

This lecture is divided into five sections. The first section is a discursive analysis of my post-secondary/graduate schooling experience in Canada in light of my expectations and secondary school education. While my experience reveals the critical gaps in my Nigerian secondary school education, the Eurocentric orientation of the Canadian education system bolstered the colonial purpose of my Nigerian education. My Canadian education experience was characterized by culturally irrelevant curriculums, few Black teachers who could serve as mentors, micro-aggression and racism from professors and ongoing humiliation in and outside the school walls. In the slides I will be using in the lecture, I identify eight distinct ways the current education system impacts and shapes Black student experiences/outcomes. They include:

- 1) Identity crisis
- 2) Ongoing dehumanization
- 3) Violence (cognitive, emotional and physical)
- 4) Mis-education
- 5) Under-education
- 6) Precarious workers as students and citizens
- 7) Dividing, ruling and conquering Black communities
- 8) Agent of self -destruction & community extinction

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Even though the lecture is primarily based on my own schooling experience, historically, a lot has been written about the anti-black orientation of the education system. Black Canadian teenagers are also sharing similar schooling experiences. This section argues that to solve this education injustice, we must properly define and understand the problem. The first point that needs to be understood is that: 1) The education system is not broken, it was designed to be colonizing and anti-black. Also, the anti-blackness and colonial orientation of the education system is not a unique Canadian or Nigerian problem, it is a global structural problem. 2) Contrary to popular belief, the global decolonization project is not complete. Creating a new inclusive global education structure/ system hinges on the extent to which an inclusive global social structure is enabled to emerge. So, the project of decolonization needs to be completed.

Section 3 of the lecture outlines a new vision of the world that moves from Eurocentricity to a multi-centric and pluri-versal world that is informed by the diverse knowledge systems of the world.

Section 4 will lay out the implications for a new education system (Decolonial Inclusive Education) that enables students to advance a world that is just, inclusive of all, prosperous for all and pluri-versal!

Section 5 lays out the implications for student activism and administration.

Moving to Canada in pursuit of leadership: awakening, taking action

Growing up in Nigeria, we were told that Children are the Leaders of Tomorrow and that if we go to school, we too, will become leaders. As a child that went to the office with her father during holidays and had opinions that I thought weren't going to be taken seriously until I became an 'educated grown up', I diligently went to school and looked forward to being able to freely contribute to society. Moving to Canada at the age of 16 was part of this leadership aspiration. When I arrived Grande Prairie, I was rudely surprised by how little Canadians knew about Africa, Nigeria and the problematic assumptions their questions often revealed, especially considering the fact that our books in Nigerian (schools, church, social, political life) had presented westerners as the yardstick of intelligence, model of what we all could become when we are civilized and educated. So, of all things not to expect Canadians not to know is that people don't walk around wearing costumes on regular days to class, people don't live in a jungle. I was taken aback when people I met viewed my traditional clothing as a costume. I wondered to myself that in Nigeria, it is only in my hometown, Agulu that I see masquerades wear costumes – the last I checked, I am not a masquerade. Also, I wondered why "jeans" was not considered to be costumes and it was just seen as regular clothes but my traditional attire is seen as a costume. With a lot love and respect for my

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foundational Canadian years in GP, the people of GP asked incredible questions. They wondered out loud to me, you must be amazed by the snow? But I have seen snow before. I mean the coldness (-30), the tininess of the city was not something I was used. However, I probably was more puzzled about how I was going maintain my Nigerian fashion standards in light of the fact that I had to walk to school, I thought winter boots were ugly and the roads had been transformed into a skating rink! Jokes aside, I was confused by this assertion and puzzled that people just made these assumptions about who they thought I was - as a child, my parents flew me and my siblings around the world during 'summer' and exposed us to people from different cultures and places with different weathers for that matter. Alongside other Nigerians in Grande Prairie, they wondered why we spoke such good English, they wondered about the transformation of our hair (long today, short and curly tomorrow, lol) and if our skin color robbed off, i.e- if we were white and just painted black paint on ourselves. In addition to being confused by these questions, I didn't understand why I simply knew more about people in the west, why I didn't just make silly assumptions about people I met yet these are people we are supposed to come and learn from/be intelligent like were acting silly. Well, instead of just complaining and wondering to myself about the root of these issues, I reached out to the lone Black professor – Oswald Warner at GPRC about planning an African event. He actively encouraged me and gave \$20 which we put towards printing posters. I reached out to the other Nigerian students about organizing a

