Whiteness, masculinity and the decolonising imperative

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Introduction

Whiteness and masculinity have no biological basis, yet the constitution of their respective but related social constructions is far from arbitrary. Together, whiteness as an ideology and the patriarchal enactments of masculinity work to establish oppressive social hierarchies that artificially divide populations, while justifying imperial and colonial violence and conquest through mechanisms of dehumanisation. Indeed, both whiteness and masculinity were central features of the colonial project, and the legacy of this project lives on through systems of coloniality. By examining two recent instances of decolonising insurgency, one in South Africa and one in Nigeria, this chapter seeks to provide both a historical and a theoretical account of the ways in which whiteness and masculinity attend to and bolster coloniality, resulting in colonial forms of being white and being (a) man/woman. As part of our analysis, we explore some of the ways in which colonial whiteness and masculinity have been resisted, and how decolonising projects and campaigns have thereby prevented the achievement of an absolute colonial, (hetero)patriarchal masculine order. We consider these modes of resistance, and the insurgent, decolonising traditions within which they work – hence referred to as 'decolonising resistance' – as pockets of radical hope upon which to draw inspiration and to build and mobilise towards a broader project of emancipatory future-building.

We begin by describing the orienting frame for our chapter. This frame, which employs the decolonial attitude informed by critical race theory, runs throughout the chapter and structures its analyses, conclusions and ethical valances. Following this, and informed by our own enunciative

and bodily positionings in the world – writing as raced and gendered subjects from the Global South – we briefly consider the ways in which whiteness and masculinity historically informed the colonial project. From there, we reflect on how decolonising movements have acted to resist whiteness and masculinity. To animate the ways in which these traditions of decolonising insurgency live on in the present, we reference two contemporary examples – that of a naked protest in Nigeria and that of school protests in South Africa. In both of these cases, those engaged in the collective struggle sought to reject the violence of coloniality, and the systems of whiteness and masculinity that attend to such violence, on structural, direct and epistemic levels. We conclude by reflecting on what these two examples, and others like them, are able to teach us about the necessarily ambitious nature of the decolonising imperative.

Critical race theory and the decolonial attitude

Although the provocations offered in this chapter are lodged within what Maldonado-Torres (2017) refers to as the 'decolonial attitude', the theoretical coordinates of critical race theory (CRT) shaped our adoption of this attitude (e.g. Crenshaw et al. 1995; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). Thus, in this section, we provide a brief outline of decoloniality and discuss how the central tenets of CRT informed the ways in which we epistemically situate ourselves in the decolonial option – that is to say, how decoloniality informed our political and epistemological positioning.

The theoretical approach of CRT can assist us in examining the relationships between race, racism and power, for the ultimate purpose of social change (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). Without being reductionist, we consider subjectivity, gender categories, bodies, cultural norms, political institutions, struggles, sexual violence, love, economy and race as social phenomena. Thus, social structures – or their opposite, social restructurings – can enable or thwart, speed or slow down social change.

Rather than a singular theory in and of itself, CRT is a trans-disciplinary 'theorizing counter-space' (Cabrera 2018, p. 213). As such, it is not guided by a singular theoretical position; however, it does maintain some common assumptions and key tenets (Flores 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). Firstly, CRT contends that race has no biological basis. Instead, race – as a site of difference – is socially constructed through societal discourses and relations (Cabrera 2018; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). Regarding race as difference, du Bois (ca. 1900, para 1), addressing the Pan-African Conference, said:

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the question as to how far differences of race – which show themselves chiefly in the color of the skin and the texture of the hair – will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization.

Race, then, is the ideological basis used to privilege one group over others and to create inequality between people. The socially constructed nature of race notwithstanding, CRT scholars also acknowledge the material reality connected to the lived experience of racial categorisation (Flores 2017).

Second, CRT contends that racism is deeply ingrained within modern society (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). Third, CRT underscores the need to consider the power and fantasies of white supremacy in the creation and maintenance of systems of racial oppression and white privilege (Rollock and Gillborn 2011). White supremacy is taken to refer to not only the racist psychologies of hate groups but also (and perhaps even more so) the 'political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings' (Ansley 1997, p. 592). Relatedly, CRT takes seriously the 'interest convergence' of whiteness, whereby, because whiteness as a system offers material benefits to white people – benefits that are reinforced and upheld through racism – white people are incentivised to maintain and reproduce systemic racism (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011).

