

# Promoting Epistemic Vigilance Against Racist Attacks on Africans on Mediatised Permanent Education Sites

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## Abstracts

*This paper analyses how tropes of racism against people of African descent manifest in public texts (permanent education sites) of different genres and forms. The selected permanent education sites include the mediatisation of the public and private lives of the British royal family's Prince Harry and Meghan's break away from royal duties, the FIFA World Cup and the English Premier League, the Chinese Museum in Hubei, and other public incidences that provoked racial controversies. These activities, controversies and exhibitions are vehicles through which racism is reproduced as part of the historical global capitalist system. This is the ubiquitous public pedagogy of permanent education. The porous but multifarious dominant sites diffuse diverse forms of pedagogical address to put into play a limited range of identities, ideologies, and subject positions that both reinforce neoliberal social relations and undermine the capacity for democratic politics. Critical scholarship has a normative duty to be mindful of all cultural activities and productions, their processes of signification, and implications for humanization and democracy. After conveniently selecting specific mass mediated permanent education sites, this paper theorises and historicises the colonial foundations of racism and the European construction of an imagined racial hierarchy. It then problematises China as an emergent global economic powerhouse located in this gradation, and its contemporary self-identities – both official and public – given notable allegations of incidences of Chinese racism against people of African descent. Popular sites of mediation are not studied for their own sake, but to develop a radical pan-African scholarship strategically positioned to influence public education sites for social transformation and justice. Such vigilant critical decolonial scholarship makes necessary committed epistemic and organic interventions in response to insidious sites of cultural education.*

**Keywords:** Racism, Permanent Education Sites, Mediatisation, Decolonisation, Critical Scholarship, Epistemic Vigilance

## Résumé

*Cet article analyse comment les tropes du racisme contre les personnes d'ascendance africaine se manifestent dans les textes publics (sites d'éducation permanente) de différents genres et formes.*

*Les sites d'éducation permanente sélectionnés incluent la médiatisation de la vie publique et privée de la rupture du prince Harry et de Meghan de la famille royale britannique, la Coupe du monde de football et la Premier League anglaise, le Musée chinois du Hubei et d'autres incidents publics qui suscité des controverses raciales. Ces activités, controverses et expositions sont des véhicules à travers lesquels le racisme est reproduit dans le cadre du système capitaliste mondial historique. C'est la pédagogie publique omniprésente de l'éducation permanente. Les sites dominants poreux mais multiples diffusent diverses formes d'adresse pédagogique pour mettre en jeu un éventail limité d'identités, d'idéologies et de positions de sujet qui renforcent à la fois les relations sociales néolibérales et sapent la capacité de la politique démocratique. L'érudition critique a le devoir normatif d'être attentif à toutes les activités et productions culturelles, à leurs processus de signification et à leurs implications pour l'humanisation et la démocratie. Après avoir commodément sélectionné des sites d'éducation permanente de masse spécifiques, cet article théorise et historicise les fondements coloniaux du racisme et la construction européenne d'une hiérarchie raciale imaginée. Il problématise ensuite la Chine en tant que puissance économique mondiale émergente située dans cette gradation, et ses identités contemporaines – à la fois officielles et publiques – étant donné les allégations notables d'incidences de racisme chinois contre les personnes d'ascendance africaine. Les sites populaires de médiation ne sont pas étudiés pour eux-mêmes, mais pour développer une bourse panafricaine radicale stratégiquement positionnée pour influencer les sites d'éducation publique pour la transformation sociale et la justice. Une érudition décoloniale critique et vigilante rend nécessaires des interventions épistémiques et organiques engagées en réponse aux sites insidieux d'éducation culturelle.*

**Mots-clés :** *Racisme, Sites permanents d'éducation, Médiatisation, Décolonisation, Érudition critique, Vigilance épistémique*

## Introduction

State enforced formalised racial segregation and oppression such as that experienced in the colonial system, Nazism, and apartheid are largely phenomena of the past, but what is apparent in the twenty-first century are manifestations of racism that filter through global society and institutions without overt endorsements from central authorities. Arguably, no state system condones racism as official public policy, yet critical race theories and methodologies consistently expose that racism as a vestige of colonial social engineering has lasting harmful effects that filter into contemporary times. Africans and other people of colour continue to be dehumanised, disempowered and exploited in order to perpetuate white supremacy. The same antiracist studies usually use intellectual activism to urge democratic citizens to adopt, cultivate and share a higher consciousness of racial tolerance, and engage in struggles against all oppression against gender, ethnic groups, class and other marginalised groups (Collins 2019; Nakata 2015). Socially conscious citizens have the moral responsibility to create postracial societies based on tolerance and egalitarianism. By critically analysing publicised racist performances,

statements and exhibitions for implicit or blatant racist attacks against people of colour, this article grapples with “persisting effects of race in a seemingly colorblind society”, as African American public intellectual and sociologist of race Patricia Hill Collins (2019: 2009) would say.

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) make the disconcerting observation that many ordinary people believe “racism is declining or that class today is more important than race”. It is true old blatant expressions of racism such as lynching are no longer as common as they were in the past centuries, and there are considerable numbers of respectful inter-race relations. However, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) disturbingly state that in “every social indicator, racism continues to blight the lives of people of color, including holders of high-echelon jobs, even judges”. Nyasha Mboti (2019) observes the same about one of the most notorious race systems – apartheid – noting the pernicious system’s “metamorphoses and afterlives”. Racism’s capacity to mutate, reinvent and reconfigure its shape without losing its initial objective and purpose of one group dehumanising, disempowering and exploiting another makes this study relevant for deciphering racism’s presence in diverse mass mediated content. Narratives and other symbolic expression have capacity to empower or harm (Matsuda et al 1993), hence the need to understand the systems that promote discourse and representations, and when these are harmful, to also devise ways of fighting for social justice.

The content studied is all drawn from mass mediated content largely found on online newspapers and sites accessible via google. All identified cases happen well into the third decade of the twenty-first century. “Colour-blind racism” that emerged after the struggles for non-racialism, instead of a genuine eradication of racism. Colour-blind racism remains racism all the same, and antiracist struggles ought to fight this damaging phenomena. Public education of various forms on matters of race, gender and other civil and political issues occurs in both formal schools and in public sites such as (social) media, fairs and exhibition, music, etc. The formal structures and systems of public education in the Global North and South can be used to diffuse or fight against all forms of discrimination including gender, race, ethnical, religious and other discrimination. Nevertheless, due to the control of such systems including educational platforms and institutions by powerful persons implicated in the perpetuation of such discrimination, the world continues to experience nondemocratic forms of life and inequality. This makes it necessary for the waging of struggles and intellectual activism against social injustice (Choudry 2015: Collins 2009: 2017: Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

Two disturbing texts were published in 2017 that suggest continued racism against people of African descent. The first was a video of a Chinese art exhibition that compared African iconography to ape iconography implying the fixed primordialism of Africans in spite of their contemporaneous coexistence with other racial groups in global (post)modernity. The second was American based political scientist Bruce Gilley’s (2017) article titled ‘The case for colonialism’ published in the *Third world quarterly* and

justifying the need to recolonize Africa. Such publications inevitably test and challenge whether the notion of globalization is apolitical and based on equality and social justice across races and individuals, or if it is predicated on othering, dehumanization and disempowerment. The USA's President Donald Trump's disparaging statement about 'shithole' countries in 2018 worsens matters as a political leader from a world power publicly shows contempt toward the African continent and its people, the majority of whom are Black. His sense of revulsion of course is a convenient mask over the historical circumstances both past and present that have militated against the development of the global South, notwithstanding the real self-inflicted woes of the south mainly from its avaricious leaders and business people.