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show to reduce these silly questions, they were on board – we were to make food, do a play, fashion show and musical performances. I reached out to my lovely friend Lohifa in the audience – Lohifa, she was in Vancouver then. From Vancouver and via Greyhound (which she probably paid for), she sent us a luggage full of clothes for the fashion show. We tried to get as many things for free and viola, this was how the first of its kind African show in GP, “Out of Africa” was produced and presented to on March 27<sup>th</sup> 2005. The next day, we were on the front cover of newspaper. With our miserly \$20 start up and free resources, we raised \$500 which we donated to the HIV society in Edmonton (Show Slide). I was extremely energized by the success of this event, thankfully it was my 2<sup>nd</sup> and last year in Grande Prairie, so, I was glad that I made a difference there and looked forward to beginning the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of my degree at University of Alberta. I still had all these unresolved questions, I set my eyes on learning and meeting older people.

When I arrived at the University of Alberta, the student groups and their incessant campaigns to help Africa welcomed me. It seemed as though every student group on campus was always organizing a fundraiser to help Africa. In my classes, I was inundated with anecdotes about how the West set Africa up for failure and how Westerners have a moral imperative to help. I wondered: which Africa is everyone trying to save? What is wrong with Africa? When I lived in Nigeria, I never thought that we had a problem. I began to research, and

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discovered how little I knew about the history and socio-economic situation in my country and continent. It pained and angered me to realize that I had lived in the midst of social injustice and inequities — child traders, mob justice, gender violence and corruption amongst others but never questioned them. I could not understand how the Nigerian education system was not geared towards ensuring that the so-called ‘leaders of tomorrow’ (young Nigerians) know about these issues so we will know what constitutes a better tomorrow. I did not understand how these issues became so natural in society that it never came up throughout my teenage years as a problem that must be tackled or talked about.

When I went back home for holidays (my parents always insisted we came back) and started asking questions like: Why aren't we taught to take ownership for the society so that we may become passionate about societal issues in our high school years? Why weren't we taught about our history in high school? Why is access to basic needs such as electricity, water, good education that is readily available in the West to second- class citizens (International students) like me not available to Nigerian citizens in their home country? Why is it that I felt like Nigerians were not valued by their government and in comparison to my Canadian experience, animals in Canada were treated better? Why are Nigerians abroad more valued than Nigerians in Nigeria? The responses I received were not satisfactory. For the most part, everyone had

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what I used to call then, usual Nigerian resignation: "this is how it is". I was confused and did not understand how these bizarre social realities had become so normal that no one questioned them. On the other hand, I was flabbergasted and angry. I felt cheated by the Nigerian education system. On behalf of my continent and country, I felt extremely insulted to learn about my country and continent in a foreign country. I was convinced that if I had known more about these issues as a high school student, was made to see that I play a pivotal role in changing my country and was equipped with the mindset/knowledge to do so, I would have made strategic decisions in my academic pursuits so that it directly benefits my country. I was also frustrated by my education at the University of Alberta – I had very limited avenues to explore these concerns and desire to change things in the world in my classes. I remember when we were taught Heteroskedasticity in Economics class and I asked the teacher – how does this connect to real life? No response. To say the least, there was an absence of the historic context for the version of economics we were taught. There was no African perspective or a recognition of the African context in these economics talk. There was a clear disconnection between what I was learning in most of my classes and the things that worried me as an African. Of course, there were some professors that helped me and tolerated my curiosity in the ways they could but they could only do as far as their course outline/education enabled. Namely, Valentina Galvani who was my Micro Economics teacher, an Italian woman – I told her about working at

