De-centring the 'White Gaze' of Development[1]

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Abstract

In its crudest form, development has traditionally been about dissecting the political, socio-economic, and cultural processes of black, brown, and other subjects of colour in the so-called global South and finding them regressive, particularly in comparison to the so-called progressive global North. However, in the midst of a 21st century, de-colonial scholarly pivot, 'opening up development' fundamentally demands turning the colonial, 'white gaze' on its head. In particular, contemporary social media movements challenging white supremacy such as #BlackLivesMatter have gained prominence while non-white development actors such as China have emerged as enticing alternatives. These phenomena have pried open development with both positive and negative results, intended and unintended consequences. My essay seeks to put Critical Development Studies into fluid conversation with Critical Race Studies in an examination of how scholars, policy makers and practitioners have simultaneously succeeded and failed in subverting the 'white gaze' of development.

Keywords: race, development, white gaze, critical race theory, critical development studies, global South, global North

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[1] An earlier version of this manuscript was presented as a keynote at the 2019 Development Studies Association (DSA) annual conference, whose theme was *Opening up Development*. Sponsored by the *Journal of Development Studies*, the address can be viewed here (http://www.open.ac.uk/ikd/dsa2019), as delivered on 20 June 2019 at Open University.

INTRODUCTION

My intention in this essay is not to trace the genealogy of development as a process of intervention, amelioration, or capability enhancement. Instead, I wish to provoke and prod, to make us all a little uncomfortable. Some more so than others. I intend to repeatedly speak into existence the proverbial elephant in the room of development: race, as perhaps the most salient 'socially constructed and historically fluid' category and qualifier of our time (Omi and Winant, 2015: x).

In preparing this text, I read all the abstracts submitted for the 2019 Development Studies Association (DSA) conference, and found up to two references to race. I scoured through explicitly development-oriented journal articles, academic books, policy documents, non-governmental organization (NGO) reports, and found cursory references to race. Yet, in its constant negotiation of poverty, power, politics and privilege, development continues to be structured in hierarchies of race and place. It puzzles me how we talk and theorize about development as if its historical antecedents—slavery, colonialism, imperialism—and contemporary manifestation of neoliberalism have not produced racialized 'phenotypic others', or as if race has not always been an 'absent-presence' in its DNA (M'charek et al, 2014: 472). As development scholars, policy makers, and practitioners, how complicit are we in upholding and reproducing the racial hierarchies that underpin this field? How complicit are we in centring the 'white gaze', of assuming that whiteness is the only referent of progress or an 'absent centre against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation' (Ahmed, 2007: 157)?

Critically acclaimed Martinican psychiatrist and anti-colonial activist Frantz Fanon was the protégé of Francois Tosquelles, who once asked, 'How can we treat [psychiatric] patients if the institution [of psychiatry] itself it sick?' (Shringarpure, 2019). Indeed, how can we truly 'open up development' without openly talking about how it suffers from a 'white gaze' problem? As the late African-American literary icon Toni Morrison demonstrates, to insist that race does not exist is to announce its centrality: 'The world does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion. The act of enforcing racelessness in … discourse is itself a racial act' (1992: 46). Following this trend, Jamaican philosopher Charles W. Mills argues, 'room has to be

made for race as both real and unreal: that race can be ontological without being biological, metaphysical without being physical, existential without being essential, shaping one's being without being in one's shape' (1998: xiv). Similarly, Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe shows that using race as a frame to analyse development is perfectly imperfect, though necessary: 'We can speak of race (or racism) only in a fatally imperfect language, gray and inadequate … race is a form of primal representation' (2017: 10).

In this essay, I want to illustrate my own development journey through the prism of race. I want to talk about what the 'white gaze' of development actually is and how it manifests in our work as scholars, policy makers and practitioners. I want to talk about how the 'white gaze' of development has been subverted, and why it is important for Critical Development Studies and Critical Race Studies scholars to converse. I also want to share elements of my new project on race, citizenship, 'South-South' migration and development cooperation in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as an example of that important convergence. And last, but certainly not least, I want to end by talking about mainstreaming race as an anti-racist agenda for the present and future of development.

