



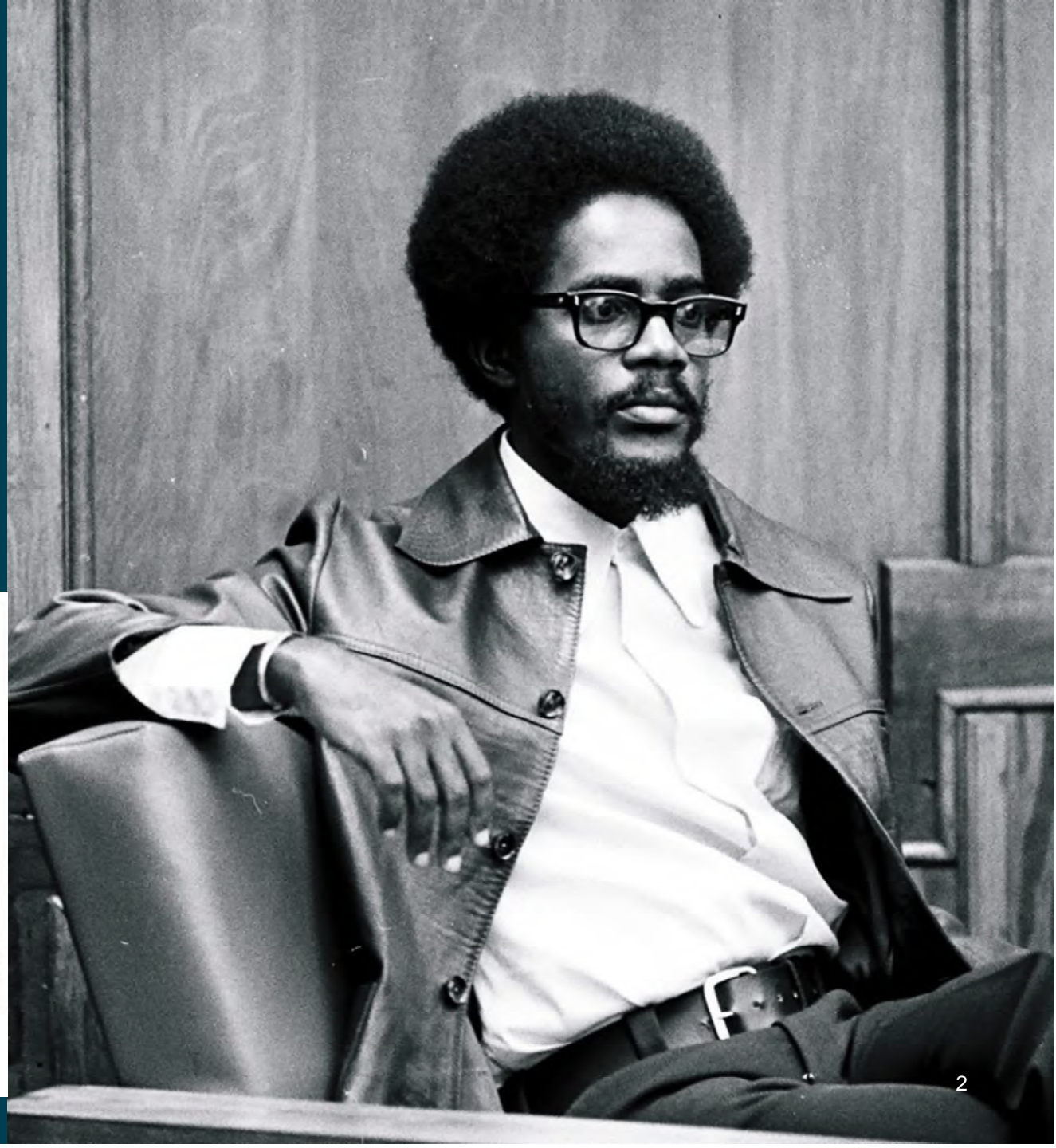
# Dismantling the Colonial University: Defiant Scholarship & Decolonial Thought in Africa

Professor Patricia Daley & Dr Amber Murrey

School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

Walter Rodney's notion of 'guerrilla intellectuals'

...not to gain legitimacy but to 'occupy the terrain' in order to 'free the whole structure'  
(p. 112)



# ‘DEFIANT SCHOLARSHIP’

- Defiant scholarship - a constellation of practices and logics by cultivating ways of knowing that are unconventional to the colonial university
- Defiant scholarship - practice of knowledge production (Grosfoguel 2012)

PLUTO  PRESS

**Decolonizing Development Studies:  
Disobedient Pedagogies for Decolonial Futures**

Amber Murrey and Patricia Daley

work against and beyond colonial grammars of knowledge, in opposition to, and/or

geographies & ‘the colonial uni-versity’

