

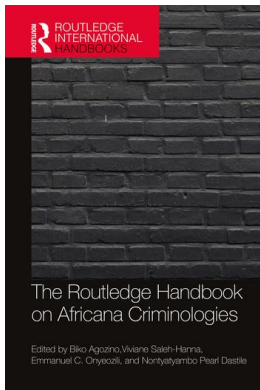
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 05 Dec 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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The Routledge Handbook on Africana Criminologies

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Conclusion

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003004424-25>

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Published online on: 30 Dec 2020

How to cite :- Nontyatyambo Pearl Dastile. 30 Dec 2020, *Conclusion from:* The Routledge Handbook on Africana Criminologies Routledge

Accessed on: 05 Dec 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003004424-25>

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CONCLUSION

Nontyatyambo Pearl Dastile

Knowledges in Africa about Africa and the diaspora continue to be dominated by Western ways of analysis and theories that do not center the being of an African. Indeed, one of the pertinent ways in which colonialism plays itself poignantly is in the area of developing knowledges. These knowledges described an African as a “savage, an inferior being,” thus promoting only Western ways of developing knowledges and ideas about the world. As Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2014: 193–195) concludes, the colonization of African knowledges and African ways of knowing and being led to the “reduction of the natives to the category of natural subjects.”

By extension, this definition of Africans as natural subjects implies that the savage represented the “ultimate locus of inferiority . . . a being who does not belong and thus cannot be recognized as human enough” to deserve inclusion in the locus of formulation knowledge. Further to this, an African, particularly a Black African, was turned into an ambiguous and fragile being whose locus of enunciation could not be defined. It is for this reason that this volume was conceptualized.

This volume seeks, amongst other things, to bring the being of African and African identities into the center of knowledges. It centralizes their being and locus of enunciation by recognizing that their offending or criminality is not something that they were born with. Their practices and doings have always been criminalized by states and governments who conveniently forgot that they had been criminalized from inception, as Trevor Noah (2016) put it in his memoir about coming of age under apartheid, *Born a Crime*.

The volume is an exercise in self-reflexivity by scholars of African and African descent in the discipline of criminology and other related disciplines. By self-reflexivity, we refer to a bold step towards the recognition of “epistemological diversity” within criminal justice disciplines. This, in turn, enables a critique of dominant Western-centric forms of knowledge, which dominate criminological disciplines throughout the world. Indeed, the volume allows for expressions of diversity of knowledges of the African subjectivities, thus bringing credibility to such forms of knowing and

being. We hope that through this volume, we can bring plurality of knowledges to the forefront of the knowledges and policies created about us.

The questions that are addressed throughout this volume concern the ways Africana criminologies can survive “the destabilizing image” that has been condemned as “*epistemicide*, the murder of knowledge” (Santos, 2014: 149). The answers come from contributions to liberation criminology, from Du Bois to the convictions and incarceration of Nelson Mandela and how resistance against epistemic injustice brought about the narratives of those who are deemed prisoners, as important knowledge–power in criminological discourses.

The volume moves on to look at how criminologists have failed to recognize decoloniality in both their curricula and their teachings, leading to practices of criminologies of the West and their related theoretical formulations being used to describe who and what an African should be. Agozino, for instance, reconceptualizes liberation fighters as criminologists; scholar-fighters; and, by extension, comrades who shaped criminal justice systems in the African diaspora. Agozino says such knowledges paves the way for a criminology that seeks to recognize, through explanatory paradigms, that as long as chronic hunger, poverty, and illiteracy plague the African continent and people of Africana decent, liberation criminology has a huge encompassing role in developing explanatory frameworks that recognize these ills as forms of injustice.

Oko Elechi, on the other hand, looks at the traditional visual and architectural forms of knowledge among the Igbo. His argument focuses on espousing traditional ways of knowing and doing justice among this community, whose goal of justice is to restore the dignity of the triad of victims, offenders, and the community. This is the humanistic criminology that centers the being of an African.

The crimes against humanity associated with the trans-Saharan slave trade are also addressed in this volume. One needs to ask what implications these had on people’s development in Africa, and, once again, this is a groundbreaking chapter whose focus is a subject that is scarcely addressed in criminological discourses. Moreover, both Murhula and Chivasa decry the histories and herstories of brutality caused by colonization against people of African descent. They both focus on colonization as a crime against humanity. Indeed, this knowledge is timely as most criminology books in Africa, scarce as they are, fail to recognize colonialism as a crime, thus only focusing on the symptoms and not the root cause, which continues to plague Africa.