INTERSECTING RACE AND DEVELOPMENT: MY PERSONAL JOURNEY

When I was 25, I won a fellowship that brought me in direct contact with Liberia's—and Africa's—first woman elected head of state, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf—as her special assistant for communications. This was at the height of our second post-war moment in 2007, when everyone seemed to be flocking to Monrovia to 'save Liberia'. Ten years later, I was shadowing African Development Bank Group (AfDB) President Akinwumi Adesina as a leadership fellow assigned to his office in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Now, colleagues and friends have goaded me for being addicted to working with presidents, to which I respond wittily that I have sought therapy and am on the road to recovery.

All jokes aside, however, these two fellowships gave me first-hand accounts of how whiteness wields structural power and privilege in development corridors. For example, I found it jarring that within weeks of my fellowship in the Liberian presidency, my three white male colleagues,

who worked directly with cabinet ministers, had changed their titles from 'special assistants' to 'special advisors'. The self-appointed title upgrades were neither questioned nor dismissed, and this aggravated me even further. I could not understand what these American twenty-somethings would be advising our ministers on since they had no post-war managerial expertise.

During this time, Tony Blair's African Governance Initiative (AGI) deployed mostly white British early- and mid-career bureaucrats to Liberia to serve as 'governance advisors' to our senior level managers with decades more experience. I began to understand slowly that the AGI 'advisors' only assumed these titles because Western whiteness remains a signifier of expertise, whether real or perceived. What I experienced acutely was not just power asymmetries between black African and white Euro-American development actors, but also marked differences between diasporic/returnee and non-diasporic/homeland actors, about which I have written extensively (Pailey, 2007, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, forthcoming). My frustrations about our constant kowtowing to white external imposition were captured eloquently by my mentor and colleague, Samuel Kofi Woods, who served at different times as both minister of labour and public works:

> … when we have to pander to the international demands and the dictates of the international community as to what model [of development] we should adapt, what will be good for our country, implementation becomes difficult … We want to be a darling of external people, probably some of us—not only the institution or the country—but as individuals, we also want to be a darling of those out there, hoping that our future can be embedded in their institutions, of the IMF [International Monetary Fund], the World Bank, and so forth … So, nothing that is borrowed without appropriate understanding can be applied consistently in this country … We need to develop our national drive, our domestic approaches to be able to address the problems of Liberia, not what happened somewhere else, or not what becomes the most romantic approach to development.[2]

At the African Development Bank, I learned early on that to question the agendas of non-African shareholders—especially white North Americans or Europeans—was to transgress visible but

[2] Interview, Monrovia, 25 June 2013.

unspoken racial tiers. Even though the AfDB had been founded in 1964 by Liberian banker Romeo Horton with the expressed mandate of Africans financing their own development, we had allowed the incorporation of non-African member states in the 1970s and 80s to tip the scales of power. In vocally challenging non-regionals, I found that my pan-African zeal was not always welcome. Now, I had experienced racism in the United States (US), where I grew up, and the United Kingdom (UK), where I have spent a large portion of my professional life, but I did not expect to have my blackness repelled so forcefully in my own country and continent. It was a stark reminder that we Africans have thoroughly internalized the 'white gaze' of development.

While I had encountered race viscerally in my work as a policy maker and practitioner of development, upon my return to academia I noticed a deliberate and exacting absence of race in scholarly discourse. This willful silence baffled me. As current Development Studies Association (DSA) President Sarah White reveals in her 2002 *Third World Quarterly* article, 'Thinking Race, Thinking Development', development fundamentally consists of a series of 'racial projects' and its overt 'colour-blind' outlook is disingenuous and dangerous (Omi and Winant, 2015; Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Indeed, most development interventions could be considered racial projects because they create and/or reproduce 'structures of domination based on racial significations and identities' (Omi and Winant, 2015: 28). In her 2006 *Progress in Development Studies* special issue on race and development, Uma Kothari takes the analysis a step further by arguing that the 'silence around "race" allows Western practitioners [and I would add Western Scholars scholars] of development to avoid being accountable for the powers, privileges and inequalities that continue to flow from whiteness' (2006: 20). Importantly, if we take seriously Katy P. Sian's premise (2019: 146, 172–173) that racially marked academics have been rendered invisible by structural forms of institutional racism and 'the sidelining of race … in the [British] academy', where development studies as an academic discipline was birthed, then it is no wonder that an interrogation of race is relatively absent in development scholarship.