In the twenty-first century, there are too many pictures of Africans and other peoples of the global South in distress or trying to escape to the global north. Many of these end up in modern day slavery, or die in the forests, seas and desert wilderness. Their humiliation and desperation conceal the historical reasons of their 'voluntary' displacements from their original homes. Far right nationalists in Europe and America see them as the pernicious coming from mismanaged economies. The dynamics of global capitalism hide the structural imbalances that perpetuate social and political inequalities in geopolitical spaces. For instance, the dominant world media reproduce images of a perpetually cursed African continent, conveniently concealing that most of the refugees are victims of global capitalism, with many forcibly displaced from their original homes as they make room for expropriation of minerals and raw materials used in industry and manufacturing. Neocolonial governments of the global South in cahoots with global multinational corporations usually exploit resources in the neocolonies at the detriment of the majority. Of course, older stereotypical and archetypal images of Africa still prevail showing them as part of nature and the landscape, as either nomads or pastoralists, or dancing or starving. In urban contexts, they are often beggars, hawkers and vendors (Obbo 2005: 155). Western media rarely makes an effort to show the similarities between peoples across races, but instead focus on the comparative differences that present Western Caucasians as progressive, civilized human beings and Africans as primitive (Fabian 2005). The denigration of people of African descent plays out in all spatial contents, most of them ordinary and commonplace – what Raymond Williams (1967) has called *permanent education sites*. Mass media reproduce and relay to millions what transpires on these sites.

This paper first justifies the selection of specific mass mediated permanent education sites to be discussed. It proceeds to theorise and historicise the colonial foundations of racism and the European construction of an imagined racial hierarchy. Then it problematises China as an emergent global economic powerhouse located in this gradation, and its contemporary self-identities – both official and public. Next, permanent education sites are situated as instruments of public pedagogy or sites for the formation of public opinion outside the formal schooling system. Hence, a committed

critical scholarship serves a normative public service role of constant vigilance against the hegemonic politics underpinning permanent education sites. There comes an evaluation of contemporary global topical issues featured on permanent education sites that involve public discussion of race relations. Finally comes a critical conclusion supporting the transformation of the Euro-American-centric neoliberal economic system founded on the reproduction of racism.

## **Methodology of selection of mass mediated permanent education sites**

All selected texts studied in this article, whether as statements, journalistic and print publications, stories on events and personalities, audio-visual exhibitions and advertisement, are products of Internet-mediated Research (IMR) (Hewson 2017). Online research methods are very diverse. Social science disciplines using IMR produce data either directly elicited through the interview forms, or that appear as numeric, graphical, textual and audio-visual formats. The advantages of Internet-based data collection methods include the possibility of studying potentially vast and geographically diverse subjects. The low cost and time efficiency is also remarkable.

The author identified topical race-related incidents that trended on social media sites between 2017 and 2020, especially those that circulated on whatsapp and facebook platforms to which he is a member. These social media sites include the Zimbabwe Diaspora Network Academics Forum and the Zimbabwe Media Academics platforms. Discussions of these incidents on these sites impressed on the author the salience of the topics leading to selection of the actual reportage of incidents for critical analysis. While the views of the Zimbabwean social media academics on whatsapp and facebook are not included in this article, the author google searched stories about the incidents on internet.

The paper purposively selects print and (audio)visual texts that have circulated on popular mass-mediated sites that generally satisfy Raymond Williams' (1967) description of "permanent education sites". The selection of cases cited is convenient largely because these stirred attention both amongst netizens and in conventional media. The mediatised cases reviewed here were identified through the researcher-author's combined media monitoring and google searching for mediatised cases with class and racial undertones/overtones. The stories' overt and covert assumptions about race relations are extrapolated from discursive contestations of readings from diverse groups. The selected texts and narratives enunciate racial dynamics and manifestations in the Euro-American epicentres of white racial hegemony, and the contemporary imaginings of race in topical Chinese texts and narratives on permanent education sites.

Discussing the racial undertones/overtones associated with the political leadership is pertinent because it attends to a group of people that are critical and constitutive of the social engineering of the racist capitalist system and its hegemony. Earlier reference to

Donald Trump's classification of struggling economies as "shitholes" reveals arguably racist prejudices from a political leader of the leading global capitalist economy. The British royal family symbolise and are direct representatives of the history of British Empire often implicated in designing institutional racism as part of an imperial "official mind". The debacle involving the withdrawal of Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, and her husband Prince Harry, from their standard royal duties raised significant media furor. Due to Meghan's African American background media discussions on race were considerable and with inevitable statements on race relations beyond the royal family. Hubei provincial museum, *WeChat* the micro-messaging and social media platform, and the Qiaobi laundry detergent advertisement were selected because they represent Chinese cultural institutions that invoked considerable media publicity. The article "They've made our blood ties black": On the Burst of Online Racism Towards the African in China's Social Media", written for an African based media and cultural studies journal by Liu and Deng (2020) was purposively selected to prove that even China-based Chinese scholars are aware of the manifestations of pathological cyber-nationalism and offline xenophobia against Africans in China. China is an old cultural center, which incidentally became a colony during its 'days of colonial humiliation'. China is also a contemporary emerging political and economic powerhouse branding itself as culturally tolerant, much as it uses what it calls 'soft power' both in its domestic affairs and international relations. Comparably, attention is given to Chinese cases because the Chinese are considered 'friends' of Africans and China is a leading investor in Africa. The cases on China do not necessarily focus on racism in sport, but reveal what transpires in other permanent education sites that arguably imbue similar accessibility and influence.

Overall, selected "sites" straddle from texts and narratives of the mediatisation of the public and private lives of public figures such as politicians, members of royal family and sportspersons, museum exhibitions, and advertisements. Analytical opinion articles that use topical events, personalities and hard news stories and broadcasts as their primary sources assist in the provision of citable mediatised materials on racism in current times. These opinion articles and feature news stories were published in the mainstream media and online from 2018 the year in which the FIFA World Cup was played, up to January 2020 when the British Royal Family's Harry and Meghan controversy dominated the media. Such articles include Afua Hirsch's (2020) "Black Britons know why Meghan Markle wants out", from the *New York Times*, James Yeku's (2018) "The racist myth of the 'physical' African football team" from *Aljazeera*, and the *BBC*'s "Raheem Sterling: how speaking out on racism has helped make him a role model" (2019). Other online print articles expose mass mediated incidents of racism in popular sites, visual exhibitions and advertisements.