# Outline of arguments

- Persistence of colonial logics in African geographies
- African geographies, racialization in Africa and anti-racist geographies
- African geographies and black geographies--Black (and) African geographies
- Contours and constellations of defiant scholarship in and with Africa

# Persistence of colonial logics in Africa



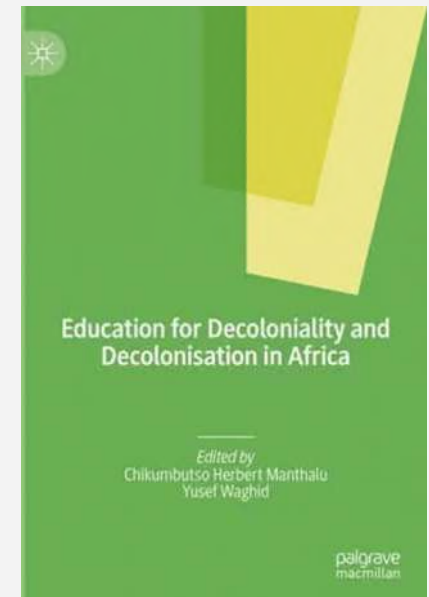
# Coloniality in the study of Africa

## **The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications**

**Paul Tiyambe Zeleza**  
Pennsylvania State University

### **1. Introduction**

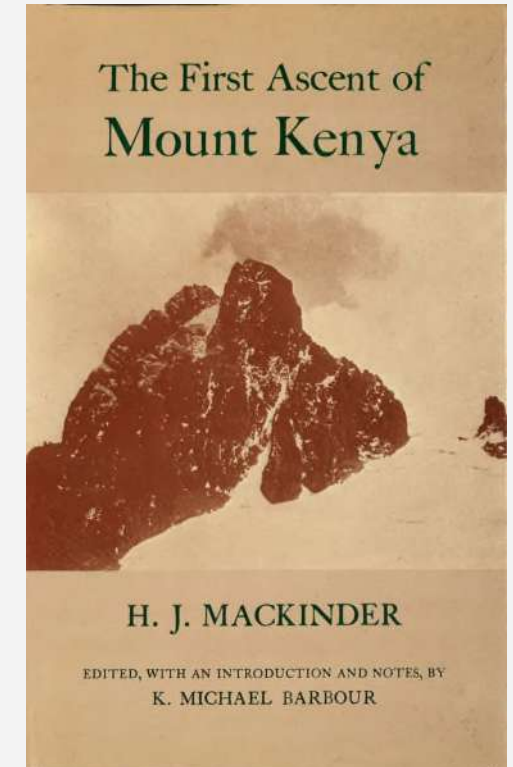
African identities, like African languages, are inventions, mutually constitutive existential and epistemic constructions. Invention implies a history, a social process; it denaturalizes cultural artifacts and practices, stripping them of primordial authenticity and essentialism. This is predictable coming from a historian, a field that investigates and invests the past with meaning, seeks to unravel the complex and often contradictory ebbs and flows of human institutions, inventions, ideas, and imaginations, in which change, often messy and unpredictable in its causes and consequences, is the only constant. Flagging my disciplinary affiliation is another way of trying to save myself from embarrassment in this gathering of eminent linguists, to tell you that while I know something about history, I know very little about linguistics, so you will have to forgive my uninformed remarks.



# Coloniality in the study of Africa— imperial geography

- The role of colonialism and coloniality in geography
- The marginalisation of African societies within human geography and of human geography within African universities

**Halford  
Mackinder**







# African Geographies, Racialisation and Anti- Racist African Geographies



## Roles of anti-blackness and racial difference understudied



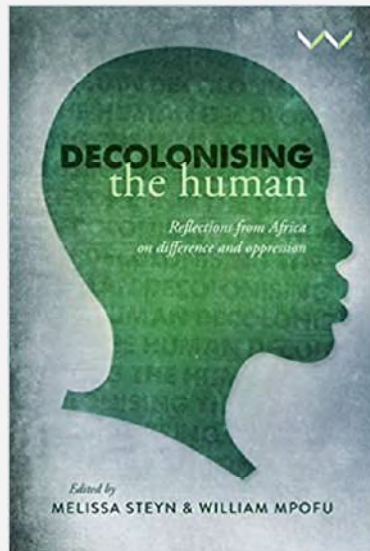
SOGE School of Geography and the Environment



Global anti-black racism has structured knowledge about 'Africa', including by erasing the ways in which racialisation impacts scholarly understandings of Africa (Pierre 2013; Daley and Kamata 2017; Steyn and Mpofu 2021)