Fourth, CRT stresses the need to foreground the voices and experiences of 'people of colour'[1] in order to understand racism (Cabrera 2018; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Rollock and Gillborn 2011). Finally, CRT emphasises the importance of intersectionality in understanding racism. Influenced by the work of feminist scholars (e.g. Crenshaw 1991; Crenshaw et al. 1995), critical race theorists hold that race should be examined alongside other categories of identity that

[1] Although the phrase 'people of colour' is frequently used by critical race theorists, we limit its use in this chapter, as we feel that it risks absolving whiteness of the responsibility of recognising whiteness as a 'colour', or race. In other words, a dislodging of whiteness from understandings of colour – socially constructed as they may be – may unintentionally reinforce notions of whiteness as a non-identity or universal standard, and thereby free from complicity with oppression.

contextualise lived experiences such as gender, sexuality, class and ability (Cabrera 2018; Flores 2017). Indeed, while CRT is 'centrally concerned with the structures and relations that maintain racial inequality, it does not operate to the exclusion or disregard of other forms of injustice' (Rollock and Gillborn 2011, p. 3). These overarching tenets of CRT act as 'epistemological and ontological premises, which inform the ways that CRT scholarship is conducted, especially as it relates to its activist orientation' (Cabrera 2018, p. 213).

Turning now to coloniality, we understand it to be comprised of the present-day oppressive matrices of power that were forged during fifteenth century colonialism (Maldonado-Torres 2007). As much as CRT's conception of race is intersectional, coloniality similarly considers both symbolic and material valances of (primarily racially-defined) identity, in addition to the ways in which these valances take root in our day-to-day lives. Linking with the du Boisian 'colour line' thesis, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argues that this line is wound together with the epistemic line, whereby coloniality denies the humanity and knowledge of racialised colonial subjects. Thus, as stressed by CRT, the violences of coloniality are multifarious and interlocking: racial oppression is, under coloniality, always a question of classed, gendered, epistemological and bodied oppression. Coloniality looks to institutionalise and reproduce relations between coloniser and colonised, which construct the world through a prism of white, male, cisgendered, patriarchal, able-bodied, capitalist supremacy (see Veronelli 2015). Decolonising resistance, therefore, seeks to 'destitute' coloniality and its supremacist ideologies – whereby the verb 'to destitute' represents a conscious action to impoverish a dehumanising yet powerful ideology.

Departing from the tenets of CRT and its orientation towards social change, we now take up what Maldonado-Torres (2017) refers to as a 'decolonial attitude', signifying both an orientation and a praxis aimed at extinguishing systems of coloniality and centring the voices, knowledges and experiences of those living under coloniality – particularly those at the receiving end of coloniality, including the descendants of the formerly enslaved, ex-colonised, exploited, marginalised and wretched of the modern/colonial world. The decolonial attitude rejects the notion that coloniality is a complete project that has irrevocably stained knowledges, power and being. Instead, the attitude embraces decoloniality as an expansive project that represents 'not only a long-standing political and epistemological movement aimed at liberation of (ex-)colonised peoples from global coloniality but also a way of thinking, knowing, and doing' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, p. 485). This attitude, similar to the activist thrust of CRT, looks to break from an identification with whiteness, along

with the perceived and real benefits thereof, by deconstructing and delegitimising whiteness as the standard of knowledge and living well.

Colonial histories of whiteness and masculinity

Although forms of oppressive social relations have existed globally for millennia, the construction of race as a fixed, hierarchical, biologically-determined identity category is associated with European colonial expansion (Dunn 2008; Garner 2007; Gould 1996; Steyn 2005). Within colonial discourses, the concept of race was organised around phenotypes – and particularly skin colour – which worked to naturalise oppressive and unequal political and economic dynamics (Steyn 2005). These colonial discourses of race were constituted through traveller's tales, missionary reports and 'race science' (Gould 1996; Wale and Foster 2007), and served the ideological function of binding a range of differences to inform racial and cultural hierarchisation and oppression (Garner 2007; Steyn 2005). Bodies were 'invested' with race and difference in order to legitimise the dehumanising practices of colonial nations (Oyěwùmí 1997; Riggs and Augoustinos 2005; Steyn 2001).