Most of the cases on racism in sports and efforts made to curb the scourge are drawn from experiences in the English Premier League (EPL) because the EPL is arguably the most popular and widely mediatised sporting activity in the world apart from the mega-

events of FIFA Football World Cup bonanzas. According to SportsPro, EPL reached a total 3.2 billion worldwide audience for all programming watched during the 2018/19 season, translating to a six per cent increase on the 2017/18 season. In the 2018/19 season the cumulative audience for live EPL programming increased by 11 per cent to 1.35 billion. These statistics only account for TV viewing in standard global homes but exclude out-of-home and smartphone or pc consumption. The EPL is broadcast in 188 of the 193 countries recognised by the United Nations. Most of the publications selected are already analytical in their coverage of incidents of racism in permanent education sites. The overall theoretical approach is Cultural Studies with its preoccupation with issues of media representation or individual and societal identities inclusive of class, race, ethnicity and gender. Studies of blackness and whiteness are thus offshoots of CS. A critical CS is acutely aware of social inequalities and injustices, hence has an inherent discursive transformative agenda for social justice and a better humanity. Decolonial theory and African studies are therefore natural theoretical imports to critical CS in the application of critical discourse analysis to the texts and surrounding events. Reflexively, this researcher-writer is Black and a permanent resident of the global South.

### **Theorising and Historicising racism: the manufacturing and sustenance of racism**

Critical race theory underpins the analysis of media texts studied in this article. It interrogates how race and power simultaneously are shaped by, and in turn shape socioeconomic, cultural, political, legal and all other systems, and individual and collective identities (Collins 2009: 2017: Choudry 2015: Delgado and Stefancic 2013: 2017: Hall 1997). There is a long global critical scholarship on race and racism, contingent with programmatic approaches for intellectual activism for the fight against the pathology of racism, seeking to create just and democratic societies (Du Bois 1902: Fanon 1967: 2008: Freire 1967; Collins 2009, 2019: Delgado and Stefancic 2013: 2017: Hall 1996: wa Thiongo 1988). The scholarship often observes that bodies of knowledge express the point of view of those who create them; hence the significance for a popular education that socialises citizens into social responsibility attuned for collective struggle in defence of democratic principles. Such education creates a “crucial link between gaining a liberatory education and empowering a disenfranchised public”. The article intersects critical race theory, decolonial theory with critical social concepts derived from media and cultural studies.

Contemporary culture, events and phenomena are generally ‘mediatised’ (Jansson 2002). Mediatisation is “the process through which mediated cultural products have gained importance as cultural referents” (Jansson 2002: 14-15), with descriptive and socio-economic, political, and identity implications for the signified (Collins 2009:

2017: Hall 1997: wa Thiongo 1986). It is “a socio-cultural state in which media images and media-influenced commodity-signs are to an increasing extent used as sources for, and expressions of, cultural identity” (Jansson 2002: 1). For instance, sociologist and cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall takes a “discursive position” to critically examine signification through metaphors, antidotes, stories, jokes and all narratives that are told in societies about physical racial differences as typified through skin colour, type of hair, and so on. He posits that race is artificial but a social construct. For him, race is a “floating signifier”. Classification that separates the one from the other, mainly focusing on differences, is put to strategic political use to empower or disempower the one from the other. Hall makes a poignant observation for the logic of racial classification:

Until you classify things, in different ways, you can't generate any meaning at all. So, it's an absolutely fundamental aspect of human culture. What is, of course, important for us is when the systems of classification become the objects of the disposition of power. That's to say when the marking of difference and similarity across a human population becomes a reason why this group is to be treated in that way and get those advantages, and that group should be treated in another (Hall 1997: 1)

Hence, this articles uses intersectionality in not only seeing linkages, continuities and discontinuities in the persistence of race (Collins 2019), but in the conceptual and stylistic devices that are put into use in studying the mediatised genres and expressions of race. A global approach to race issues is adopted without necessarily focusing on localised race systems and architecture (Mboti 2019), or minority race groups such as what Nakata (2007) and Matsuda et al (1993) have done in their canonical works, or what several authors in Delago and Stefancic (2017) have done elsewhere, although all these and other works remain relevant to the present submission. It also does not give substantial attention to gender and race for the same reasons, much as an intersectional approach on these issues would certainly enhance the critical treatment (see Collins 2009). The common perspective is a call and reinforcement of a non-racial critical approach that recognises and locates intellectual activism positioned within engaged scholarship and critical pedagogy (Nakata 2007: Delgado and Stefancic 2013: 2017: Choudry 2015).

This paper analyses selected contemporary narrative tropes of racism against people of African descent found in public texts (permanent education sites) of different genres and forms. Definitions are always slippery and elusive but they help with classification and providing focus to issues. Race is neither originary nor a scientific fact but is constructed, imagined and fictive in biological terms, although it is an existential fact when it comes to the peoples' lived realities (Hall 1996). It is a critical determinant for the historical



and contemporary relations between different sets of people, communities, peoples and nations/states. Race is a “material” sign produced within historical contexts; hence according to Tomaselli et al (2019: 271) “Self-constructed identities based on race and origins are mobilised by particular interpretive communities to legitimate specific racial arrangements.” For instance, “Africanness” or “blackness” is used in America to challenge prejudice in that country. “Blackness” ceases to be a “mystical absolute”, hence not only those people who look black can think black thoughts, and conversely, black looking people can be clones of whiteness and white privilege. The latter are what Malcolm X derides as “Uncle Toms”, Fanon’s versions of brainwashed blacks or metaphorical “black skins white masks”. Democratising “blackness” to include all those who empathise with and struggle alongside those who are marginalised and exploited due to their appearance and class, literal blacks included, becomes a universalising activity. This permits for Arabs, Jews, LGBTI, and people of African descent, and of course radical whites, to claim to be “the new black”, and all can show solidarity in struggles and social movements such as #Blacklivesmatter, #Rhodesmustfall, #Feesmustfall, etc. The broader struggle against racist capitalism is more progressive and important than confining discourses to essentialised exclusiveness of blackness, while continual reference to ‘blackness’ keeps focus on a signifying referent associated with gross indignities, exploitation and marginalisation. Kehinde Andrews (2018) says black struggles are somewhat neutralised through using “non-racialism” as a ‘politically correct’ terminology, hence the need to consciously reintroduce ‘blackness’ at the centre of a discursive struggle. Terms such as “Africans”, “Blacks” and “people of African Descent” are used interchangeably in the paper, cognisant of existential blackness as a state of mind, principled consciousness and practice.