Silenced the role of global raciality in shaping dynamics

### Political Geography

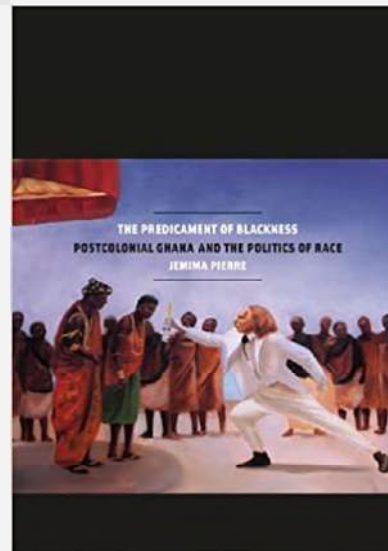


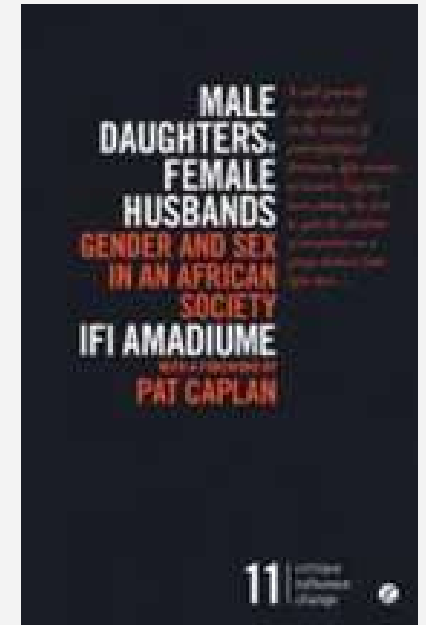
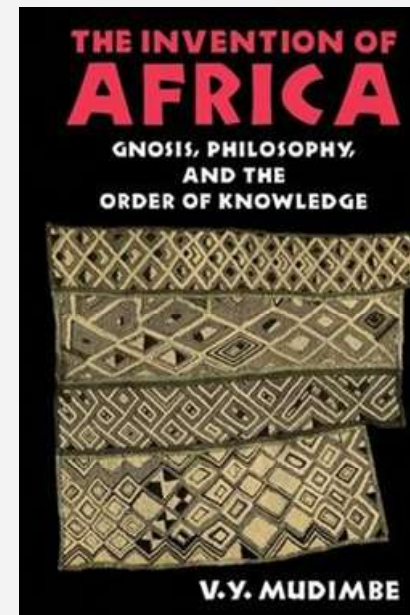
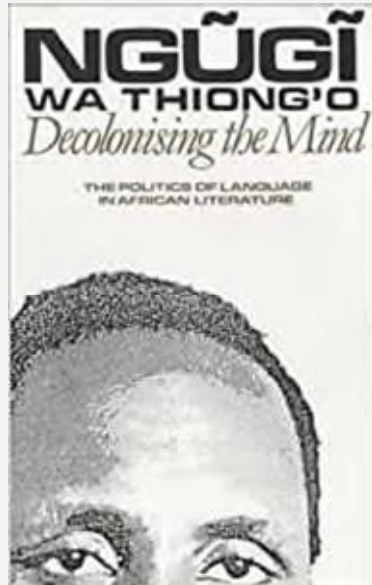
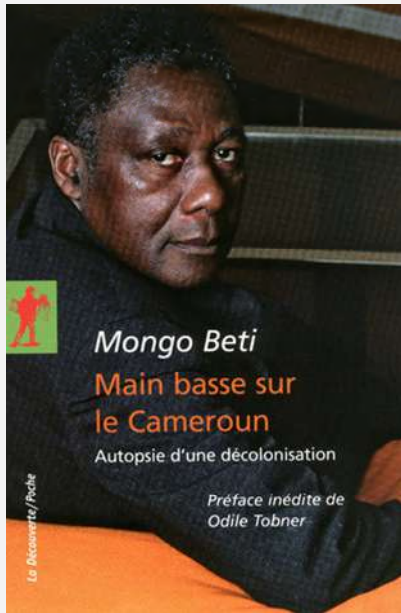
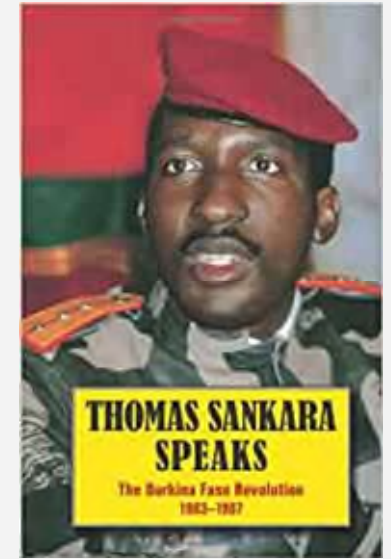
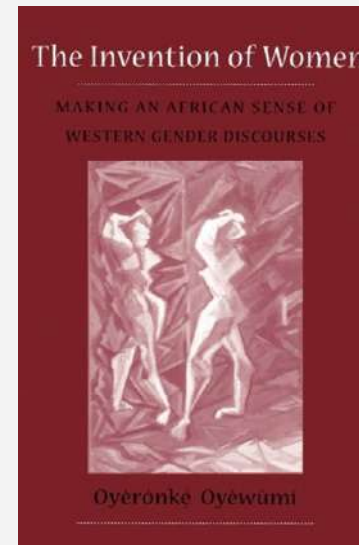
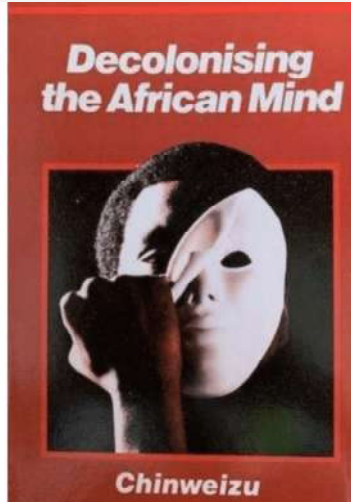
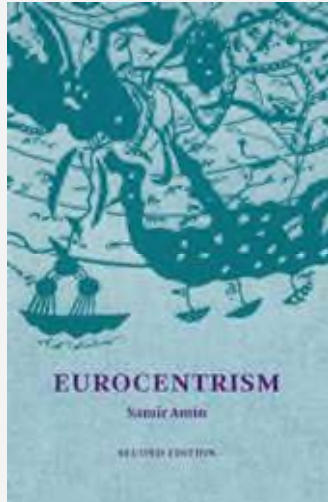
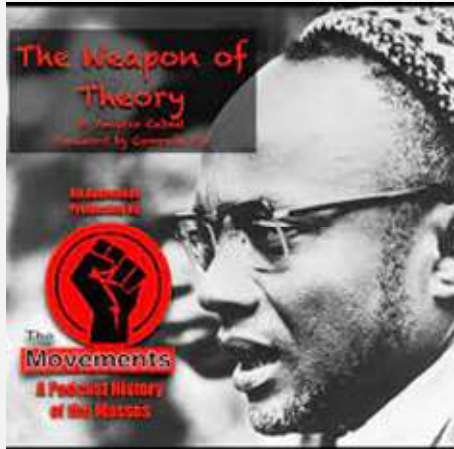
#### The north/south divide in the study of contemporary Africa