As one can see from the examples I have given, development is fundamentally raced, whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. So, how do we de-centre the 'white gaze' of development? First, by understanding what it truly is.

WHAT IS THE 'WHITE GAZE' OF DEVELOPMENT?

The 'white gaze' is a phrase that gained prominence in the works of black American public intellectuals and literary legends—including Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin—who have fiercely resisted one-dimensional, racist tropes about blacks in America. A Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning author of 11 novels, Morrison once quipped in her 1992 book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, '… I am a black writer struggling with and through a language [English] that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive 'othering' of people…' (x–xi).

Now, as an aside, I have to admit that I stan for the late Morrison, may her soul rest in perfect power. As far as I am concerned, she could do no wrong or say no wrong. But all stanning aside, her book *Playing in the Dark* is, in my estimation, the most important work of literary criticism, and if you have not read it, you must do so. Morrison continues elsewhere: 'I'm writing for black people in the same way that Tolstoy was not writing for me, a 14-year-old coloured girl from Lorain, Ohio. I don't have to apologize or consider myself limited because I don't [write about or for white people] – which is not absolutely true, there are lots of white people in my books. The point is not having the white critic sit on your shoulder and approve it' (Hoby, 2015).

Transcending Morrison's and others' resistance to the white American gaze, I borrow from this tradition in my conception and critique of the 'white gaze' of development, which assumes whiteness as the primary referent of privilege, power, prestige and progress across the world. It equates whiteness with wholeness and superiority. The 'white gaze' of development measures the political, socio-economic, and cultural processes of Southern black, brown, and other people of colour against a standard of Northern whiteness and finds them incomplete, wanting, inferior or regressive. In essence, white is always right, and West is always best.

There have been other apt phrases used by prominent scholars to depict the 'white gaze' of development invariably as a white Western conceptualization of worldly advancement. Egyptian-French Marxist economist Samir Amin (1972a, 1972b) referred to it as 'Eurocentrism' because it places European whiteness at the centre of all meaning. While Palestinian scholar

Edward Said (1989) evoked the 'white gaze' of development as the 'seeing eye' of Orientalism, French existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1964) described it as 'the privilege of seeing without being seen'. Whereas First Nations and indigenous studies scholar Glen Coulthard (2004: 14–15) termed it a 'colonial frame', American sociologist Joe R Feagin (2013: ix, 3) called it an 'overarching worldview' and 'white racial frame' that rationalizes and justifies white privilege and domination. Continuing on this trajectory, Mbembe (2017: 28) called the 'white gaze' of development a 'Western consciousness of blackness' which makes whiteness the epitome of normalcy. Echoing Hall (1992), Malawian historian Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2009: 131, 133) reduced it to a 'colonizing epistemological order' which seeks to 'universalize the West and provincialize the rest'. And last, but certainly not least, Kenyan literary scholar Grace A. Musila (2017: 703-704) recently summarized the 'white gaze' as a 'single-lens knowledge register', a 'blindspot' and a 'fantasy of the monopoly of the gaze' which assumes that 'the Other is both subject to this gaze and incapable of returning the gaze'.

In the same way that other fields suffer from a 'white gaze' problem, so too does development. Development legitimizes itself through racial tropes. Even the geospatial terms we employ reek of the 'white gaze'. We continue to use problematic binaries such as developing vs developed, industrial vs agrarian, low income vs high income, Third World vs First World, global South vs global North, core vs periphery, sub-Saharan Africa vs North Africa, etc. We refer to endogenous, non-colonial institutions as 'informal' and compare them to 'formal' institutions of Western governance, failing to realize that those so-called informal institutions wield more power and clout than the formal ones. These binaries shackle us, they do not liberate. Similarly, concepts like neopatrimonialism or fragile states, which have been expertly dismissed by scholars such as Thandika Mkandawire (2015), continue to be reproduced. Now, as a disclaimer, I have not come up with alternatives to these terms and phrases, but in our 21st century quest for epistemic justice, in the age of 'opening up development', I would argue that this must be our scholarly imperative.

Why and How Has the 'White Gaze' of Development Endured?