This chapter is followed by criminalization of people of African descent in Brazil, which is, ironically, one of the BRICS countries. Mileno augments the neglect of race and racism as pivotal in the criminalization of Black people in Brazil, and he calls for an academic revolution that would advance liberation criminologies in Brazil by centering race and racism in their curriculum.

Kalunta-Crumpton, in her study of intimate partner violence among both men and women in a Nigerian community in Texas, questions whether physical violence is the only form of intimate partner violence. As gender violence has skyrocketed globally, this intervention is unique in that it exposes how African women fail to consider other forms of abuse, such as verbal abuse or financial deprivation, as gender-based violence. This thinking is necessary as it encompasses voices and narrations of African women whose voices are often overshadowed by statistical analyses.

Oludare then looks at the retention of colonial laws against African women. These are inclusive of laws that negate the participation of women as co-creators of wealth and coparticipants in both local politics and economies. As with Kalunta-Crompton, we see in this chapter the gendering of criminologies and criminal justice pedagogies.

Festus Obi examines the dynamics of the imprisonment of people of African descent, whether on the continent or in the diaspora. Anybody who identifies as an African, irrespective of their geographical location, is considered a person of African descent. Across continents, Obi addresses, through case studies, the lockdown of Africans and African Americans globally and encapsulates the reasons behind the incarceration of Black people, particularly migrant people.

The impact of the sedition law in resisting colonialist crimes among African people is addressed by Raufu, who delves into the experiences of nationalists and the defiant structures that result in the negation of sedition laws. This is followed by resistance of the criminalization of hip-hop culture among African people. Through case studies of hip-hop artists such as Meek Mill, Miles argues against the criminalization of hip-hop artists in the Americas. All these artists are Black artists whose criminalization resembles that of people of African descent throughout the world. In methodologies that are similar to narrativity, Miles deploys the lyrics of hip-hop artists and thus develops another tool to study the incarcerated community. Thus, Miles also goes beyond the boundaries of criminology and enriches this volume, suggesting ways to rethink the discipline in Africa.

Could it be that Miles, Agu, and Ibe foresee the use of the voices of African people to challenge the ways of knowing and being that are referred to in the earlier sections of this conclusion? School discipline in Africa has also not been addressed forms of injustice in these schools as Agu and Ibe argue. Colonialism had not spared the rod and therefore has contributed to various forms of child abuse in the guise of discipline in schools. Agu and Ibe thus advocate for alternative ways of doing school discipline in order to allow the voices of children to permeate and be heard on the issues that affect them.

Wallace examines the phenomenon of gangs in the Caribbean and looks at the nexus between gang dynamics and gender in Trinidad and Tobago. Majavu unpacks the issue of the created dysfunctional identities of African people in New Zealand. He argues that Black Africans are regarded as a people who are “unfit” for “modern life.” This narrative is an offshoot of the long-standing discourse of a “Dark Continent.” Onyeozili looks at gunboat criminology and how the oppressive and exploitative nature of European colonial and control policies and practices permeated and corroded African cultural, political, and socio-economic space, resulting in the stunted growth and development of Africa. Evidently, the transatlantic slave trade alluded to earlier on as one characteristic of the enslavement of people of African descent.

From Nelson Mandela’s criminology to the criminology of another giant, W.E.B. Du Bois, Elechi enlivens this volume by examining how this criminology looks at the relationship between culture, social and economic environment, and criminal behavior. He also highlights how race and power intersect with societal responses to deviant behavior. Both Mandela’s and Du Bois’s criminology cannot be overstated as critical pieces that can contribute to liberation criminology in Africa. Otu questions,

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in the final chapter, whether the history and herstory of colonization, the slave trade, slavery, lynching, and racial discrimination against African people (all opposed by Du Bois and by Mandela, who abolished the death penalty in South Africa) have any relationship with the retention of the death penalty by neocolonial regimes, even after the colonizers who imposed capital punishment have abolished it in Europe.

The main argument of this volume is that knowledges about Africa and people of African descent should be considered as global social justice initiatives aimed at undoing the epistemicides that have been targeted at Africa. In this volume, we have been instrumental in unearthing how Africans can be thought about. We have further succeeded in presenting an African as a being who can “think, theorize, interpret the world, write from where they are located, unencumbered by Eurocentrism” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018: np).

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