 2007c). Armed with a divinely inspired hubris, they set out to impose their dominion "over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

Therefore, the struggle against colonialism was not simply one of structural change, but also the transformation of mental consciousness. Herein, Du Bois viewed Pan-Africanism's utility in its ability to enliven the struggle for African independence, in addition to challenging the conceptual apparatus of colonial subjugation and arguing for the decolonization of the African mind as a more fully realized process of revolutionary change.

Pan-Africanism and decolonization: synthesis and disjunctures

The ending of colonialism was in itself insufficient to achieve a deeper reconfiguration of the political-economies of African societies. The demise of the former could be (and often was) little more than the end of direct administration by European states. This system was supplanted by one where European states and corporate entities exerted irresistible force upon the newly "free," and profoundly fragile former colonies. This vulnerability, in part, stemmed from the economic legacy of colonialism. If Europeans were able to restructure the economies of African societies so as to maximize their extractive capacity as far back as the era of enslavement, the persistence of such an

economic pattern became something of a parting gift of the former colonizers (Rodney, 1974). Africans soon found themselves at the helms of states that lacked both the expertise or infrastructure to actualize the sovereignty that their independence movements promised. Instead, they had transitioned from colonialism to neo-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1963, 1969), the continued dominance of the West via coups and campaigns of destabilization, multinational corporations, trade agreements, and the mechanism of debt.

Various proposals were put forth to counter this malaise, including continental integration, industrialization, and economic modernization. These were in addition to the notion that decolonization required the transformation of not only the political economy of a society but also the minds of its people. For proponents of continental integration, such as Diop and Nkrumah, the capacity of former African colonies to fully actualize the sovereignty that they desired, was an unlikely prospect. The inability to achieve this largely rested on the inadequate economic basis bequeathed the new nations by the former colonial powers. Under colonialism, African economies were structured to facilitate the extraction and export of raw materials to the West (a pattern that largely persists to this day). Further, the territorial boundaries of *modern* Africa were not based on any logic greater than the arbitrary determinations of the attendees at the Berlin Conference. These boundaries ignored and undermined precolonial states and societies, as well as cultural traditions and political histories. It has been argued that the removal of these borders via the formation of an African supra-state was a necessary move to more effectively marshal the material and human resources of the continent, while also positioning it to more effectively defend itself from external threats (Diop, 1987; Nkrumah, 1963).

In addition to the prospects for political and economic independence, one oft-neglected area was decolonization of minds and the creation of a new African consciousness. In this struggle, Nkrumah saw culture and history as critical domains. His founding of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana-Legon, the initiation of the Encyclopedia Africana project, and the involvement of African intellectuals from all around the world were reflective of his view that the transformation of African consciousness entailed a global struggle, drawing upon the collective genius of the continent and its diaspora. In fact, Nkrumah's efforts signified an attempt to wrench African studies from the hold of European scholars, who he said, "continue to make European studies of Africa the basis of this new assessment," and instead to approach the study of Africa "in new African centered ways" (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005, p. 67). Additionally, Nkrumah's significant investments in K-12 education was indicative of the degree to which he saw education as a means to augment the human capital of Ghana, believing that the minds of the people were the most potent fuel capable driving Africa into the future (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005; Nkrumah, 1963; Okrah, 2003; Tetteh, 1999).

For Du Bois, the prospect of an emergent critical consciousness had been a feature of his work since the start of the century. However, his conceptualization of this is most coherently expressed in his 1960 essay *Whither Now and Why* where he argues forthrightly for the importance of African American culture as a basis of collective identity and development (Du Bois, 1973b). He also articulates the need for grassroots institutions charged with stewarding the knowledge production necessary to counter the debilitating impact of enslavement on the African American mind. Moreover, he calls for the broad-based diffusion of socialization processes, where families and communities become sites of education.