Since it is now clear what the 'white gaze' of development entails, we must now question why it reproduces itself. I have come across two works that offer some clues. First, in his 1997 book, *The Racial Contract*, Mills argues that white supremacy is an unnamed political system that has shaped how we experience the world as socially constructed racialized beings (3):

> … racism (or, as I will argue, global white supremacy) is itself a political system, a particular power structure of formal or informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for the differential distribution of material wealth and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties … the peculiar contract to which I am referring, though based on the social contract tradition that has been central to Western political theory, is not a contract between everybody ("we the people"), but between just the people who count, the people who really are people ("we the white people"). So, it is a Racial Contract...

By centring race and white supremacy as the dominant organizing principle of modern political systems, Mills subverts the so-called neutral, ideal social contract developed by Western political theorists such as Kant, Hobbes, and Locke. While the social contract is based on voluntary consent, according to Mills, the Racial Contract is 'enforced through violence and ideological conditioning' (81). He continues elsewhere (4, 11):

> The "Racial Contract", then, is intended as a conceptual bridge between two areas now largely segregated from each other: on the one hand, the world of mainstream (for example, white) ethics and political philosophy, preoccupied with discussions of justice and rights in the abstract, on the other hand, the world of Native American, African American, and Third and Fourth World political thought, historically focused on issues of conquest, imperialism, colonialism, white settlement, land rights, race and racism, slavery, Jim Crow, reparations, apartheid … the general purpose of the Contract is always the differential privileging of whites as a group with respect to nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land, and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them. All whites are *beneficiaries* of the Contract, though some whites are not *signatories* to it.

Taking cue from Mills, one could argue further than all whites are beneficiaries of the 'white gaze' of development, though not all are signatories to it.

Robin DiAngelo's 2018 book, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, also has some answers about the enduring legacy of development's 'white gaze'. In particular, she defines what white fragility means within the context of race relations in the US, but I would contend that this can also be applied to how and why racial hierarchies are sustained, and also silenced, in the field of development (1–2, 4):

> Given how seldom we [white people, generally] experience racial discomfort in a society we dominate, we haven't had to build our racial stamina. Socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race. We consider a challenge to our racial worldviews as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable—the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviours such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-inducing situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. I conceptualize this process as *white fragility*. Though white fragility is trigged by discomfort and anxiety, it is born of superiority and entitlement. White fragility is not weakness per se. In fact, it is a powerful means of white racial control and the protection of white advantage … Given our racial insulation, coupled with misinformation, any suggestion that we are complicit in racism is a kind of unwelcome and insulting shock to the system…

For people of colour who have been perplexed and exhausted by discussions of race with their white counterparts, there is an uncanny familiarly with DiAngelo's notion of white fragility. Her book is limited in that it focuses on white settler societies such as the US, Canada, and Australia. It is not revolutionary or unprecedented in its premise. African-American intellectuals like WEB

DuBois, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright demanded in the 1800s and 1900s that white people learn how to be more self-reflexive about their racial hang-ups. And Frantz Fanon captures the psychopathology of colonialism not only on black people but also on white people in *Black Skin, White Masks*. However, DiAngelo's positioning as a white woman speaking to white people about their complicity and investment in racism is what makes her book so refreshing.

Indeed, coupled together white fragility and the Racial Contract enable development's 'white gaze' to persist and endure over space and time. Although progressive people of colour are infiltrating development at break-neck speed and demanding alternatives to mainstream notions of structural transformation, the levers of power over development—be it in policy making, practice or scholarship—are still mostly controlled and sustained by white people. One need only take a cursory look at the traditional institutions of global development (for example, the World Bank, IMF, World Trade Organization, United Nations Development Programme), their NGO proxies, and international development or development studies departments even in the most non-mainstream institutions such as SOAS, Sussex, or Open University, to see this reality confirmed. As African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass (1855) once said, 'power concedes nothing without a demand' or struggle.

There are other channels for reinforcing the 'white gaze' of development. The rise of white supremacist, ultra-conservative, right-wing leaders across the so-called global North is a clear marker, with a 'whitelash' that brought to power that man who now occupies Obama's old office serving as the ultimate triumph or trump. International migration is also replete with examples of a sedentary policy bias that seeks to keep black and brown people in their place. The hierarchies of passports, geopolitics of citizenship tiers, border controls, fortified walls, executive bans, and the fallacy of a 'migration crisis' in Europe also animate the 'white gaze', even though the real crisis rests in faulty Western policy making. The rise of China as a global hegemon, and the ensuing frenzy of Sinophobia enforce the 'white gaze', as do charity appeals that employ what Hannah Arendt (1963) called the 'politics of pity'.