Patricia Daley and Ng'wanza Kamata

In 2015, in defence of a new Somali journal launched at the School of Oriental and African Studies with no Somali academics on the editorial board, Dr. Markus Hoehne, an anthropologist at the University of Leipzig and racialized as white, deployed a tirade of racial stereotypes to justify their exclusion. For Hoehne, there are no "Somalis who would qualify as serious SCHOLARS [his emphasis] — not because they lack access to sources, but because they seem not to value scholarship as such" (Hoehne quoted in Aidid, 2015). This view is symptomatic of an undercurrent of racism in the academy, and wider society, in the contemporary global North that hides behind a cultural critique. In this intervention, we seek to contextualize the thinking of such knowledge production within a neo-liberalized African Studies, and consider how, with its history of racialized politics, the subject can transcend current manifestations of imperialist knowledge-making.

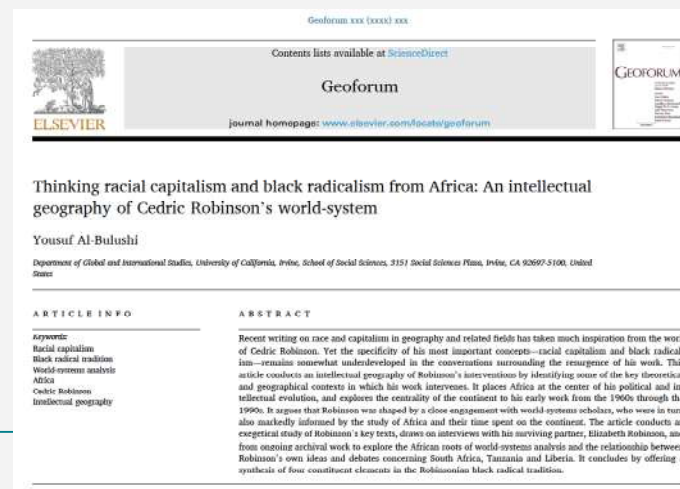
A long tradition exists in the global North whereby scholarship on Africa has been contested predominantly by scholars of African descent. Such critics point to the persistent coloniality embraced by much of the teaching and research on Africa, and the foreign policy origin of much of the sources of funding. Knowledge production has essentially constituted gathering intelligence on African people — their cultures, customs, and languages. In the USA, under Title VI of the 1965 Higher Education Act 125, centres for African Studies were established in universities across the country as teaching and research about other regions of the world were deemed central to national security. After 2001, the 'war on terror' shifted funding away from the traditional Title VI centres to support more militarized scholarship, such as in the newly-established Social Science