Racism is an inherent and deep-rooted aspect of the European modern nation-state (Mamdani 2003: Virdee and McGeever 2018) and its constrictive capitalist interests and forces underpin the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism whose legacy culminate in modern-day neoliberal market economy. From its inception in the late fifteenth century, racism has been a critical component of the European nation-state and its successors (Arendt: 1975: Mamdani 2003). As the European nation-state grew outwards through colonial and imperial adventures, a system of institutional racism utilised a bureaucratic structure and hierarchy; Caucasians positioned/imagined themselves at the apex, Orientals coming next below them, and black Africans at the bottom. This hierarchy is reproduced in some discursive representations in the global (post)modern era. Once again, such representations advance the racist neoliberal interests of its Caucasian systemic progenitors. Using the intersectional approach that creates spatial and temporal links between racist-colonialism, Nazism and apartheid and racism in the contemporary historical period where racism is “seemingly colour-blind”, Collins (2009) identifies the continued prevalence of “deeply entrenched hierarchies of class, race, gender, and ethnicity that persists from one generation to the next”, thereby compromising genuine democracies and full citizenship. She further argues that elite groups manipulate

education to convince the public to social inequalities of race, class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality as natural, normal, and inevitable. While Collins often concentrates on the formal educational system and the need to revamp curricula, this article focuses on the 'informational' and 'educational' sites that are ubiquitous found outside the formal sector. This is the territory of conventional and social media, public performances and exhibitions. They are widespread and permanent, especially when 'permanently' published on internet as 'social media' with relatively easy and instantaneous accessibility.

How 'blackness' is a source of discursive struggles necessitates the selection of public narrative texts emanating from Chinese quarters. The Oriental Chinese ostensibly are Africa's 'all weather friends'. They also suffered Western colonial subjugation and are best positioned to understand and empathise with those who were similarly humiliated. It is debatable whether those Chinese who produce racist texts are merely reproducing the classic institutionalized racism encapsulated within the traditional Western hegemony, or they are reinventing a racism predicated in a new fervent Chinese nationalist revival occurring within the clutches of a capitalist order that best thrives on racial inequalities befitting its historical legacies. This racism manifests and exists in spite of neoliberal sanitized discourses about civilization, human rights, equality and tolerance of diversity.

Since the Atlantic slave trade, race has been implicated in the socio-economic inequalities between peoples, with the Negroes or people of colour or blacks experiencing the worst in racial encounters. Systems of governance and management of labour and production relied intricately on racial classification. Slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism exploit(ed) the racial factor and determinant for those systems to operate and benefit Caucasian Westerners at the detriment of blacks. This happens in spite of the contemporary claims that the world systems are non-racial. If the scourge of racism was totally eradicated and the social systems were non-racial or post-racial the debates on racism and campaigns against racism would be phenomena of the past. Unfortunately, global movements such as #BlackLivesMatter bear testimony that racism is present. Africa still remains less developed and racism is often implicated in why it lags behind. Racism can only be eradicated through overturning the entirety of the world racist economic order (Andrews 2018; Fanon 1967: 2008; Rodney 1983; Cabral 1979). Kehinde Andrews (2018) unsparingly finds that structural racist capitalism pervades some of the supposedly 'progressive' struggles meant to eradicate it. For instance, bourgeoisie or 'Uncle Tom' black leadership of pan Africanism in Africa and in the diaspora have been self-serving while paying lip-service to African unity without addressing the critical causes of economic inequalities in the world system. Such leadership champion forms of pan Africanism that only result in the perpetuation of the exploitative and suffocating racist capitalist system which overallly benefits the white race and the Western world.

In the past, Walter Rodney (1983) scrutinised and revealed how the global South countries continued to struggle towards democracy and development due to their incomplete inclusion into the world economic system. Rodney pinpointed the reproduction of a racialized hierarchy in the world system where the global South and people of colour were confined to the bottom ranks. Much as Rodney was writing about the period between independence and the 1970s, it is pertinent to consider how the unreformed global order continues to marginalise the global South. “The question has never been how to include postcolonial societies within a system that kept them out. It was always how to remake the system that kept them down”, writes Sam Krug (2019). Institutional racism debilitates all efforts at emancipation of those historically marginalised due to racial exclusion and exclusivity. Even when there is Black presence in various positions in postcolonial governments, business and financial institutions in Africa or abroad, etc., as long as there is institutional racism, and if the structure is essentially racist, the deliverables and outcomes will favour the dominant racial group (Andrews 2018: 11). Various institutions prop up the world racist economic and political order. Some institutions are political, economic, socio-cultural and yet others are ‘academic and intellectual’. The latter attest for the knowledge reproduction that both implicitly and explicitly advance the interests of a racist economic order. It is in the cultural sphere and intellectual spaces that racist notions and attitudes are processed and circulated with the support of the political systems, hence the power-knowledge nexus is established.

Again, the race issue is a global one affecting blacks in Africa and those in the diaspora. There is a level at which “blackness” transcends the colour of a person but represents marginality and exclusion of those oppressed and exploited by the capitalist system. This explains for the solidarities forged across the world by peoples of the Third World or global South fighting injustices through the twentieth century and right to contemporary times. For instance, Palestinians gave Ferguson protesters advice on how to deal with state-sanctioned teargas attacks after the murder of Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri, in what became the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Ferguson protesters reciprocated the solidarity by chanting and displaying banners reading “Free Gaza”. Solidarities of progressive forces that include ‘whites’, African Americans, black people on the African continent against totalitarianism, segregation and imperialism are not a new phenomenon as these were constructively used throughout the twentieth century.

## **Contradictions of racist capitalism and the formerly colonised East**

The paradox of the Post-1989 Era is that countries that were traditionally non-racist at a structural/policy level and non-imperialist such as Russia and China embarked on

economic structural reforms which saw them embracing capitalism in one form or another. That adoption of capitalism inevitably immersed them into the racial and economic dynamics that were traditionally and typically associated with Western “White Power”. Andrews (2018: 51) bemoans that before 1989 Black radical movements placed faith in communist countries, but with the ‘demise’ of communism China and Russia retreated into the neo-colonial global order. A clear example is how China and Russia with veto powers in the Security Council no longer exercise the same type of interest in the liberation of Africa as they exhibited during the Cold War era. In spite of China’s “peaceful rise” in the global economic order, the country vigorously competes for resources and markets in the capitalist market economy (Moyo 2012), and its culture and race has incidentally received considerable recognition, acceptance and valorisation from the hierarchical racist order. The Chinese are now synonymous with Whiteness in spite of their history of having been previously colonised. Andrews (2018: 57) bluntly criticises China of “wholehearted embrace of the Western economic and colonial model.”