How Has the 'White Gaze' Been Subverted?

Given the entrenched racialized markers of the 'white gaze' of development that I have illustrated thus far, I would like to now highlight how the gaze has been reversed, in social movements, in scholarship, and in literary works. For example, in response to police brutality in the US, #BlackLivesMatter emerged as an assertion of black personhood as the norm, rather than the exception. There have been calls for #BlackLivesMatter to connect the dots, however, to link the physical and structural violence meted out against black people in the US to the physical and structural violence meted out against black people in Africa, Australia, Europe, and Latin America. Because black lives will never truly matter in North America until #AfricanLivesMatter across the globe.

Generally, scholars have invariably reversed the 'white gaze' of development. Some academics have questioned the blasphemy of calling countries 'developed' when they have systematically dispossessed and annihilated indigenous peoples or impoverished black and brown people. We can see this explicitly in Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery*, published in 1944, and Manning Marable's *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America*, published in 1983. Other scholars have researched and written about indigenous knowledge systems. Some have showcased China and India as alternative development actors. Many have published extensively about 'South-South' migration, centring the perspectives and experiences of migrants themselves. While some scholars are beginning to seriously question what a 'donor' actually is in the age of covert neoliberal agendas, others reveal the lack of transparency around overseas development assistance. They demonstrate how aid flows actually bankroll mostly white, exorbitantly paid foreign technical assistants and advisors who flock from one development project to another.

I know there are many other examples of subversive acts of scholarship, but for the purposes of this intervention, I am now going to focus on the region with which I am most familiar and to which I have deep personal and political commitments: Africa and its diasporas. In her groundbreaking monograph published in 1987, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, Nigerian feminist scholar Ifi Amadiume challenges racist and sexist received wisdoms about women in the so-called global South, and especially the notion that all women in pre-colonial Africa were subordinate. In particular, she deconstructs the especially

racist attitudes of global North feminists towards women in the global South by arguing that it was colonialism that severely eroded women's power in Igbo society, through changes in the economy that undermined women's control over the sale of certain goods, through the imposition of Christianity which diminished goddess worship, and through the hiring of male warrant chiefs and courts which weakened women's political power. In her tongue-in-cheek suggestion about how to turn the 'white gaze' of development on its head, Amadiume (1987: 10) suggests further that Southern scholars should produce ethnographies of the global North, echoing demands to anthropologize the West:

> It can be argued that because of our plural and multicultural backgrounds as a result of the colonial heritage, Third World Women are best qualified to carry out comparative studies and make generalized statements about women's positions in their societies. We are, therefore, waiting for invitations and grants from organizations in the West to study Western women, so that we can begin to redress some of the imbalance.

She argues that a more appropriate role for Western women would be monitoring the ethnocentric bias inherent in 'policies and activities of international development agencies' because at least they would be 'working within the culture they know best—their own' (1987: 10).

Non-academic literature is also teeming with reversals of the 'white gaze' of development, including novels written in Gikuyu by Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who challenges us time and time again to publish in indigenous languages as a means of escaping what he calls a 'linguistic prison' (1986). In her 1966 novel *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Dominica-born writer Jean Rhys resurrects the story of the black Caribbean 'woman in attic' who is central to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, but glaringly silenced. In Rhys' novel, we learn that the woman has a name, Antoinette Cosway, a story, and a perspective. We also learn that Rochester's wealth is a result of his colonial exploits in Jamaica and marriage of convenience to Cosway, an heiress. Now, when I read *Jane Eyre* as a 15-year-old student in a predominantly white all girls' secondary school in Washington, DC, I remember feeling very unsettled about this 'black woman in the attic'. It wasn't until I read Rhys' novel years later in a Caribbean literature course at Howard

University, considered the mecca of black education, that I realized where my discomfort came from.