# Anti-racist African Geographies

Anti-racist geographies have much to offer us by way of attending to the roles and functions of racism, racialization, whiteness and anti-Blackness on the African continent



# African Geographies and Black Geographies - Black (and) African Geographies



in conversations about Black (and) Muslim geographies

Azezat Johnson

## Wider problematics in the study of African geographies

- (a) the marginalization of Africa within critical geography, particularly outside of Southern and English-speaking regions (Daley and Kamata 2017);
- (b) exacerbates the avoidance of race, racial politics and anti-racism in the study of African Geographies that we have previously outlined
- and (c) silences under-realized knowledges of shared experiences, pluralities of place-making/being-in-place/embodiment/and more that are distinctive, and dis/congruous forms intellectual fodder and repair.

Zeleza (2006: 97) argues that Gilroy's Black Atlantic is 'a form of pan-Africanism that is largely confined to celebrating the creativity and construction of new cultures among the diaspora communities in the Anglophone world of the United States and Britain, excluding Africa'.

*African Affairs*, 104/414, 35–68  
doi:10.1093/afraf/adi001

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## REWRITING THE AFRICAN DIASPORA: BEYOND THE BLACK ATLANTIC

PAUL TIYAMBE ZELEZA

### ABSTRACT

This essay argues that despite the growing popularity of diaspora studies, our understanding of the African diaspora remains limited by both the conceptual difficulties of defining what we mean by the diaspora in general, and the African diaspora in particular, and the analytical tendency to privilege the Atlantic, or rather the Anglophone, indeed the American branch of the African diaspora. It begins by trying to explore the various conceptions of the African diaspora, foregrounded by a critique of Paul Gilroy's influential text, *The Black Atlantic*. This is followed by discussions of what the author considers to be the four dominant dimensions of the global African diasporas, namely, the intra-Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and Atlantic diasporas. Finally, the essay examines the emergence of the new global African diasporas.

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# Defiant Geographies





# Origins and significant of term, 'defiant scholarship'

Walter Dignolo's (2011: 45) 'epistemic disobedience', which calls for a delinking (*desprendimiento*) or 'spatial paradigmatic breaks of epistemic disobedience' from colonial logics and epistemes.

**Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option:  
A Manifesto**

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WALTER D MIGNOLO  
DUKE UNIVERSITY

The ideas, many of which will unfold through years of engaged political work, need not be perfect, for in the end, it will be the hard, creative work of the communities that take them on. That work is the concrete manifestation of political imagination.

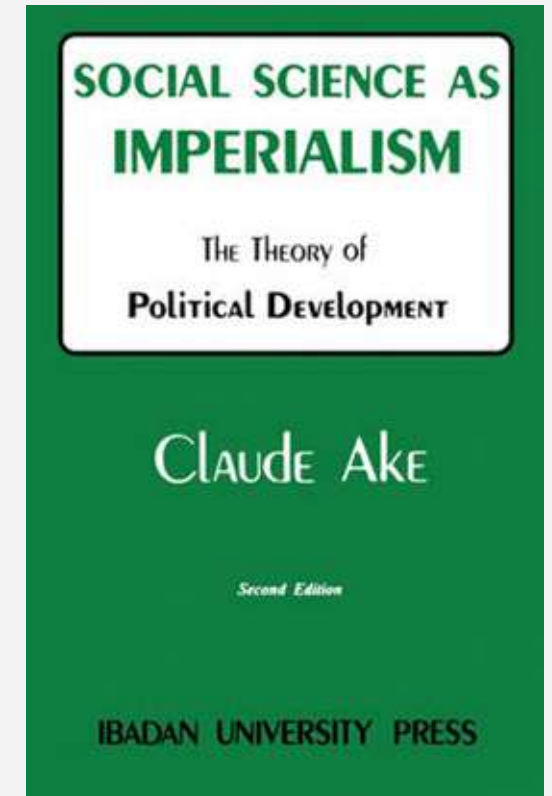
Fanon described this goal as setting afoot a new humanity. He knew how terrifying such an effort is, for we do live in times where such a radical break appears as no less than the end of the world. In the meantime, the task of building infrastructures for something new must be planned, and where there is some room, attempted, as we all no doubt already know, because given the sociogenic dimension of the problem, we have no other option but to build the options on which the future of our species rest. (Lewis Gordon, "Fanon and Development. A Philosophical Look" 2004).