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World Bank as a pathway to helping my continent, thankfully, she steered me away from that. Ineke Lock, another White professor, whose sociology class helped me understand the relationship between citizens, ideology, power and our reality. Her class helped me see how the powerful people in society construct of reality and define the parameters of our choices- that is, all that we see today is as result of some other people's actions, it is not permanent. This class allowed me see things in Nigeria as not being permanent, and changeable. From her class, I began to say – I want to gain power so that I can change ideologies. Despite these two professors influence on my curiosity path, it simply wasn't enough. The search for the dignity of Africans which I saw as where my leadership was urgently needed had no place in my university degree. Pursuing this goal of transforming my community, responding to urgent questions relating to our dignity, had to be explored outside of school, it had to become a side project (something that should be my main project and school ought to have helped me with it) – school wasn't giving me the skills to do it. My anger set me off on a rage for change. I had to do something. In spite of what was going on or not going on in my formal education, it was quite clear to me that fixing Nigeria and Africa should be the primary responsibility of its citizens. We have to take responsibility for our responsibility!

Armed with this perspective, I found it even more perplexing that Canadians believed that they could really “help and save” Africa through the pennies and

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loonies they raised from Bake Sales to buy goats and build villages in Africa.

(When I go home for Christmas, I see how people spend \$100,000 on weddings, concerts, etc, so how does \$5 sales compare to this in a land of abundance) I did not quite understand how people actually believed that Africa was going to develop without Africans being in the drivers' seat of their own development; without Africans taking leadership for their problems and in most cases like mine, without Africans knowing that they had serious problems to fix. (society was simply telling them that they get a degree, get a job, buy a car, get married, etc). I did not understand why people were not bothered about asking why Africans could not help themselves. Why Africa's education system was not producing leaders that could solve its problem? I wondered, if Canadians were so charitable and want to see Africans pulled out of poverty, why weren't they asking these questions? Why weren't they calling for us to have our own public schools fixed the way theirs is? It beats logic and I thought that perhaps I had not seen the full picture.

In the interim, I decided to focus on the future, reimagining and redesigning the future. I thought, if I cannot do anything about today – the current situation of things in society, I must be able to do something about tomorrow. In the long term, I had to contribute to preparing students for University. In the short term, I wanted to create a platform for young Africans like myself to see their role and responsibility in bringing about change in the continent.

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In 2006, as a 3<sup>rd</sup> year student, Alongside Morenike Olaosebikan, I started a non-profit organization (Unveiling Africa) focused on achieving this purpose. At University of Alberta where we started, Unveiling Africa Speaker Series provided a platform for African students to mobilize together but also connect with students from other cultural and professional groups aimed at supporting an African led process to development. After over ten speaker series, establishing a partnership with U of A professors, students at University of Bristol and raising over \$5,000 for people in Darfur, I was not satisfied. By 2007, I had graduated with a Bachelors' Degree in Economics from University of Alberta, lived in a fancy apartment and my dad bought me a car but I was still not satisfied and did not feel equipped to understand my world or solve the problems within it. The Lufthansa incident showed me that the solution to the African problem was not the paucity of degree. The leadership/respect education was to provide for us wasn't something our education could give. Worst of all, when I went back to my village and tried to engage, the education was of no good. The leadership I had hoped to provide as a child was not obtainable through my education.

In all of this, I became passionately interested in engaging students in Nigerian high schools. I wanted to reduce the number of students who graduate without a nuanced understanding of their society and what they can do to contribute to change. I wanted a situation where did not have to leave our countries in the first place. But I also wondered why the Canadian education system was a

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receptor of this deficit education we had in Nigeria. It appeared that the Canadian and Nigerian education system were in cahoots with each other. The Nigerian school system prepared us to fit into English Canada ( I spoke such 'good English', I had mannerism that made White racists comfortable, I had learnt to embody the superiority of Europe) but to be so estranged from our own cultural environment. The Canadian education system affirmed this colonial education by not robustly introducing the African perspective/worldview/non-European perspective or providing an opportunity for students like me to explore and tackle these issues that concerned me.