Unease about the 'white gaze', which I felt viscerally from the deliberate erasure of Cosway in *Jane Eyre*, has inspired many writers to challenge it, with some using humour. For instance, the late Kenyan writer and critic Binyavanga Wainaina published the satirical essay, 'How to Write about Africa', in 2005 as a literary guidepost for subverting the 'white gaze' of development. He parodies beautifully the hyperbolic manner in which Africa is repeatedly essentialized:

> In your text, treat Africa as if it were one country … Don't get bogged down with precise descriptions. Africa is big: 54 countries, 900 million people who are too busy starving and dying and warring and emigrating to read your book … keep your descriptions romantic and evocative and unparticular … be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention and your important book, Africa is doomed.

In similar fashion, Nigerian-American photographer and novelist Teju Cole posted a series of satirical tweets which became 'The White-Saviour Industrial Complex', a popular treatise about the pitfalls of humanitarianism, which was published in *The Atlantic* in March 2012:

> One song we hear too often is the one in which Africa serves as a backdrop for white fantasies of conquest and heroism ... It is a liberated space in which the usual rules do not apply: a nobody from America or Europe can go to Africa and become a godlike saviour or, at the very least, have his or her emotional needs satisfied.

However, as African-American critical ethnographer Adia Benton (2016 :191) has explained, rarely do white intervenors come across as benevolent saviours primarily to the so-called intervened upon:

> I found that my [black African] interlocutors raised concerns about the profound inequalities—expressed not only in terms of class and nationality but also race—that they experienced in their encounters with aid programmes and mostly white expatriate

> employees. While the ways they talked about race and whiteness were not uniform, race and the various privileges (and character flaws) associated with whiteness were significant in how the recipients of aid and "local" managers interpreted the organization, practice and effects of humanitarian aid.

Even in our deconstructions of development, however, we may reproduce problematic tropes, such as calling white migrants 'expatriates' while referring to their counterparts of colour as 'migrants' marked by racialized otherness. So, race must be deliberately and consistently employed as an analytical tool for subverting the 'white gaze' of development. Critical Development Studies scholars have much to learn from Critical Race Theory (CRT) in this regard.

BRIDGING CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CRITICAL RACE STUDIES

According to the 2018 *Essential Guide to Critical Development Studies*, critical development studies (or CDS) is committed to challenging mainstream development discourses which focus on advancing neoliberal agendas. In this important anthology, scholars analyse 'the systemic changes needed to transform the current world to one where economic and social justice and environmental integrity prevail' (2018). By providing examples of alternative development or alternatives to development, the book focuses on intersections of class, gender and empire. However, there is only a cursory mention of Africa or the Middle East (with no scholars from Africa featured, as far as I could tell); a profound silence on race (with the exception of one chapter on world systems theory); and a mild dismissal of critical scholars such as Arturo Escobar who preach the gospel of post-development.

As a sidebar, Escobar's 1995 book *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third Word* is essential reading because it argues that development constructs the Southern 'other' or object, as having problems and needs rather than capacities to choose, make decisions, or devise solutions, in order to dominate it. His critique follows in the tradition of Walter Rodney (1972), Edward Said (1978), V.Y. Mudimbe (1988), Chandra Mohanty (1988), Stuart Hall (1992, 1997), Homi Bhabha (1994), etc, who viewed mainstream 'development' as essentially

about white Western domination. Escobar (1995: 12-14). and others are decidedly more concerned about how people in the global South resist externally imposed development interventions, thereby creating alternative ways of thinking, being and doing. The literature on historical and contemporary grassroots social movements in the global South—including the 1791 Haitian Revolution, the 1929 Aba Women's Riots in Nigeria against colonial taxation, the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Mexico against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the 2005-2011 Stop Firestone campaign in Liberia—is particularly rich in this regard. It demonstrates concretely African-American feminist scholar bell hooks' assertion that marginality is not only 'a site of deprivation' or repression but also 'a space of resistance' (1989: 20-21).

Despite post-development's radical orientation and integration in development discourse, I am aware that it has been justifiably critiqued for its romanticizing, essentializing, and valorizing of the 'local' and 'traditional'; its overly moralizing rhetoric; its unsubstantiated claims about the global South's general lack of desire for mainstream development; and its disregard for the state (Andreasson, 2017; Kapoor, 2017; Wilson, 2017). Post-development also suffers from a 'white gaze' problem in that it remains conspicuously silent on race, racism and racialized forms of Northern hegemony. Similarly, while Critical Development Studies is decidedly transformative in its centring of class and gender, respectively, in the works of Marxist and feminist scholars, where race is concerned, it falls flat. As Mbembe (2017: 36) has asserted, race and class are inextricably tied but to subsume race within class is faulty: 'Race and racism are certainly linked to antagonisms based on the economic structure of society. But it is not true that the transformation of the structure leads ineluctably to the disappearance of racism. For a large part of modern history, race and class have constituted one another. The plantation and colonial systems were the factories par excellence of race and racism'. Other scholars such as Omi and Winant (2015, 11) have argued that Marxism reduces race to a subset of class and this is a major faultline because 'while inequality is certainly an important dimension of race and racism … race cannot simply be reduced to an economic matter'.