## Social Science as Imperialism and the Defiant Scholarship of Claude Ake

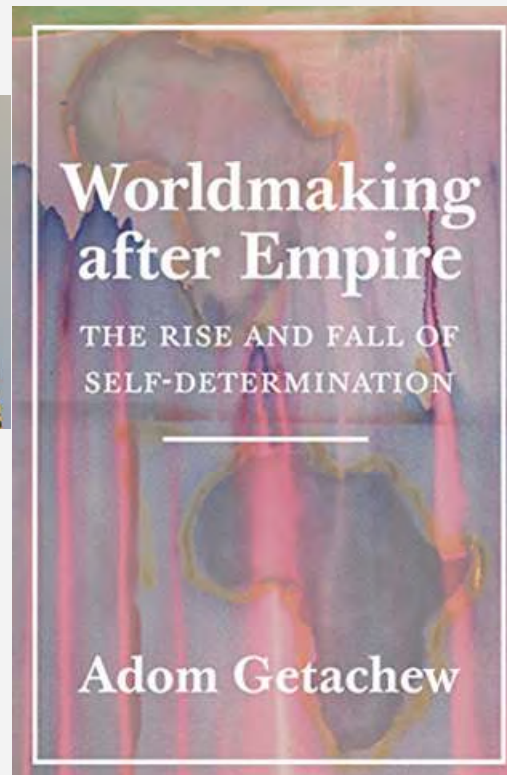
First: because ‘it foists, or at any rate attempts to foist on developing countries, capitalist values, capitalist institutions, and capitalist development’

Second, it ‘focuses social science analysis on how to make the developing countries more like the West and...

...thirdly, ‘it propagates mystification, and modes of thought and action which serve the interests of capitalism and imperialism’ (p.xiii).



# Anti-Colonial Worldmaking



# Epistemologies of Equilibrium Must Fall: Thinking beyond the many turns in Anthropology

🕒 August 8, 2016    👤 Decolonizing Anthropology

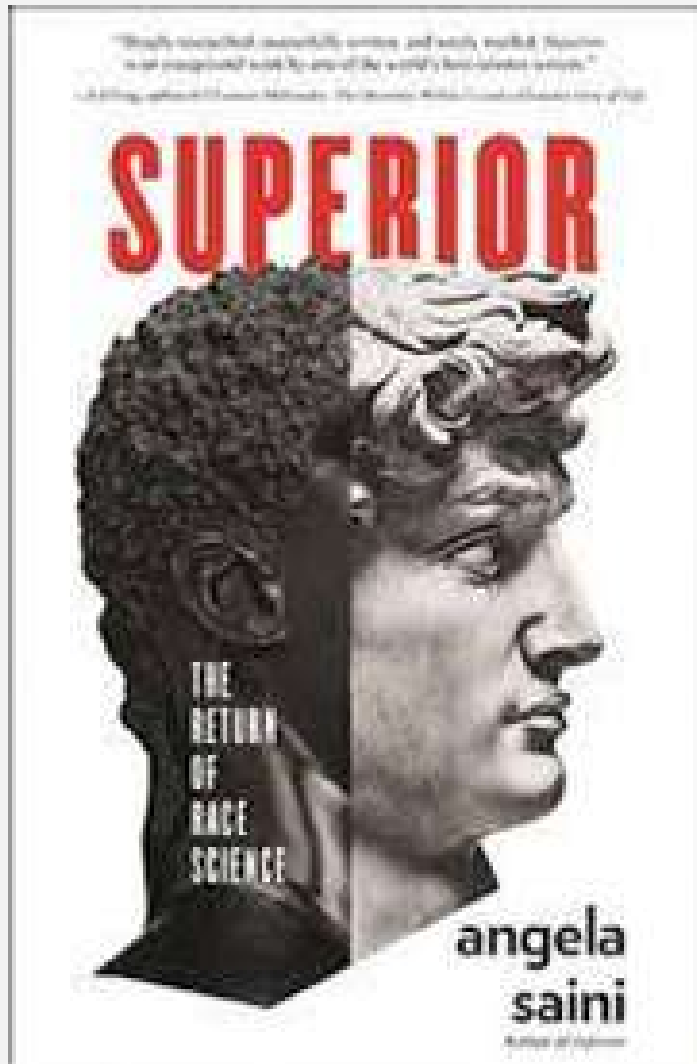
This entry is part 13 of 20 in the **Decolonizing Anthropology** series.