From an academic and extracurricular standpoint, understanding, theorizing and taking steps to put Africans especially the upcoming generation (youth) in the drivers' seat of the continent's future became my life's mission. In 2010, I quit my job as a Research Intern at the government of Alberta and moved to Nigeria to set up Unveiling Africa.

Moving to Nigeria, my goal was to understand how I could develop a critical mass of Nigerians who were critical thinkers, problem solvers and passionate about Africa's transformation. Everyone around me was infected with my passion and concerns for Africa's development. My mother has been the pillar of UVA from DAY 1 – she came from the very first UVA event, sent me clothes, invested her money, cooked and did whatever was necessary. I had wild dreams – I wanted to bring Wole Soyinka, Onyeka Onwenu for my first UVA

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event – my mum never for a minute doubted me. She nurtured every idea and pursued them for me. Even though my dad was not a UVA devotee at the beginning (hopefully tonight gives him a complete conversion), for him, “he is like, my friend, this is not what I sent you to Canada to do”.. He said when I make money I can do whatever I want. Nevertheless, I still used every resource including his money that I received indirectly to nurture my UVA interests.

Anyways, in preparation for my return to Nigeria, my mum registered UVA in Nigeria, she set up the board, mobilized resources and got her staff members involved in getting UVA off the ground! My number one unsung UVA hero is Kingsley Ezeagwula, from Canada, he created the ladder that ushered my ideas for UVA Nigeria into Nigeria way before my arrival into the country. In addition to making a \$1000 donation for UVA Nigeria, he referred me to potential collaborators in Nigeria. He told his friend- Chidubem about my interests and passion for youth development. Chidubem connected me to Tony Ajah. Tony connected me to Sydney and Stanley who helped me plan the first part of my vision for UVA Nigeria – an essay contest. Sydney and Stanley had mobilized other volunteers who distributed the essays to more than 40 schools in Lagos and Ogun State. Idowu who is in Edmonton now, helped me brainstorm for the focus of our inaugural essay contest. For the students in junior school, we asked them to write about “The Nigeria of their Dreams” and for senior school students, we asked them to write about “The Role Nigerian Teenagers Play in Nigeria's Development”. When I left for Nigeria, my beloved friend Titilope

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Sonuga stepped in to lead UVA Canada. We sent the submitted essays back to her and the African volunteers in Canada to help with marking. Upon reaching Nigeria, my mission was to plan a conference to convene all the essay contest participants. Everywhere I went to was UVA, UVA, UVA.. lol. My mother's office had being transformed into UVA everything. Tony, Stanley and Sydney had set everything up including press connections. Tony mentored me by telling me who I will need to talk to. To find a venue, I went back to my Almameter – Chrisland Primary School to ask for their partnership. They provided us with our first hall.

By every standard, this conference themed: “The role of Nigerian Students in Nation Building” blew everyone's mind away. Students from public schools that are often looked down on, did the most amazing play, students from various schools led and taught each other in the breakout sessions. The teenagers were treated like full human beings, like critical stakeholders who they are in Nigeria's transformation. Over 600 people were in attendance for this conference.

Everyone wanted more- so I followed the conference with publishing a magazine, training students to plan their own conferences, enabling students to lead community service events in their communities. We gave out over \$15,000 in scholarships, we mentored a young boy Lekan that was in the street into an internship in a salon. We gave startup funds/resources to students to begin their passion projects. We encouraged students to advocate for issues that affect

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them and challenged them to begin to take action in their respective communities. This led to some students going on a fundraiser to raise \$20000 which they used to buy a bus for a youth home.