Stuart Hall (1992) refers to the colonial discourse of race as the discourse of 'the west and the rest', through which Western European peoples and nations were constructed as superior to 'the rest' (i.e. non-European nations and people). Whiteness was the position from which such comparison, categorisation and classification was carried out. In other words, it was a 'fulcrum of domination' (Garner 2007, p. 175). Within this colonial discourse of race, whiteness became an 'ideologically supported social positionality that has accrued to people of European descent as a consequence of the economic and political advantage gained during and subsequent to European colonial expansion' (Steyn 2005, p. 121). Accordingly, modern whiteness is a shared social space that has been historically, culturally, socially and politically produced and linked to particular privileges and dominance (Frankenberg 1993; Steyn 2005).

Ratele (2021) notes that the colonial discourse did not consider colonised and enslaved peoples full people (see also Fanon 1963). He goes on to argue that, at best, these not-quite-people were simply not afforded the same rights as the colonial masters; at worst, they were considered and treated as the dehumanised, 'thingified' property of the colonisers. The co-constitution of masculinity and colonial/racial identification still exists, serving to (in)form contemporary modern/colonial racist societies. The construction of race and the dominance of the system of whiteness are deeply connected to contemporary constructions of masculinity (Connell 2005; Dunn

2008). As Nagel (1998) suggests, 'state power, citizenship, nationalism, militarism, revolution, political violence, dictatorship, and democracy – are all best understood as masculinist projects, involving masculine institutions, masculine processes and masculine activities' (p. 243). Within the project of colonial expansion, (hetero)sexist patriarchal gender ideologies became linked with racial hierarchies (Connell 2005). Indeed, the 'imperial social order created a scale of masculinities as it created a scale of communities and races' (Connell 2005, p. 75). In the British Empire, for example, colonies were ruled along the same hierarchical arrangements that structured Britain at the time, with norms dictated by the ruling class, represented by the landed gentry. While these norms morphed and developed over the centuries, they nonetheless remained in the imperial service of monopoly capital (Connell 2005).

As Connell (2005) avers, the 'imperial state thus became a transnational arena for the production and circulation of masculinities based on gentry customs and ideology, although these were increasingly modified by military and bureaucratic needs' (p. 75). Indigenous gender relations, practices and structures were thus disrupted by the patriarchal hierarchising and dominant masculinity of the colonisers (Connell 2005; Oyěwùmí 1997). Such disruption was often advanced by Christian missionaries, whose colonising mandate functioned under the guise of 'civilising' colonised peoples (Césaire 1972). Thus, the colonised were called not to God, but to the white oppressor (Fanon 1963). In the colonies (e.g. South Africa), laws and norms ascertained that white people – and specifically white men – were ensconced at the top of the racist (hetero)patriarchal social architecture, with the rest of the racialised sexes/genders arrayed below. Indeed, as Ratele (2021, p. 769) notes, in the wake of colonialism and slavery, masculinity (as well as other ways of being and relating, which could pertain to anatomical distinctions between individuals but were not limited to sex, sexuality and gender) were 'given a particular colour, a specific organisation and a certain desire, among which is the patterning of relations – social, economic, [gender], and sexual – between the colonized and colonizer groups, and later the former colonized and former colonizer'. Once again, it was often the Christian missionaries who were tasked with enforcing such monogamous, heteropatriarchal and essentialising gendered relations (see, e.g., Oyěwùmí 1997).

Resisting colonial (hetero)patriarchal masculinity, whiteness and violence

In a well-known statement, Foucault (1978, p. 95) claimed that 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power'. Certainly, coloniality – and its attendant ideologies of whiteness and masculinity

– are never foreclosed, but rather contain within them ruptures that can be seized upon by resistance efforts. Coloniality is thus always challenged by decolonising resistance, informed by decolonising attitudes, with the consequence that it is forced to re-form itself in response. Decolonising resistance can assume various forms across numerous spaces, be they institutional, quotidian or public. We can, in this respect, understand decolonising resistance as constituting the contextually-embedded actions and voices of the oppressed and exploited. These actions and voices assume their most effective formation when they are arranged *from below* – that is, by those at the sharpest end of the coloniality of power, gender, being and knowledge (see Maldonado-Torres 2007, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015, 2018). At the same time, decolonising resistance cannot but draw from those solidarity-building efforts that disinvest from the symbolic and material benefits (both real and perceived) that accrue from structures supporting colonial whiteness and (hetero)patriarchal masculinity (see Davis 2011). It is within, but also beyond, the contexts of these struggles that people are able to work together to foster the kinds of critical consciousness that are so central to decolonising resistance.