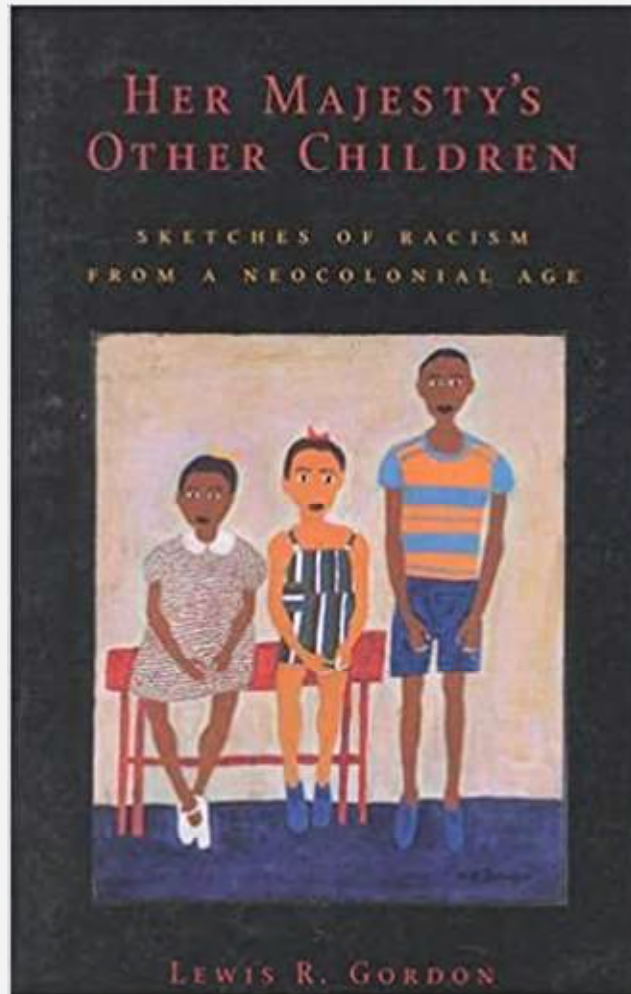
By *Nokuthula Hlabangane*

"Modernity will never again, up to the present, ask existentially or philosophically for the right to dominate the periphery. Rather, the right to domination will be imposed as the *nature of things* and will *underpin* all modern philosophy." (emphasis in original; Dussel, 2014: 32-33)

Defiant scholarship is an ethos and not a fixed rubric or traveling model, hustling and adapting new strategies and manoeuvres in real-time to ever flexible but also sedimented forms of coloniality.

This is because colonial logics are multiple and dextrous, frequently reassembling, fatiguing, misappropriating and re-bordering in the face of resistance.





Lewis Gordon reminds that it is the “mundane, often boring features of instrumental activity” in which political change or stability reside

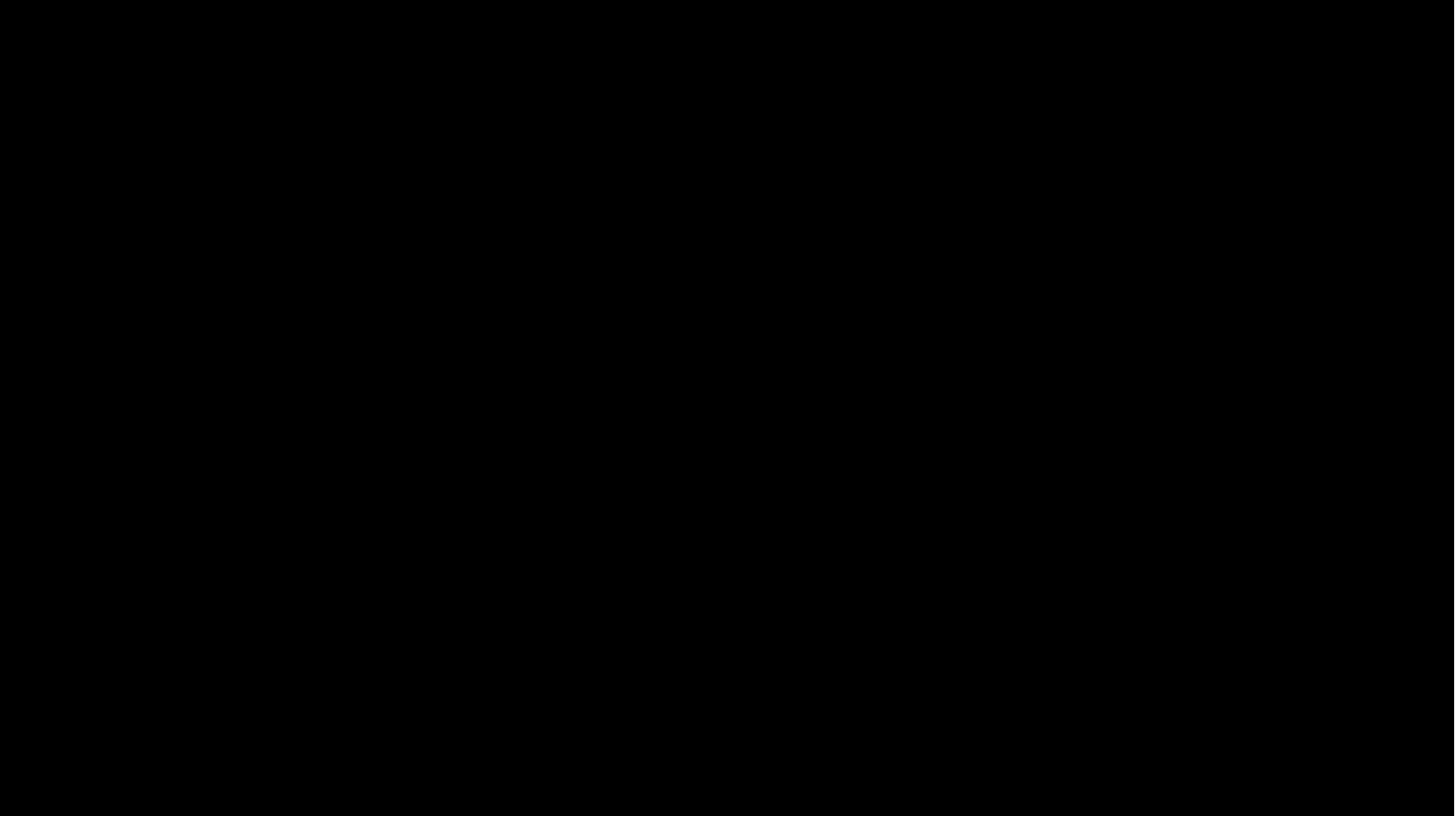
# DECOLONISING RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