In spite of insistence that China is a socialist nation guided by Marxist philosophy (Jinping), there is again acknowledgement that the economic principles that the country has adopted are inherently those of “state-capitalism” (Moyo 2012). Speaking at the 12th group study session of the Political Bureau of the 18th CPC Central Committee Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated the need to strengthen China’s “cultural soft power” in order to realise Centenary Goals and “the Chinese Dream of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation”. This simply means that the country organises its society within a centralised command structure, while it concurrently competes within the global markets and respecting the terms and principles governing global capitalist markets. The significance of the proper balancing of a free market economy on one hand, and a strong and firm governance system on the other hand, is not lost to the Chinese. Theoretically, there is no room and space for the excessive interference of the market on political governance spaces, or vice versa. China’s President Xi Jinping socio-economic policy expects the market to play its role as “the ‘invisible’ hand”, with government as “the ‘visible’ hand”. These two “hands” complement and coordinate each other “to promote sustained and sound social and economic development.” This is “socialism with Chinese characteristics” or “the sinicization of Marxism” typical of a “socialist market economy” (Jinping 2014).

Abrasive critics of the Chinese system view it as now embedded within, and a continuation of, the rapacious capitalist system that has disempowered some global regions such as Africa and South America. Hence, Chinese socio-economic efforts are intractably intertwined with the old structures of Eurocentric hegemonic colonialism, neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism (Andrews 2018). Sugar-coating the system as a socialist market economy is simply diversionary, yet the market and economic principles are the same insidious age old ones.

## Soft power and China-Africa relations

The Chinese government especially under the leadership of Xi Jinping has adopted the concept of “cultural soft power” in both its international diplomatic relations with other countries, and local issues concerning its hegemonic rule on the domestic front. Political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr first propounded the soft power theory as a progressive approach to international relations. Advising on a state’s management of global politics, Nye (2004: 5) explains that there is an “indirect way to get what you want” without resorting to “tangible threats or payoffs”. Soft power is alternatively called “the second face of power” as opposed to aggression or coercion as a means of achieving desired objectives. In international relations, this soft power entails a country’s ability to benevolently co-opt and influence the preferences of other countries (Nye 2004: 5). Soft power is intricately related to a country’s intangible resources such as its culture, political values and foreign policies (Nye 2004: 11). The dual nature of China’s use of soft power is both outward focused (its relations with other countries and other peoples) and inward looking (nation-building and consensus building based on embracing Chinese people’s values and traditions). Culture based Chinese soft power’s discursive structure contains propaganda elements targeted at both its internal and external subjects of interactions (Riva 2017: 97-100; Zhang 2017; Yao 2015; Cao 2011). Moving away from the commandist style of orthodox Marxism, the Chinese government is using a much more seductive and less authoritarian tone to inspire Chinese citizens with new sense of pride in their traditional heritage and personhood in order to promote a Chinese Dream. The state is trying to build “a moderately prosperous society” that provides a “common spiritual home for the Chinese people”, while “enhancing the country’s cultural soft power” (Jinping 2014). The recuperation of Chinese cultural identity and confidence from the debilitating experiences of colonialism and stifling orthodox communism is paramount (Han 2017: Riva 2017: 97). However, on the downside an obsession with “Chineseness” has led to relative “cultural essentialism” among some people, a “sinocentrism” which “draws an imaginary boundary between China and the rest of the world”. According to Chow (2000: 5)

Everything Chinese... is fantasized as somehow better – longer in existence, more intelligent, more scientific, more valuable, and ultimately beyond comparison. The historically conditioned paranoid reaction to the West, then easily flips over and turns into a narcissistic, megalomania affirmation of China; past victimization under Western imperialism and the need for national ‘self-strengthening’ in an earlier era, likewise, flip over and turn into fascistic arrogance and self-aggrandizement.

Of course, the Chinese government has not shown this blatant arrogance in its dealings, but ordinary people seem to have taken up that attitude as attested by cases selected for discussion here. Notwithstanding despising the West, there have been an equally disconcerting denigration of other formerly colonised peoples such as the Africans.

## **Media, permanent education sites and public opinion formation**

Popular media and mediatized public events, personalities and statements are critical instruments in the process of public opinion formation. Ordinary people form opinion and attitudes toward other people and phenomenon using information and images they derive from public media. Museums, exhibitions, fairs, global sporting events and the popular media in general serve the role of socializing and educating the public. For example, 19th century Europeans and Americans racist attitudes were largely informed by the popular press and the public exhibitions/fairs held in Europe and America (Lindfors 1999). This is because media representations of an event or place have got wider ramifications on how it is eventually perceived by the general public. Peasants, working class and elites alike variously used prejudiced information from public sources. These public sources are not confined to formal institutions such as schools, universities and academies (Gramsci 1971; William 1967; Giroux 2004). They are diverse, virtual and pervasive. They include popular media (advertising, television, film, the internet, video games, the popular press and visual cultural performances of all kinds), exhibitions, films, political rhetoric and other cultural narrative texts. This is the ubiquitous public pedagogy Raymond Williams (1967) aptly called “permanent education”. It is not limited to “conscious” social spaces alone. The porous but multifarious dominant sites diffuse diverse forms of pedagogical address to put into play a limited range of identities, ideologies, and subject positions that both reinforce neoliberal social relations and undermine the capacity for democratic politics (Giroux 2004: 107). In view of these wide-ranging sites of education, critical scholars must be mindful of all cultural activities and productions, their processes of signification, and implications for humanization and democracy. Scholarship embedded in critical and decolonized Cultural Studies and African Studies monitors and makes necessary committed intervention in response to insidious sites of cultural education (Zezeza 1997; Bourdieu 2008). Scholars must not just study the popular sites of mediation for their own sake, but strategically influence these to promote social transformation. Such scholarship with political agency is necessary especially now when substantial numbers of academic publications are not read at all except by reviewers and referees (Tomaselli 2020).

The symbolic and semantic ‘facts’ produced in permanent education sites do not always serve the best interests of a democratic humane society. In fact, fallacious statements

which wittingly or unwittingly serve the interests of an elite controlled hegemonic project are (re)produced to maintain the status quo. Words and images are (re)produced to unleash “symbolic violence” on both their producers and recipients. Indeed, systemic and symbolic violence spares no one, including both perpetrators and victims (Fanon 2008; Giroux 2004; Gramsci 1971; Williams 1967). Advocating for a committed Cultural Studies, Raymond Williams (1967: 15-16) writes

What [permanent education] valuably stresses is the educational force of our whole social and cultural experience. It is therefore concerned, not only with continuing education, of a formal or informal kind, but with that the whole environment, its institutions and relationships, actively and profoundly teaches... [It is also] the field in which our ideas of the world, of ourselves and our possibilities, are most widely and most powerfully formed and disseminated. To work for the recovery of control in this field is then, under any pressures, a priority.