After two active years (2010 – 2012) in Nigeria, UVA had worked with more than 2000 teenagers and we had devoted UVA parents, school principals and teenagers. I still felt like we were far from understanding what it will take to bring a critical mass of Africans to the fore of their development in a way that was transformative and natural. I had a lot of questions about what exactly it will entail to enable an African led and driven development to emerge. However, a few things were clear. Bringing Africans to the fore of their development would require more than a point in time activities such as the series of leadership development events. It will be an ongoing engagement that brings about a lifestyle and a change in perspective and mindset. This mindset had to be fuelled by an embodied knowledge that centers Africa's transformation. This embodied knowledge will influence how Africans see the world in relation to the continent and how they equip themselves for the continent's transformation.

In search of what this knowledge/perspective is and my curiosity about what it could look like in an educational context, I decided to pursue a Master's degree at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. The first year of my Master's program at OISE was violent and lonely. Starting from my advisor who I had very high expectations of and came into town to meet with

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prior to the start of school to discuss with, he was not a professional, negative, had low expectations of me for no reason other than my race and eventually, left me with no doubt that he was racist. Amongst the many passively violent and emotionally destructive things he did to me, I will never forget when I expressed interest in transferring from the course-based Masters' program to the thesis-based program, he kept reminding me of how high my scores had to be to get into the thesis-based program. I was flabbergasted and started wondering if I was admitted into the Masters' program on charitable grounds. I mean, my GPA from U of A was not as high as I wanted but it was good, a 3.3 from and given the focus and intensity I had shown, there was no reason for him to think I would not be able to make such a switch. Still he was negative. At the end of the first semester, I emerged with two A+'s and an A, I was hoping that will change his behavior or make him see me from a different light. So, I asked him to write me a reference letter for a scholarship I wanted to apply for, mind you he was my assigned advisor, the first professor I met at OISE and he had seen me evolve from when I came to meet him prior to my program till end of semester one. To my dismay, he wrote back to me to tell me that I didn't qualify for the scholarship because a Canadian undergraduate degree was one of the scholarship requirements. Upon seeing his email, I broke down and wailed. At this point, this man's low expectations and condescending emails started to make sense. It was completely clear to me that this man's assessment and perception of me was simply based on the experiences his small mind could

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fathom that a Black person had. He was not judging me based on my file which he ought to have or my scores. He did not assume that I read the scholarship requirement before I asked him to be my reference. Most of all, he wouldn't never had extended such a comment to a white person, white South African who for all you know may have completed his or her undergraduate degree in South Africa. I responded to my advisor to tell him that I completed my undergraduate degree in Edmonton. Because of that experience, I decided not to apply for that scholarship. When I got his reference letter, I tore it into pieces. This violent experience was one of many draining racial experiences in my department. In all my classes, I was the only Black person. None of the professors that taught my required classes were Black or colored so this meant that they did not understand my perspective and were limited in the extent they could mentor me. Even though the classes I took had generic and universalizing titles like "Educational Administration" that would make you think that you will see many cultural perspectives of Ed Admin thus equating it the "Educational Administration", but it was mostly European perspectives. So, I wondered where the other perspectives travelled to and why the courses weren't renamed to be truly representative and say "Eurocentric perspectives in Educational Administration", this way students are well prepared. The authors in most of my course outlines were mostly White! Again, the international perspective, African perspective I was looking for was missing in my core courses. The International Development Education program I took wasn't of much help in terms of the

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perspective I was looking for. So, just like the University of Alberta, I had to explore my curiosity and develop knowledge required for my leadership desires outside the core focus of my program. The saving grace in my first year was that I came into the program with a vision of what I wanted, so I used my class assignments to bare out my passion and research on something that connected back to my vision. Despite the poor classroom experience I had, there were a handful of supportive White professors that helped and pushed me ahead – Carol Campbell, Mark Evans, Joe Flessa and Jane Gaskell amongst others. Jane Gaskell especially, encouraged me. Because of how much I spoke about African Leadership Academy and Claude Ake's theory, Jane encouraged me to explore a research project on the school in SA – African Leadership Academy using Claude Ake's theoretical framework. Between these four professors, I was referred to George Dei & Njoki Wane on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor. Through my rigorous scrutiny of professors in my department, I found John Portelli who happened to have a cross appointment between my department and the social justice department.