Whereas Critical Development Studies is virtually colour-blind, critical race theory (CRT) only sees colour within the context of American racism and jurisprudence. Developed out of

contemporary legal studies and established by progressive scholars of colour in the US, CRT challenges 'the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture and, more generally, in American society as a whole' (Crenshaw et al, 1995: xi, xiii). In his Foreword to the book *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, African-American activist-scholar Cornel West (1995, xi) argues that race was, and in many ways still is, foundational to the formation of American law and to the deliberate and systematic subjugation of people of indigenous, African, Asian, and Latino descent. Because of this, CRT was often sidelined by mainstream American legal scholarship (ibid).

In their introduction, *Critical Race Theory* editors remain preoccupied with how the law shapes race relations and how racial hierarchies construct the law. They also admit to having blinders, especially where analysis of race and global political economy are concerned. Crenshaw, et al (1995: xxx) acknowledge the need to engage with development discourse, especially within the prism of globalization, because 'abstract illusions to "rich" and "poor" nations simply fail to yield an adequate vocabulary for analysing the precise processes that produce globalized racial stratification ... While that domination may be essentially *constituted* by economic power, it is essentially *legitimized* by racial power…'. Admittedly, a chapter in the volume by Cheryl I. White (1995), in which she talks about 'whiteness as property', frames the genesis of white racial domination in the US as embedded in global dispossession and theft. White argues that the twin seizures of indigenous land and enslaved, African labour by American whites accorded them unearned socio-economic and political benefits that remain today. There is an implied connection here to the seizure of land and labour during various eras of colonialism and structural adjustment, which are part and parcel of development's longue durée.

While both Critical Race Studies and Critical Development Studies scholars, at least in the edited volumes that I have mentioned previously, profess to reject convention, subvert mainstream thinking, advance an ethical and emancipatory agenda, they have blindspots that could be reconciled by speaking to one other. Postcolonial Studies may bridge this divide quite naturally because theorists have done an important job of centring race in their analyses of colonial and neocolonial conquest. I am reminded especially of Gayatri Spivak's 1988 seminal article, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in which she showcases the irony of white male colonizers attempting to

‘save brown women from brown men’. Although much of Postcolonial Studies de-centres the ‘white gaze’ of development by addressing the intersections of race, class, and gender within the context of empire and political economy, much of the work coming out of this field has been critiqued for being too dense and inaccessible. In her seminal book *Race, Racism and Development*, Kalpana Wilson (2012: 7, 10) also interrogates the tendency of postcolonialism, and its Foucauldian underpinnings, to sideline the relationship between ‘sources of power’ and ‘material structures of production, exchange and accumulation’ thereby indirectly ignoring how race ‘shapes material structures of power and distribution of resource, and regulates bodies and spaces’.

So, given postcolonialism’s explicit blindspots, how do we actually bridge the divide between Critical Race Studies and Critical Development Studies?

How Do I De-Centre the ‘White Gaze’?

This is precisely what I am attempting to do in new research entitled ‘Africa’s “Negro” Republics: How Race, Citizenship, and Migration Impact Development in Liberia and Sierra Leone’. I would like to thank Leverhulme Trust and the Oxford Department of International Development (ODID) for believing in this project when other funders and institutions did not. My advice to early career scholars? If you have a research proposal that keeps you awake at night and about which you are most passionate, continue to tweak and fine tune it until you find the right home for your project.