In many respects, Du Bois' call anticipates the later rise of the black independent schools movement during the Black Power era. This was a movement that saw education as a core basis of African liberation, and led to the subsequent formation of the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI) in 1972, which served as an umbrella organization for independent and African-centered schools throughout the United States (Konadu, 2009; Lomotey, 1992; Madhubuti, 1973; Piert, 2015). According to Hannibal Afrik, one of the founders of the Shule ya Watoto, an independent school established in Chicago in 1972, each of these institutions represented an "organized, revolutionary approach by black people to control the development of the minds and consciousness of our community through the self-reliant process of [building] progressive

educational institutions" (Shujaa & Afrik, 1996, p. 256). Afrik, like others in CIBI, viewed education as a means of transforming African American consciousness and providing the conceptual basis for liberation. They argued that education was inherently political and, as such, served to reinforce the existing order of European hegemony. By contrast, African people desirous of freedom required an educational system that was unambiguously committed to African self-determination via the reclamation of African culture and the restoration of sovereignty.

Each of these conceptions of Pan-African praxis indicates the degree to which Africa's future was viewed as contested space. This future represented both a continuation of colonialism's legacy and a more complete break from it, enabling the emergence of a new Africa—an Africa not defined by the territorial constraints of European power, but rather a continent whose material wealth is used to enrich its people, and a people whose consciousness is richly informed by a deep understanding of African history and culture, able to marshal their collective will towards the actualization of their goals.

Nokware (Truth)

In contextualizing the work of Du Bois and Nkrumah, rather than relying upon the critical discourses of the Frankfort School or others, I have instead proposed an indigenous African paradigm that I maintain encapsulates the most salient aspects of Du Bois' and Nkrumah's thoughts pertaining to overcoming colonialism's legacy. African culture is replete with conceptual models, and I have turned to one whose simplicity is also the basis for its profundity—truth. Truth is a vital element in the cultural matrix of African societies. In fact, one might argue that truth, as an ethical value, is one of the most central values among African peoples. Opoku notes that, on the occasion of receiving their name, "The first moral instruction given to newly born Akan children … is to be truthful" (1997, p. 72).

African proverbial wisdom is a rich resource explicating the necessity of truth as a fundamental basis for good social relations. These proverbs capture a range of social situations or are often applicable to a myriad of contexts, from the personal to the social. The Akan proverb, "Nokware di tuo" (Opoku, 1997, p. 76) is exemplary. *Nokware* is a noun, which translates into English as *truth, di* is a verb, which translates into English as *eat*, and *tuo* is a noun, which translates into English as *gun*. Hence, "Nokware di tuo" translates as "Truth eats [the] gun." Opoku (1997) offers the following explanation, "Truth is stronger than the gun and cannot be silenced by it. The proverb expresses the power or invincibility of truth" (p. 76).

When considered in the context of the political history of the Akan and present-day Ghana, this proverb takes on further meaning. Firearms were introduced into the region by European merchants in the mid-17th century. Their introduction changed the political dynamics in that they both accelerated the disaster which was the *Maafa*—the interrelated process of slavery and colonialism—specifically with respect to the commerce in human beings, while also intensifying conflicts between local states. This culminated with the rise of "military states" such as the Asante who leveraged this technology for military advantage (Amenumey, 2011, p. 103). However, just as the gun (tuo) enabled the rise to power of the Asante, a major Akan subgroup, it also was the instrument of their ultimate defeat by the British. Hence, the gun, whether used in support of or contrary to their political and economic interests, has been shown to be an instrument of power. Here, the question of the relationship of truth to power becomes most urgent, and as this proverb suggests, truth represents a greater source of power than the gun. It literally states that "truth devours (di) the gun."

I argue that this proverb offers an important indicator of the conceptualization of nokware (truth) in African thought, not only within the traditional society, but also in the African diaspora. Nokware represents a truth that is both invincible in terms of power and a source of courage or surety in terms of its potential to serve as a basis of personal motivation. Take for instance, Dr. Martin Luther King's remarks from 1967: "Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of

conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world" (Shujaa, 2003, p. 179). Here, Dr. King illuminates the challenges of championing an unpopular truth, particularly during times of social upheaval and state repression. However, King's remarks also note the degree to which nokware is weighted with obligation, that is, *inner truth* places demands upon us to act on its basis.