Decolonising resistance is not immune to the forces of oppression it seeks to combat. Indeed, history presents us with many examples of decolonising resistance efforts that were plagued by oppression from within. Kelley (2002), for instance, recounts that, throughout the mid-twentieth century, anti-colonial movements across Africa were often intensely masculinised and sought to reinstate patriarchal manhood under the guise of African freedom. During the apartheid struggle in South Africa, the Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko (1978) warned against white allies within anti-apartheid resistance movements who supported the struggle for their own purposes and on their own (essentially liberal) political terms. In 2015, many activists who participated in South Africa's student-led Fallist movement – which called for the decolonisation of higher education institutions – noted instances of (hetero)sexism, homophobia and transphobia within the movement (Ndelu, Dlakavu and Boswell 2017). Considering the ways in which currents of oppression can operate within resistance movements is not to announce the inevitability of coloniality. Neither is it to diminish the achievements of those who have fought to destabilise colonial whiteness and (hetero)patriarchal masculinity within these movements. Rather, reflection of this sort points towards decoloniality as an emancipatory ideal that must be continually replenished, reimagined and struggled towards. It is crucial that any decolonising effort reflect on its internal structures and external relations so that it may guard against reproducing the sorts of oppression it seeks to combat.

When we consider decolonising resistance to whiteness and masculinity, both within and beyond Africa, we should not understand the present-day iterations of such resistance as lacking in precedent. Historical consciousness is imperative for building a new historical community (Ratele and Malherbe 2022). That is to say, today's local and transnational decolonising movements build upon, speak to, take inspiration from and reformate centuries-long struggles against colonialism, which include uprisings, protests, revolts, campaigns, strikes, civil disobedience, armed struggle and escapes (see James 2012). At the grassroots level, Angela Davis (2011) notes that women living in the slavocratic and colonial era – of whom many experienced appalling sexual violence – engaged in various acts of resistance, such as the poisoning of white slaveholders. Additionally, among anti-apartheid resistance efforts in South Africa, the armed wings of the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress trained many female cadres who resisted systems of whiteness and masculinity in a variety of interesting – sometimes conflicting – ways (Cornell et al. 2021). It is crucial that, today, when seeking to resist and decompose whiteness and masculinity within a decolonising frame, we do so in conversation with the histories of decolonising struggle – histories that are repeatedly ignored, muted and repressed.

Resisting the violence of coloniality: Two case examples

Decolonising resistance to colonial whiteness and masculinity is difficult, as it requires a break from and a remaking of a dehumanising world order that has already been broken apart and remade in the image of coloniality. It requires such a radical destitution of coloniality's accepted norms that, as Frantz Fanon (1963) argued, colonial powers are likely to consider it a kind of violence. In drawing out this point, Fanon added nuance to the ways in which violence – and resistance to violence – are conventionally understood. Indeed, the violence of coloniality is pervasive, inhering in structures, representations and subjectivities, and not simply confined to discrete bodily assaults. Decolonising resistance is, accordingly, ambitious and yet possible, everywhere. Coloniality can and has been resisted in both formalised decolonising social movements and day-to-day interactions in knowledge making, teaching, spiritual practices, labour relations, culture, language, intimate relations, architecture, healthcare provision and many other spheres of life.

Motivated by the Fanonian provocation, and drawing on peace and critical psychology (e.g. Galtung 1990; Teo 2010), we understand violence as constituting three interlocking formations: direct, structural and epistemic. All of these formations cohere with coloniality in particular ways. Structural violence, in Galtung's (1969) well-known formulation, speaks to the dominant social

systems, ideologies and discourses that cause and perpetuate harm and harmful practice. Direct violence, on the other hand, pertains to physical and psychological aggression and harm (see Galtung 1990). Finally, epistemic violence denotes harmful depictions that 'other' and dehumanise (see Teo 2010). These violences do not operate separately. Instead, they work together, informing and re-forming one another and the broader system of coloniality.

A number of decolonising resistance efforts have sought to foil these forms of violence inscribed within coloniality (which include the ideologies of whiteness and masculinity) through a myriad of strategies and tactics. Such movements provide examples of alternative, (re)humanising and decolonising ways of being and knowing. In what follows, we recount two recent examples of such resistance efforts, and seek to unpack how they addressed whiteness, masculinity and the interlocking forms of violence that comprise coloniality.