My journey of self-discovery, that is - articulation of my schooling experiences in Canada and increased awareness about our 'neutral' looking societal structures that Africans appear to be trapped in began in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of my masters when I met John Portelli, Njoki Wane and George Dei. I took a class with Portelli but was only able to audit Dei and Wane's classes. Mind you, by this

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time, I had already picked my research project, so did not get as much mentorship as I could have received had I met these people in year one.

John Portelli's class helped me to problematize the neutrality and naturalness of contemporary society. It helped me to understand the logic of my ignorance and Africa's predicament. The Anti- Racism and Anti-Colonial and Indigenous Knowledge classes (taught by Prof. George Dei and Prof. Njoki Wane) that I audited provided me with a conceptual framework to unearth suppressed memories, theorize, express and problematize my experiences. These classes made me know that my experiences matter and the most important source of knowledge in making the world better. Through Wane's class, I realized that the holes I observed in my educational experience had a complicated history and politics that was rooted in the colonial past of my country, Canada and the world, which were not adequately problematized or talked about in Nigeria or Canada. At best, in Nigeria, it was talked about briefly, like something that happened in the past. The Nigerian social reality of speaking English, pursuing a degree abroad, etc was presented as natural and unchangeable. Thus, the fact that people like me received an education hollow of relevant day-to-day Nigerian life issues and conscientization but learnt about the British monarchy and Shakespeare was not entirely accidental. It was in line with a 'neutral' and 'natural' looking but British setup social system that presented individual economic prosperity as obtainable in the West (getting good western

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education, getting a job, buying a car, buying a house, getting married (for the women become a Mrs. and having children) as the ultimate purpose of life. In Njoki's class, I remembered that after my undergraduate degree in Edmonton, Alberta I had gone through that cycle of getting a Western degree, getting a Western job, getting a car and living a fairly good life for my age but I was still deeply dissatisfied. I still felt unskilled and incapable of contributing at an optimal way to my country and continent. Despite what I thought was my 'Western enough English' (also known as "Phone-tics" in Nigeria), I was always rudely reminded that I did not perfectly fit into the Canadian society through questions like: "How come you speak good English"? "I did not know Nigerians speak good English!" "Where are you from, Where are you really really from?" I came to see that all along, my education and socialization experience as a Black, African had transmitted a false identity and consciousness in me. One that suggested that I am just a human being, same as everyone else in this global union of civilized English speakers, catholicism adherents that refrained from savage indigenous things. But all the questions, violence and micro-aggression received from Canadian students and teachers was simply trying to tell me that I don't belong here, that while I might see myself from the perspective of my bountiful family upbringing, the world saw me from a deficit lens, from a colonial and racist lens which most of my education had shielded me from understanding. Given these experiences, I had no choice but to claim my difference. But in return, I found that I had nothing different to offer. The

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difference in skin color between my White Canadian friends and myself should have meant nuanced knowledge about my real culture, tradition and values. To my shame, I found that I did not have any different knowledge and didn't embody a different culture. I came to realize that I did not know anything about my real history and English had no correlation with my real cultural history. English was violently imposed. Christianity that was presented to me as the pathway to love, justice, civilization, heaven was the exact bridge that was used to rationalize the slavery of Black people, Christianity had arrived into my community and gained the power it had because of numerous genocides in Igboland and across communities in Africa. Christianity was the vehicle that was used to empty the minds of my community members so that a new education system that upholds their inferiority, the superiority of Europeans -their killers, and creates a dependency/unequal relationship on the European empire was established. Even though people asked me to tell them about my uniqueness, I could not tell people about my story growing up because there were simply no stories to tell. I could not tell people about my tradition because I had grown up practicing the same tradition (Christmas, Easter and Valentine's Day amongst others) as them. In all of these, I felt empty!