In ‘Africa’s “Negro” Republics’, I explore how socio-economic development is mediated by race and citizenship in Liberia—a country ‘founded’ by black migrants who adopted a constitutional clause that prohibits non-blacks from obtaining citizenship. Deeply embedded in Liberia’s historical DNA, the ‘Negro clause’ was instituted in the mid-19th century when, fleeing gross economic and racial inequalities in the US and Caribbean, manumitted slaves and their free black counterparts vowed to create a haven where they would be the sole owners of capital, land and the means of production. Maintained in Liberia’s 1973 Aliens and Nationality Law and 1986 Constitution, the race-based provision centres blackness as an explicit property of citizenship

thereby challenging white supremacy and unsettling the very foundation of citizenship as nested in a predominantly white, liberal state. While countries like Chad, Malawi and Mali at one time restricted citizenship to people of 'African origin' or 'African race', Sierra Leone adopted a 'Negro clause', modelled after Liberia's, at the time of its independence in the early 1960s. Whereas Liberia categorically prohibits non-'Negroes' from obtaining citizenship by birth, ancestry and naturalization, Sierra Leone enacted a 2006 Dual Citizenship Act that enables non-'Negroes' to naturalize regardless of their birthplace, making it a fascinating comparative case study.

Wide-ranging dissent about the clause is especially a function of historical and contemporary Middle Eastern and Asian immigration to Liberia and Sierra Leone, during which Lebanese and Indian entrepreneurs in particular gained a stronghold in the service, retail and trading sectors. That Liberia and Sierra Leone remain the only two states in Africa with explicitly raced citizenship clauses, despite being host to brown Southern migrants, make them important case studies for turning the colonial, 'white gaze' of development on its head. By examining how 'Negro' clauses have influenced the political economies and post-war recovery trajectories of Liberia and Sierra Leone, I centre black and brown people as active subjects rather than passive objects of scholarly inquiry. Although Liberia's and Sierra Leone's 'Negro' clauses de-centre the 'white gaze' of development, they are not exempt from important critiques. For example, I intend to explore how one defines a 'Negro' in the 21st century and the irony of black migrants, who constituted a minority, asserting black personhood and citizenship in the 1800s and 1900s while systematically denying the personhood and citizenship of indigenous blacks. And lastly, I will examine how the 'Negro' clauses have benefitted black elites rather than the vast majority of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans.

CONCLUSION

Mainstreaming Race as an Anti-Racist Agenda for Development

In this essay, I have tried to illustrate how development is about negotiating poverty and power, and how this feat is not confined to the so-called global South. Whether we work as scholars,

policy makers, or practitioners, our experiences of and encounters with development are inevitably fashioned by race. If we say we are committed to 'opening up development', we must acknowledge race as foundational to this field. Until we come up with a new lexicon that recognizes the dignity and humanity of people of colour in the so-called global North and South, development will always suffer from a 'white gaze' problem.

Until the identities of those who shape and control development discourse, policy and practice diversify, development will always suffer from a 'white gaze' problem. I must be clear that I am not speaking about the common practice of recruiting people of colour—and any person of colour, for that matter—to fill tokenistic diversity and equality quotas. I am referring instead to an emancipatory kind of recruitment that values and elevates radical rabble rousers who challenge and dismantle the status quo.

Until white development workers and scholars confront how they benefit from the racial hierarchies that underpin this field, and actively work to upend their unearned privilege, development will always suffer from a 'white gaze' problem. In Derrick A. Bell's (1980) incisive critique of why American government school desegregation was legislated in the 1954 historic Brown vs Board of Education ruling, he argues that reforms to racist policies and practices, such as the 'separate but equal doctrine' of school segregation, tend to occur through 'interest convergence'—when the values and self-interests of marginalized groups (for example, persons of colour) align with that of dominant groups (for example, white people) on a particular issue. I use Bell's analysis to argue here that the 'white gaze' of development will likely only be eradicated if this is viewed as important and necessary for both development actors of colour and their elite white counterparts.

Another way to address development's 'white gaze' is to mainstream race in our analyses in the same way that we have mainstreamed gender and class. Going forward, I would like to see race identified as a cross-cutting issue in all development policy interventions. I would like to see race and development modules and stand-alone courses embedded in undergraduate and postgraduate development studies and international development degrees. Agreeing with Omi's and Winant's (2015) firm belief that 'to oppose racism one must notice race', I would like to strongly assert

that an anti-racist commitment to transformative development requires speaking and writing race into existence, because it does exist. So, I end this essay with one important question for critical self-reflection: How are *you* de-centring the 'white gaze' of development?

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