## A Critical Teaching & Learning Online Collaborative

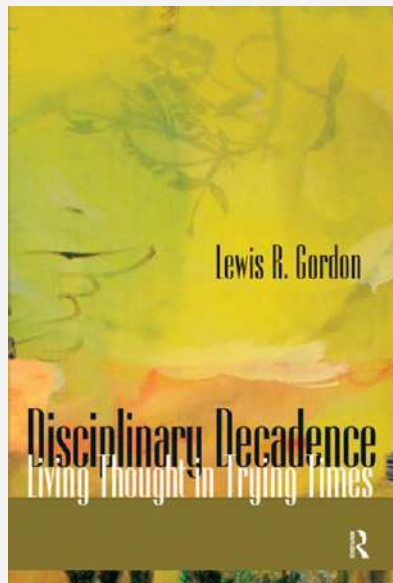
10 May - 25 June 2021, University of Oxford and University of South Africa

How do we teach emergent, defiant, decolonial options even as they are rendered unimaginable, unknowable, and/or delegitimised within the dominant paradigm and the global 'Westernised university' (Grosfoguel 2013)? How do we learn and practice ways of knowing that do not concede to the violence that keeps the present colonial system in place? How do we move away from colonial illusions of certainty, efficiency, expertise, discovery, and related promises? How do we resist the seductive desires to have our knowledge validated, acclaimed, and affirmed by dominant systems, institutions, and people? How do we teach and learn what is uncertain, what is becoming?

In this experimental course, we would like to foster an interactive and collaborative digital space to build, challenge, and practice ways of knowing offered by the rich scholarship on decolonising research methods in the social sciences. We recognise the significance of trust within collectives thinking against coloniality and colonial violence and striving towards epistemic decolonisation - particularly online. Guided and immersive sessions will help us work towards the creation of a different kind of digital classroom and cultivate a collective commitment. Our course activities are flexible and include the creation of a power playlist; sessions on self-critique and decolonial reflection; discussions with serious, committed, and humble scholars who have worked for decades on community centred and decolonial knowledges in Africa and beyond; an Uncomfortable Oxford digital tour tracing Oxford's spatial and historical relationship with colonialism, particularly in Africa; a final week of student-led deliberations and (re)imaginings of their current research; and more.



# defiance beyond disciplinarity



- ‘...maintain methodological rigor’
- ‘...make contributions to *the* discipline’
  
- Even as decolonial thought opens up new ways of thinking... un-disciplining ourselves remains dangerous for many of us.






# Final words

- Aspiring towards defiant practice within the colonial university is a knowingly transgressive undertaking
- Working within historical and emergent traditions
- Saadiya Hartman (2019: XIV-V) proposes that we attend to ‘the insurgent grounds of the wayward’ as they embark on ‘the beautiful experiments’ in living beyond negative categorizations
- The university as a site for reparative justice (Daley in *Rhodes Must Fall: The Struggle to Decolonise in the Racist Heart of Empire*, 2018)

# Thank you for listening

Oxford University Centre for the Environment  
University of Oxford, South Parks Road  
Oxford, OX1 3QY, United Kingdom

enquiries@geog.ox.ac.uk  
tel: +44 (0)1865 285070

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