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Section 2: The Education System is Not Broken, It Was Designed To Be Colonial & Anti-Black!

While the experiences I have shared are just mine, from the course of my research, my advocacy efforts in Unveiling Africa and numerous interactions with Black students, I know that many Black students face similar issues. In Edmonton, my adopted nieces and nephew – Buchi, Nonso, all under the age of 15 had complaints of racism, silence on heritage in the system and minimal mentorship they are receiving. Infact these experiences are not new, as far back as 1933, Carter Woodson comprehensively wrote about this in his aptly titled book - The Mis-Education of the Negro. Many more people have written about this in articles and book, including Chinua Achebe's book – The Education of the British Protected Child, Ngugi Wathiongo's Decolonization of The Mind, Mwalimu Shujaa's book – Too Much Schooling, Too Little Education (1993) captures these sentiments. So, why is it that after almost 100 years, the same questions, complaints Black people have had about their education still persists? What is preventing the change of this system? What will it take for things to change? I have some suggestions:

- 1) The system is not broken. It was designed that way.
  - a. Our world is a colonial world that thrives on the erasure of marginalized histories
    - i. The purpose of colonialism

ii. Division of Africa

- b. When U of T was built, communities around the world were steeped in slavery and colonialism.
  - c. The education system is simply an agent of a vision of society.. manifestation of an anti-black world.
  - d. Nothing accidental about poverty, nothing accidental about racism, nothing accidental about the historic exclusions of people living with a disability.
  - e. White supremacy is the problem that needs to be tackled, institutionalized hierarchies need to be disintegrated and reconstituted to reflect multicultural diversity.
- 2) This is a global problem – not a Nigerian problem, a Canadian problem.
- a. The entire education system, the global governance structure is designed to keep our current world order.
- 3) Articulating the Black education problem as a contradiction is to get the attention of the global community 'liberals' who sway us into the modernity project without questioning the historic foundation of the world.
- 4) For Black people, the consequences of our mis-education isn't just an intellectual incongruence, it has material and emotional consequences in our communities. The education system dehumanizing us, it is draining us...it is costing us our mental health, it is preventing youth from acquiring the skills to transform their communities and continent, it is stripping us of

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our identities, it is leading Black people to take on a confused identity, it is transforming us into agents of our own self-destruction, it preventing us from enriching the world with the wealth of knowledge that exist in our cultural heritages. It is dividing us – we are taught in a way that nurtures a hierarchical

- 5) White students – the system dehumanizes us all. Even though many people in the room didn't actively create this system, you are beneficiaries of the system. Your ongoing silence further entrenches the structural malfunction of the world. It also says a lot that .. It is mediocre that the only way we as a world can move ahead is by pushing others down. Common, we can do better and must do better.

### Section 3: What Change Looks Like

So, what does change look like: We are not looking for a hierarchical world but what Walter describes as a pluri-versal world.

What vision of the world are we looking for? I couldn't say it better than Walter Mignolo..

- Moving from a universal world towards a pluriversal world.
- Moving from white supremacy to equitable co-existence of the diverse cultures of the world.
  - o European origin story/mythology has informed the creation of western society including the food, economic system, political system
  - o In my village – we have a different mythology of how the world came to be, as a result, we have different days of the week, different political system, different religion, different economic system and so on.
  - o A truly inclusive world for me is one where folks in my village are educated to see their village, their lives as a site of knowledge. a site for economic transformation

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- People need to be educated in a way that centers them in their history in relation to the world.
- When this shift happens, the economics also shift. Once we have an education system for example that thrives on local knowledge, all of a sudden, the people become the experts. We will need to fire European publishers such as Macmillan and begin to develop local expertise.