Decoloniality and the insurgent body

It is estimated that, since 1980, ten to twenty thousand people have died as a direct result of the ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria's Kaduna State (Hoffmann 2017). Those living in the northern region of Kaduna are mostly Muslim, and represent a majority; while those living in the southern region are predominantly Christian, and constitute a regional minority. The segregation of Kaduna was facilitated by the British colonisers (Campbell 2021). Over the past three decades, the two groups have been locked into violent conflict over political power, land, economic opportunities and resources – particularly agricultural resources (e.g. water). This has contributed to social deterioration and high levels of human displacement throughout Kaduna (see Hoffman 2017).

On 23 July 2020, hundreds of women in Kaduna – most of whom were mothers – staged a protest against the conflict. The women claimed that many of them were widows due to the conflict and had lost land, in addition to family members (Yusuf 2020). The protesters demanded that both the Nigerian State and the international community intervene (Alozie 2020a). Optically, what was most striking about the protest was that most of the women were naked.

Naked protest has long been used as a political tactic and mode of collective resistance in Nigeria, typically among Igbo and Yoruba women. It is understood as a method by which to curse and shame political targets, and indicates that the protesters are willing to die for the cause to which they are politically committed (Alozie 2020b; Fallon and Moreau 2016). Naked protests draw on older forms of feminist insurgency, such as the pre-colonial Igbo tradition of 'making war with a man', wherein groups of women would target a man who had harmed or disrespected a woman, and

dance and sing insulting songs that questioned the male offender's manhood, until he repented (Van Allen 1972). Similar to naked protest, making war with a man came to signify female political agency, and later informed the ways in which women protested against the British colonisers.

Indeed, women played a central role in some of the country's largest anti-colonial protest movements (see Fallon and Moreau 2016). In 1929, for instance, hundreds of near-naked women catalysed what became known as the 'Aba Women's War', protesting colonial authorities' racialised notions of the body (Abaraonye 1998). We can see the legacy of such episodes of female insurgency in Nigeria's most powerful contemporary protest movements, of which many have been organised by either individual women or feminist organisations (e.g. the Feminist Coalition).

Although naked protest in Nigeria has been described as a potent weapon, due to its ability to generate relatively swift responses from state authorities (Fallon and Moreau 2016), it tends to remain a last resort for feminist activists, as it comes with tremendous risk (Abonga et al. 2020). Indeed, the Aba Women's War resulted in many deaths and was instigated only after the petitioning of colonial authorities failed (Abaraonye 1998). Alozie (2020a) recounts a number of other, more recent, naked protests that carried significant risk for the protesters, including a women's union-based insurgency, female-led activism against Nigeria's military, and a female protest that was successful in shutting down a terminal of an oil company that had ignored the needs of local residents – a political victory that male protesters had previously failed to achieve. In addition to the risks such protests carry, they are also repeatedly represented through dominant colonial frames (e.g. within global mainstream media) that enact epistemic violence by debasing their political nature and focusing instead on the female body as an exotic site upon which to gaze (Fallon and Moreau 2016).

Looking critically at the 2020 protest in Kaduna, we can understand how modes of collective insurgency harnessed decolonising traditions to challenge violent currents of whiteness and masculinity. The naked protesters rejected the epistemologically violent scripts upon which coloniality drew (and draws) when constructing Black and feminised bodies. Their female bodies, in other words, became the site from which to resist mechanisms of biopolitical control and male possessiveness that seek to render such bodies passive, exotic objects of sexual gratification, or functional only insofar as they advance colonial interests (see Abonga et al. 2020; Alozie 2020a, 2020b; Davis 2011). Nakedness, therefore, served as an insurgent spectacle that disrupted the infrastructure of public space, all the while disturbing socio-cultural norms (see Abonga et al. 2020) in order to highlight how the lives of ordinary people are continually made disposable when such

‘normality’ remains intact. Visually, the protesters ‘reclaimed’ the female body and, through their ‘visual spectacle’, highlighted the Black female body’s often stereotyped or dismissed existence.