Texts, mediated performative acts and spectacles given attention to here are examples of sites of permanent education. The world's elite own and control dominant cultural industries in the service of producing a public cultural sphere in which dominant ideas, attitudes and values circulate. The dominant social class ‘manufacture’ public opinion using media to propagate preferred ideas and attitudes that valorize their being, while condescending on ‘subordinate’ classes and races. Media are used for strategic social engineering and control, hence creating the power-knowledge matrix. The elites champion production of public opinion not as the narrow and limited expression of their class interests but ostensibly as the universal “revelation of the general interest and common good” (Bourdieu 2008: 61). Through repetition, systematic and systemic reproduction they eventually normalize and naturalise their engineered ideas and attitudes about the economy and social relations. The attitudes and ideas are infused with the façade of matter-of-fact, elevated to common sense, and ultimately appear as indisputable fact. They become a pseudo-scientific reality in and by themselves. The permanent education and information sites are responsive to the preferences of the dominant socio-cultural, economic and political system. Hence, epistemic vigilance is in the public interest in order to develop a wholesome society. An ambitious, courageous and committed social science can go beyond just raising alarm through striving to overturn the debilitating system that denies people equality and dignity, and suggest alternative systems based on social justice and equality (Andrews 2018).

## Critical scholarship as public duty against racism

The watchdog and transformative role of the critical academic is ensured where there are no restrictions to the free exercise of scholarship or the free exchange of information between intellectuals and society. Academic freedom is a precondition for epistemic vigilance and socially engaged scholarship. Where it is denied there must be boldness to demand it. Fredrich August von Hayek (2006: 338) aptly notes the need for vigilance against censoring and restricting political and economic interests in academic institutions, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Vigilance and critical scholarly commit to advance the high ideals of humanism in a free environment, apart from what Antonio Gramsci calls “intellectual-moral orientation”. There are ingrained virtues in a scholarship that is a weapon in the struggle for freedom, decolonisation, human rights and human advancement (Mkandawire 2005; Zeleza 1997: 2005). This is a public duty. Those who access public funds for their scholarly endeavours have a comparatively higher obligation to that public duty. They must not suffer any moral ambiguity about whom they serve; their work and their knowledge must be unquestionably committed to the public good, advancing justice and freedom (Bourdieu 2008: 380-381). Hence, it is expected that current social scientists possess intellectual moral aptitude to reproach neoliberal policies that cause social ills, and at best struggle for the overturning of systems and institutions that perpetuate injustices.

Decolonial epistemologies of vigilance, resistance and transformation take the responsibilities of reflexively announcing their intentions in the fight against crippling hegemonies and rankings of human cultural knowledge and existence. The decolonial project continues beyond the fight against formal colonialism; it is a struggle that transcends particular spatio-historic contexts and limitations. In this struggle, questioned are assumptions of the superiority of Eurocentric thought over other peoples’ knowledge and being. Eurocentricism is the ideological and cultural chauvinism of white Westerners (Euro-Americans) about their self-ascribed superiority over other peoples of the world (Kho 2014). The racist epistemic system is unrelenting in producing demeaning knowledge against people of African descent. Its academes valorise Eurocentric knowledge and denigrate other forms of knowing. A serious example is how Bruce Gilley’s controversial article blatantly calls for the physical recolonization of Africa. He avers that colonialism was “a general rule both objectively beneficial and subjectively legitimate in most of the places where it was found” (2017: 1). Gilley is conveniently blind to neo-imperialism’s subversions and destabilisation of ‘postcolonial’ Africa, nor the harm caused by international financial institutions. This infamous article raised intense furore, leading to its removal from the journal’s website and half of the journal’s 30-member editorial board resigning.



While decolonial scholarship guards against epistemologies that demean other forms of thought and existence, this paper also investigates whether some popular Chinese cultural texts signify an equally racist Sinocentrism. The West colonised countries in the global East, India and China included. Just like with Africans, Westerners created a hegemony of knowledge about the people in the east (Said 1978). In Eurocentric epistemology and popular imagination Asiatic peoples precolonial culture and achievements were/are better than Africans' but inferior to those of European descent (Kho 2014). This paper hence problematises whether race-related incidents emanating from China are proof of the Chinese's internalisation and reproduction of European hierarchical racism embedded in a racist capitalist system.

Cultural bigotry or epistemological ethnocentrism as defined by Mudimbe (1988: 15) expounds "the belief that scientifically there is nothing to be learned from 'them' unless it is already 'ours' or comes from 'us'." A formidable group of anticolonial and decolonial thinkers from Africa and the diaspora emerged in the twentieth century (Fanon 1967, 2008; Rodney 1983; Malcolm X; Cabral 1979; wa Thiong'o 1986), and the intellectual genealogy persists into the twenty-first century (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Mutsvairo 2018). Thinkers of colour have never lacked allies from across the racial divide, hence "blackness" is a geospatial category that transcends physical colour. Africa's epistemic vigilance, resistance and transformative urgency against dehumanising and restrictive global hegemonic forces is not a racialised or ethnicised effort. It is deracialised and de-ethnicised thus some exponents to this movement are Caucasian scholars based in the world Western metropolises (Fabian 2005; Willems 2014). Social movements in support of black people and the marginalised are vibrant. It is not unusual to find a "White" person who claims to be "black" as a way of advancing social justice and a common humanity. The multiracial #BlackLivesMatter movement easily comes to mind.

The decolonial epistemic turn against engineered racial bigotry straddles all fields of study (Zezeza 1997; Ntarangwi et al 2005; Willems 2014; Mutsvairo 2018; Moyo and Mutsvairo 2018; Chasi 2018; Chasi and Rodney-Gumede 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Quite often intelligentsia of African descent reclaim their humanity through validating and legitimising the knowledge systems of their own communities and people.

## **Racial Crisis at the Royal Metropolitan Centre as a permanent education site**

Popular culture avails the lives of celebrities as public spectacle mediated through mass media. Such spectacles legitimise the privileged lives of the rich so that ordinary people emulate them, or they signify the greed and debauchery of the wealth that some politically conscious groups resist and condemn. Thus, the mediation of the lives and activities of celebrities is a contested terrain, existing in the domain of permanent

education sites. Celebrities come in different guises ranging from narcissistic self-performers like the Kardashians, artists, sportspersons, politicians and activists, and members of royal families. The celebrities assume a public function for various reasons. Politicians and members of royal families are thrust in the public gaze largely because they have ways of accessing public funds. This justifies the public interest in their public and private lives. For the purposes of this study, British royal members Prince Harry and his wife Meghan Markle's widely publicised withdrawal from some forms of royal duties is critical in that it dominated public media in January 2020, and its coverage raised racial undertones. Meghan has black lineage.