- The Black education problem requires Black leadership
- The challenge for Black students is that we have been educated to sustain this universal world. How do we redirect our education so that we are equipped to obtain more than a degree from the university and actually contribute to ensuring that generations after you have a better education experience? Here are my suggestions for Black students:

- 1) Get Woke, Stay Woke! Educate yourself!
- 2) You are different, claim, justify and unapologetically live it out
  - a. Find out your origin story. what are the anti-colonial implications for your new identity?
  - b. Refuse to be put in a box
  - c. Redefine who you are from a decolonial lens
  - d. Redefine your purpose in life
  - e. To expect a Eurocentric education from U of T is to lower our expectations of U of T... U of T advertises itself as one of the best in the world. Canada advertises its self as inclusive, democratic – so we must hold it to books.
- 3) Changing the world, being political, making a difference is not a choice! It is a responsibility and necessity.

- a. From a divine perspective, we did not choose to be born, we were born into the world – what are we going to leave behind? Many better people have died, that we are still alive is for a reason and you must find it.
- b. For me, I found inspiration and logic for wanting to make a difference from the lives of my parents and Oprah! After watching an Oprah show where she talked about seeing Sydney Poitier get an award, she said to herself if this colored man can do this, I wonder what I can do. For me, I looked at my father – he did not come from a wealthy home – he had to figure life out my walking the way. He not only figured out his life but did so for his siblings, many many people in our village, we his children and the people he employs across the country. So, I have promised myself that if my dad is doing all that he does without affluent parents, a university education, I wonder what I must be able to do?
- c. From a social perspective, the freedom we have as Black students hasn't come simply because we are human beings. It has come because of the Harriet Tubman's, Malcolm X's, Martin Luther Kings, Walter Rodney's, Viola Desmond's, Kwame Nkrumah's, our black professors on campus and around the world. And the work is not done!
- d. So, on campus – you have a responsibility to speak up.

- e. You must take an anti-racist, anti-colonial, Africanist class.
  - f. Not being political is a luxury that you cannot afford. Political Apathy is not an option.
- 4) What is your politics? What is your political perspective?
- a. As a Black/African person, I am not sure how you can survive w/out race consciousness. For me, within the global world, it is a critical entry point but its
  - b. I want an inclusive world, where all my identities are always and simultaneously honored every time
  - c. This comes with responsibility – we too must speak up wherever we see oppression.
  - d. What is your political entry point?
- 5) In your studies, what problem are you trying to solve? What problem are you trying to understand?
- a. Knowing your community is critical to doing this.
- 6) What is a political perspective?
- a. What is your political entry point?
  - b. For me, the race and colonial is a mobilizing identifier for me in the world. But in other contexts, it will change.
- 7) What is your vision of the world?
- a. Say no to hierarchies across all social identities! And injustices within our communities!

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- 8) What is your politics? What is your entry point?
- 9) What are your political values?
- 10) What are you trying to change and how is your degree pushing you towards that?
- 11) Develop alliances across cultures, age, disciplines, etc
- 12) Self-love and service – take care of yourself, build a community of positive friends/mentors around yourself, nurture it with true love and service to them.

For allies, the ongoing colonization and discrimination of certain communities, is our collective dehumanization. I have five suggestions:

- 1) Educate yourself & community members – take a class on world history from an anti-colonial lens
- 2) Redefine your values
- 3) Listen, Make space in the power circles
- 4) Advocacy – international and local
- 5) Resource redistribution

For the university, moving the education system from an anti-black system to a truly inclusive one is a moral and ethical decision. Now is the right time to do the right thing. A lot of activism has been done and recommendations outlined for U of T. I join with student movements on three campuses in calling for resources for

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Black students. Including a department for African/Caribbean` studies, more  
Black professors, greater recruitment of Black students, etc.

Conclusion:

“Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or  
betray it in relative opacity”. Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth

I strongly believe that the mission of this generation is to accelerate the  
decolonization project.. Our focus has to be on bringing down hierarchies,  
calling for justice, and true inclusion for all. The alternative, our current reality is  
not sustainable and will lead us to self-destruction.

I remain hopeful in the power of people and energized by gatherings like these  
– As Margaret Mead reminds us- "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,  
committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever  
has"