It is through the action-orientation of the naked protesters that colonial epistemologies of the Black female body-object were disregarded, as their bodies instead emerged as a collective form through which humanising and decolonising political activity was enacted. Thus, in addition to reconstituting epistemologically violent images of the Black female body, the protesters’ call to the wider community (as well as the Nigerian state) to intervene in Kaduna’s conflict acted to connect instances of direct violence to the broader, structurally violent socio-historical context within which the conflict was embedded. In other words, the shameful silence and neglect of the Nigerian state, as well as the national and international communities, was made salient by the protesters, who used their bodies to make clear both the psychological and the material consequences of the conflict. Whiteness and masculinity were not rejected in the abstract, but in the very ways in which they are used to support and feed an overarching global system of coloniality that manifests in everyday, physical, hermeneutic and psychological experiences.

Disrupting whiteness and patriarchy in South African schools

As in most colonial nations, the education system in South Africa was central to advancing colonialism and, later, apartheid. The apartheid schooling system – through the Bantu Education Policy – was imbedded within a culture of white, (hetero)patriarchal Christianity and served to uphold and maintain the white supremacist and patriarchal masculine principles upon which the country’s societal structure was established. The apartheid government sought to use education as a form through which to structurally enact the violent subjugation of Black people, promoting ‘explicit and hidden curricula’ in which ‘black students and teachers were coerced to become docile supporters and transmitters of the state ideology of social inequality’ (Ndimande 2013, p. 23). The racial segregation of South African schools – and indeed educational institutions, more broadly – reflected the colonial discourses of race as a biological and fixed natural entity and of racial hierarchies (Soudien 2010; Vandeyar 2008). In the four-tiered race system, students racially classified as African, Native, Bantu or Black had access to only the least resourced schools and were prohibited from learning in their native languages. Students classified as ‘white’, in contrast, attended well-resourced schools. Those who were classified as ‘Indian’ or ‘coloured’ attended schools that tended to be more degraded than schools designated for white learners, but less so than those designated for Black learners (Soudien 2010).

The oppressive and hierarchical state of apartheid education did not exist without resistance (Ndimande 2013). When Afrikaans was made a compulsory language of instruction in 1974, Black students collectively mobilised against both the language policy and the Bantu Education Policy, more broadly. This culminated in the 'Soweto Youth Uprising' on 16 June 1976, in which students in Soweto marched peacefully in protest. Police fired into the crowds of these marching students, killing and injuring thousands of young people and children. In response, a widespread student revolt spread across the country, lasting into the following year (Ndimande 2013; SAHO 2020). With the dawn of the democratic dispensation in 1994, the transformation of the education system was a key priority of the new national government. Through the South African Schools Act, schools were desegregated and educational policies were introduced to allow students from all backgrounds to access high quality education. A single national school system was instituted, founded on the principles of non-discrimination and equality (Christie and McKinney 2017; Vandeyar 2008). As Vandeyar (2008) suggests, 'it was hoped that in creating this opportunity, students would become integrated into the whole school environment and the seed of a new society will be sown' (p. 287). However, although schools were no longer formally segregated, the colonial divisions, inequalities and violences of the past persisted, and hope for an equitable, socially just education system in contemporary South Africa was not yet fully realised (Christie and McKinney 2017; Soudien 2010; Vandeyar 2008).

Williams (2011) describes the private and former 'Model C' schools as 'islands of privilege' in which (hetero)patriarchal whiteness remained dominant (Christie and McKinney 2017; Vandeyar 2008). Model C schools were former white schools that tended to be better resourced than schools previously designated for Black, Indian, or 'coloured' students. The schools originated as a result of the steps taken by the National Party to protect the privileged position of white state schools towards the end of the apartheid regime in 1990. Schools could opt to become Model A, B or C schools: Model A schools were private, Model B schools were state schools and Model C schools were state-aided and semi-private. Thus, Model C schools received a state subsidy, but the school's governing body was responsible for the general administration and management, with substantial decision making power (Christie and McKinney 2017). Although a diverse range of students now attend former Model C schools, research shows that Black students are expected to assimilate to the dominant institutional cultures of these schools, and thereby 'act white' (see Vandeyar 2008; Vally and Dalamba 1999). Indeed, 'the development and operation of "Model C" schools, and in particular their language and associated cultural practices, may be explained as forms of coloniality'

(Christie and McKinney 2017, p. 8). For instance, in most schools, English is taught as a first language, whereas African languages are rarely granted this position. Moreover, the study of history still privileges a colonial, Eurocentric lens. Thus, various traditions inherited from the British school system, which characterised colonial and apartheid schooling, are still dominant in most schools, even after the dismantling of apartheid.