To this point, I argue that nokware is not merely a philosophical abstraction or something that exists as a preserve of ethicists, but is a matter of life and struggle. I contend that nokware is the inner truth that Dr. King articulates, which is also linked to political imperatives. It compels us to, as is often said, speak truth to power. However, it also requires us to transform reality on its basis. It is the institutionalization of such truths in social life which enlivens their revolutionary potential. Thus, I am offering nokware as a type of Pan-African critical theory, a mode of praxis rooted in African tradition that requires, as does the ethical instruction from the Akan naming ceremony, that one "be truthful" in both word and deed (Opoku, 1997, p. 72).

Nokware is evident in both Du Bois' and Nkrumah's critique of colonialism, and their various proposals to achieve its undoing. Their participation in the Pan-African Congresses, efforts to reconstruct and recover African history, contributions to a liberatory education, and advocacy for a just economic system all evidence the application of nokware. They did not seek to accept the colonizers' rationales of colonialism's humanitarian mission, but instead deconstructed these arguments, revealing the capitalist underpinnings of the colonial project. Nor did they submit to the Hegelian lie that Africa was devoid of history, but rather recognized the subordination of processes of ideation to the political and economic exigencies of the day—in this case European imperialism. Their awareness of the powerful role of mis-education (Woodson, 1990) in the maintenance of oppressive systems, thus it compelled them to devise new educational models ultimately concerned with the decolonization of the mind. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the latter has been each of their contributions to ethnic studies—whether African, African American, or the more broadly conceived Africana Studies. Lastly, they did not view the capitalist system as essentially benign or Africa's participation within an economic order established by the former colonial powers as an optimal outcome. Rather, they viewed this system as one that relied on hyper-exploitation and thus concluded that it could not provide a foundation for Africa's future. As such, they looked to socialism as a system that could create justice and fairness for the masses of African people, a system that would enable all to achieve their full potential. In short, their works were informed by nokware, a deep study and appreciation of truth—the irrefutable truth of African humanity, the truth of Africans' right to self-determination, and the proposed truth that a unified Africa would create a higher standard of living for the whole of the African world. It was the actualization of this latter truth, which was the basis of the works of these two men.

Turning to the present, nokware, or rather the pursuit of it, compels us to both ask and answer several pertinent questions. Has the neoliberal model of social development ushered into being a higher standard of living for African nations? Have these policies produced an improved condition for the African masses in the diaspora? Have Africa's descendants inherited a world where Du Bois' "problem of the 20th Century," racism, has been abolished? Lastly, have African communities—whether on the continent or abroad—become bastions of stability and prosperity unperturbed by the broader machinations of alien forces? Sadly, if nokware is a basis for our deliberations, we must respond to all of these queries negatively. Given this, we are left with the subsequent question: What do such truths compel us to do?

This work has not sought to provide a comprehensive critique or analysis of either Du Bois or Nkrumah. However, their ideas provide a substantive basis upon which to interrogate the present and future of the African world. Both thinkers leave us with a potent challenge, that is, the work of definitively ending the processes of dispossession and alienation. Colonialism as a mere passing stage remains undone. The collapse of the once vast colonial empires has enabled the ascent of a neo-colonialism that is, in many respects, far more intractable than its predecessor. Moreover, the unabated exploitation of Africa's resources continues to undermine the welfare of African societies. As a result, ours is a day where avarice, fear, destabilization campaigns, dubious "aid" policies, and the

impoverishment of imagination has resulted in the de facto acceptance of the neo-liberal model as the totality of possibility. It is a state of affairs that has made poverty, the striving to achieve narrowly conceived models of success, and the seductive appeal of escapist and fundamentalist ideologies more acute. It is a moment where the need for a critical perspective, for nokware, is most urgent.

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