The couple was supposed to embody post-racial Britain, symbolising a new era of enlightenment, but all regressed as they became a disconcerting site of race contestations (Saleem 2020). Critics alleged historical institutional racism that the British royalty and Empire always represented and presided over had returned to haunt them from within nucleus family (Hirsch 2020: Saleem 2020). The chickens had come home to roost. Analytical hard news, feature story and opinion articles were published instantly in mainstream newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *New York Times*. This study's selection of the contemporary British monarchy is not only opportune, but symbolic, metaphorical and literal at the same time in the manner it accentuates published allegations of how the monarchy is embroiled in, interfaces with, and reproduces systemic racism. Shown already is how the British Empire and institutional racism are nearly synonymous, stemming from the emergence of racially exclusionary European nation-state. When Meghan and Harry decided to "carve out a progressive new role" within the royal family, "step back as 'senior' members, and work to become financially independent", race immediately came to the fore. Afua Hirsch's (2020) article in the *New York Times* shows that racism is so endemic and ubiquitous that it does not spare elites of African descent even when they belong to the British royalty itself. The system has ways of reminding such elites where they belong in the racialized hierarchy of neoliberal structures. It can be uncouth, low-life white racists caricaturing the Obamas through tasteless hateful right-wing jibes in spite of the Obamas' achievements. It can be a vicious media and tabloid journalism hounding British Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, ostensibly because of the latter's black lineage. The media apparently takes its cue from an equally racist British Prime Minister

whose track record includes overtly racist statements, some of which would make even Donald Trump blush, a Brixton project linked to native nationalism and a desire to rid Britain of large numbers of immigrants, and an ever thickening loom of imperial nostalgia (Hirsch 2020).

The crisis of neo-liberal capitalism sees a clash of racialised classes especially

in Euro-American metropolises. The worst financial crisis since the Great Depression aggravates social inequalities leading to resentment against migrants in most Euro-American capitals. Brexit in some ways is a manifestation of racism, as the British retreat from a globalising world. Hence Satnam Virdeea and Brendan McGeever (2018) posit the English want to insulate themselves in a world that is “no longer recognizably “British”. The Brexit vote translates into “a politicization of Englishness” and resentment of migrant foreigners who “lower standards” and exacerbate violent crime. There are insinuations that some members of the royal family did not kindly welcome Meghan due to her class and race background. Apparently, Princess Michael of Kent wore [HYPERLINK “https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/princess-apologizes-after-wearing-brooch-deemed-racist-lunch-meghan-markle-n832211”](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/princess-apologizes-after-wearing-brooch-deemed-racist-lunch-meghan-markle-n832211) \t “\_blank” an openly racist brooch in Meghan’s company (Hirsch 2020). A catalogue of the various prejudices that coalesced around Meghan include media’s reference to her “exotic” DNA, associating her with mass murder and terrorism, and comparing her newborn baby to a chimpanzee. The media allegedly used racial stereotypes against Meghan for acts that attracted praise when white royals performed them (Hirsch 2020).

All thoughtful articles implicate British media’s racist attack’s on Meghan, but also find a way of noting the racism is in sync with the legacy of the nation-state and Empire. In an introspective article, a white journalist Ella Alexander (2020) squarely blames the racist British tabloids that continued in over-drive even after the resignation of Meghan and Harry from royal duties:

The headlines are apocalyptic - “Queen’s fury at Megxit”, “Meghan Markle and Prince Harry resign from the royal family leaving a trail of destruction” and “Queen ‘deeply upset’ at Harry and Meghan’s Royal exit sparking ‘civil war’”. The screeching hatred from today’s British tabloids following [HYPERLINK “https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/culture/culture-news/a30445448/meghan-harry-duke-duchess-sussex-step-down-as-senior-royals/”](https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/culture/culture-news/a30445448/meghan-harry-duke-duchess-sussex-step-down-as-senior-royals/) \t “\_blank” the announcement that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex are stepping down from their roles as senior royals reflects the way they have written about the couple for the past 12 months - with deep judgement, vitriol and righteous indignation, all mired with thinly veiled racism.

The most insensitive media racial slur is probably when in May 2019 after the birth of Archie, Meghan and Harry’s son, BBC radio host Danny Baker tweeted a picture of the couple holding hands with a chimpanzee. The caption on the picture was “Royal baby leaves hospital” (Alexander 2020). The unrepentant Baker and his sympathisers, blinded by centuries of white privilege, thought his critics over the incident took political

correctness too far! (Mos-Shogbamimu 2019).

Contemporary incidences reveal institutional racism whose links are traceable to the colonial doctrine of white supremacy. These include “policies of recruiting people from the Caribbean and Africa into low-paid work and then discriminating against them in education and housing” (Alexander 2020), and the Windrush scandal that has seen the cruel deportation of Black British subjects who have lived in the country for several generations (Segalov 2018).

## The ‘beautiful game’ and ugly performances of racism

The Brazilian legend Pele popularised the description of football as “the beautiful game”. Sport is not mere entertainment, but a site for unity and education for people from diverse origins and backgrounds. Critically, sport divides in as much it unites. With reference to football, Pannenberg (2010) submits that it is a charged political and ideological structure where power and identity battles are fought both on the surface and through subtexts. In essence, sport can be an arena of ‘inter-cultural struggle participating in the reproduction of boundary demarcations on the basis of factors such as inter-ethnicity, religion or nationality’ (Ben-Porat 2001). This explains why sporting events especially soccer, are often fraught with aggravated attacks on other people’s personhood (Ncube and Mhiripiri 2020). An apt example could be the tragic 1 February 2012 Port Said massacre in Egypt when Al-Masry Ultras ambushed visiting Al-Ahly Ultras with deadly weapons resulting in deaths and severe injuries. Sporting authorities often prohibit unauthorised public displays and political expression at organised sports arena. Intended and unintended racial slurs in the form of utterances or performances still appear in sports journalism and sections of fandom. Recorded cases show that sportsperson are usually the victims of such denigrating and stereotyping. Sports journalists especially broadcasters of live matches are opinion leaders who frame and shape multitude fan-audiences’ opinions in real instantaneous sporting time. Broadcasts are nearly subliminal as audiences take statements as informed ‘facts’ that accompany their entertainment, unless really grossly stated. Shrouded in the cacophony of live entertainment, audiences take commentaries as subtexts that they subconsciously absorb unless their denotative intention is blatant. A critical assessment of sport journalism is necessary to bring vigilance against unethical pronouncements.

James Yeku (2018) analysed for *Aljazeera* “the kind of language white pundits use during FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games for years”. He concludes white pundits have fascination with the black body, which they ridicule as a sign of “raw racism” and “discursive violence”. Football commentators and broadcasters evoke associative images of “animality” and “physicality” with black athletes, insinuating they lack strategic training, thinking or creativity in their exertions as compared to white or Asian sportspersons.

Tropes of black people's primordial physicality proliferate in commentaries at mega-sporting events, justifying their marginalisation as not quite accomplished participants in not only world sporting but also other global socio-economic spheres. Black people based in the diaspora are not spared in the stereotyping of the black peoples of the world. During the course of the 2018 FIFA World Cup held in Russia, James Yeku raised alarm on racism in the media's description of black sportspersons. British businessperson and reality TV star Alan Sugar's tweet about the Senegalese football team at the 2018 FIFA World Cup condescendingly visualised professional Senegalese footballers as hawkers of sunglasses on beaches. When confronted, Sugar and his sympathisers perceived the tweet a "joke". Critical decolonial discourse guards steadfastly against such 'seeming' innocuous sick jokes for their real dehumanising intent.