A notable example of the coloniality of education in South Africa is offered by the Pretoria High School for Girls – a former Model C school in Gauteng Province (Christie and McKinney 2017). In 2016, the students at this school problematised the regulations around 'appropriate' ways of styling hair, which privileged whiteness and marginalised Blackness, thus promoting coloniality's epistemologically violent racial discourses. According to a Department of Education report, the School's official code of conduct maintained that afros and braids could only be grown to a certain length, whereas similar regulations were not applied to 'white' (i.e. straight, long) hairstyles (see Hendersen 2016; Maromo 2016; Ngoepe 2016). Students also reported that they were reprimanded by teachers for speaking African languages at school (see Giokos 2016; Hendersen 2016). The behaviour of Black students (e.g. wearing their hair in a particular way or speaking an African language) was therefore scrutinised and policed. Epistemologically violent regulations of this kind act to bolster coloniality's dehumanising, structurally violent social mechanisms by sending messages to students about who is a 'legitimate student' and who is not, within schools' officially sanctioned diversity codes. These notions of ontological legitimacy feed into coloniality's directly violent notions of humanity, which are premised on whiteness (see Fanon 1963). As Christie and McKinney (2017, p. 17) suggest, 'relationships of coloniality pervade these and other schools in an education system that is fundamentally unequal in the experiences and opportunities which it offers to students'.

The students at Pretoria High School for Girls followed in the long tradition of decolonising resistance to oppressive education systems by protesting the institutional culture of their school. They registered their discontent by styling their hair in ways that defied school regulations, dressing in black and gathering together in silent protest at a school event, and sharing their experiences on social media, generating widespread news coverage in South Africa (see Nicolson 2016; Parker 2019). Their actions were influential in encouraging students from other formerly 'white-only' schools to challenge exclusionary and epistemologically violent policies at their own schools, as pertaining to race and gender (Goba 2017). For example, Westerford High School – another former Model C school in Cape Town – mandated student uniform options that were rooted in essentialist

understandings of gender. Male students were prohibited from having long hair or wearing jewellery, as these were gendered as 'female'. The institutional culture of the school relied on a fixed, binary understanding of gender, assuming that all students were male or female, and thus failed to serve the needs of transgender and gender non-binary students. Additionally, the code of conduct drew artificial assumptions about the ways in which 'maleness' and 'femaleness' should be enacted. Prompted by debates around student appearance that the Pretoria High School for Girls protests elicited, the principal of Westerford High School, in discussion with the students, revised the code of conduct to allow students of all genders to wear their hair as they wished (provided the style was 'neat') and to also wear jewellery (Goba 2017; News24 2016).

Although the Pretoria school protests focused mainly on disrupting whiteness, and the Westerford policy change was concerned with gender binaries, the Pretoria protests against the dominant and marginalising status quo arguably contributed to the development of critical consciousness amongst other South African high school students, thereby fostering their resistance to structural forms of marginalisation in their own environments (Goba 2017). It should be noted, however, that the Westerford High School code of conduct relating to uniforms still designates skirts as 'female' and shorts as 'male' (see WHS 2019). Nonetheless, the Pretoria protests 'brought the power relations of coloniality into visibility' (Christie and McKinney 2017, p. 16), which encouraged students at schools across the country to challenge the oppressive parameters of their own codes of conduct.

Conclusion

Informed by CRT and decolonial thought, this chapter has offered an account of decolonising resistance against colonial impositions of whiteness and masculinity/femininity. Our basic goal was to surface localised acts of resistance informed by decolonising attitudes – either implicitly or explicitly – as instantiations of hope, voice and action against coloniality. We focused on two protests – each of which was led by African women and girls: one in Nigeria and another in South Africa. Protests such as these, we argue, inform our understanding of how we might 'destitute' colonial forms of masculinity and whiteness. Although the protests were set in vastly different contexts, and ranged enormously in scope and political tactics, each worked within their respective national tradition of decolonising resistance to reject the stifling premises of coloniality, particularly with respect to whiteness and masculinity. In both cases, gender and race were harnessed in ways that spoke to the multifaceted nature of colonial violence, thereby resisting this

violence on direct, structural and epistemic levels. In each instance, the contextual particularities were addressed in ways that spoke to coloniality's globally oppressive project. Thus, a universalising mode of humanising insurgency was evident – an insurgency to which those who are engaged in the decolonising struggle must lend their solidarity, in order to develop it into a globalising project of decolonial future-building.

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