Again, when the Senegalese football team defeated Poland 2-1, *NBC Sport* published an online article which pronounced Senegalese "pace and physicality" and no other cognitive attributes. Stereotyping exoticises the African subject, shrouding him or her in mystique that marks him or her "not as *a thinking subject and individual innovator in his and her own right*, but as a bearer of prescribed and homogenized cultural signs and meanings" (Fisher 2005: 235 - *emphasis mine*). This was the problem with Negritude as espoused in the past, notwithstanding its contributions towards black cultural pride.

Emphasis on Senegalese players' physicality as an 'attribute' is farcical especially when referees penalise them for committing fouls. Senegal was the first team in FIFA World Cup history to get eliminated from the tournament after the application of the rule where in the event of a tie on all aspects, the team with fewer foul offences progresses to the next prestigious stage. Referees' perceptions about African players, which they bring forth before the tournament starts due to the influences of pervasive "permanent education", might most probably interfere with the referees judgement when faced with 'inherently' *physical* black players!

Seemingly ingratiating comparisons to animals is also suspicious. After scoring a goal Nigeria's Ahmed Musa is described as a "gazelle" to symbolise his 'pace' and "grace". Truly, the description can figuratively capture the beautiful effortlessness of his execution. However, Yeku admonishes bluntly: "Drawing parallels between black people/Africans and animals has a very long and racist history and it has to stop".

Due to the frequency of racist slurs about black players at different tournaments, New York based writer and producer Rose Eveleth (2018) came up with a *World Cup bad announcer Bingo* in the run up to the FIFA 2018 World Cup competition held in Russia. Emulating Issa Rae, Eveleth proclaims who she supports in the 2018 tournament: "I'm rooting for everybody black". She declares that American broadcasters are annoying when they talk about black players and African teams. Annoyance caused her to compile a table of 25 thoughts on *World Cup bad announcer Bingo*.

(Source: Eveleth 2018).

European teams with a large cast of black players such as France in both 2014 and 2018 World tournaments are not spared the racial stereotypes. Using a Barthesian approach, Yeku concludes dominant football commentary at global tournaments is embedded in a speech system that promotes racial bias. If not disputed this language becomes hegemonic and normalises indignities. Racially biased language operates as “discursive violence” traceable to colonial-era racism.

## Incidents of racism in the EPL

European football leagues continue to witness cases of racism in stadia. In the English Premier League (EPL) - probably the most popular global sporting spectacle - racism manifests more openly among sections of the spectators inside stadia. The majority of fan racial attacks are against footballers from rival teams. In the last quarter of 2019 alone headlines hogged the media, indicative of the disturbing frequency of racism. Some of the EPL black footballers victimised in the last quarter of 2019 include Rudiger of Chelsea FC, Fred of Manchester United and Marvellous Nakamba of Aston Villa. Besides the usual hateful jibes at opposition team players, Nakamba's case is unique. His own team's supporters inadvertently abused him in a video posted on social media. Ironically, while celebrating the player, the supporters reproduced racially offensive and derogatory lyrics. Stereotypical myths are circulated as harmless banter in spite of their insidious intent and origins. Hegemonic socialisation made fans see no harm in chanting: “Marvelous Nakamba / His dad's a rasta/ McGinn's his master/ His cock's fucking massive”. McGinn is Nakamba's white team-mate. Aston Villa legend Stan Collymore immediately condemned the lyrics on Twitter: “This is racism. Nothing more, nothing less. Over to @AVFCOfficial.” The club similarly condemned the racist supporters and threatened to get them arrested.

One article with the following intriguing title evaluates how rampant are racist attacks among the supporters of the EPL teams: “More fans of *this* football club have been arrested for racism than any other” (Selby 2019 – italics added). The article is educative about the English legal system and how it regulates against hate crimes of all sorts. Under the Equality Act of 2010 football clubs as service providers bear the responsibility to ensure that stadia are safe places for all types of people regardless of race, creed, gender, etc.

While condemning a racist incident that occurred during a high profile derby match between Manchester City FC and Manchester United FC, Piara Powar, executive director of Fare network, an organisation against discrimination in football, made connections between reckless racist statements top political leaders make and how football fans then “mimic’ and ‘legitimise’ these in stadia. Powar outlined:

”There is a contagion... This is happening everywhere unquestionably because of a few things. One of those is mimicry – people are seeing others doing it and they think that they can follow and it’s legitimate to do it. I think focusing on an individual is a good way to make that individual accountable, but sometimes we need to look wider than that and frame people as a collective”.

Speaking on Sky TV after the Manchester derby during which a fan appeared on TV to have made monkey calls at the black Manchester United player Fred, former player now football analyst Gary Neville blamed politicians for legitimising racism. He made disturbing connections between Boris Johnson, the British Prime Minister’s ‘ultra nationalist rhetoric on immigration during election campaigning, with the rise of incidents of racism in British society and sport. “You are watching the prime minister’s debate where he is talking about migration to this country and people having to have certain levels. It fuels it all the time,” Neville noted. “It has got worse over the last few years in this country and not just in football” (Walker 2019). Traditionally, politicians are regarded as intellectual, cultural and moral leaders. It is therefore dangerous for social harmony when such leaders create a socio-cultural climate where racism appears acceptable.

## **Footballer, organic intellectual and spokesperson on race**

The high incidents of racism in the EPL have led to the emergence of footballer ‘activists’ who condemn the practice. Every footballer is literally a champion against racism as all footballers participate in the Kick It Out campaign intended to stamp out racism. Nonetheless, Raheem Sterling’s outspokenness on express condemnation of racism on several occasions, sometimes when the race attacks are targeted at other black players and not necessarily at himself, has earned him the title “de facto spokesman for black footballers”. At only 24 years old, BBC described him as “an unofficial spokesman for a generation of footballers on race, class, society and the media”, and “the most important sportsperson in Britain right now”. In 2019 he was recipient of the BT Sport Industry Award for his stance against racism. Craig Mitch the host of England’s YouTube channel ingratiatingly likened Sterling to Muhammad Ali the legendary USA boxer and civil rights activist who was also a follower of Malcolm X. Mitch testified: “Any creed or colour can look at (Sterling) as an inspiration. And that’s the highest act a human can perform: inspire. He’s one of the top role models we have right now - not only in sport but in popular culture.” Notwithstanding these accolades, retired England and Liverpool football star John Barnes posed a pertinent challenge for Sterling to become a broad-based activist against racism and not just be confined to the footballing world. Speaking on the 5 Live panel John Barnes makes a critical observations on race, class and activism:

”[Sterling’s] started the debate about the influence the media has on perceptions of black players but rather than talking about millionaire footballers who get racially abused, I’d like him to - because he’s got that voice and people are listening to him - to talk about the black community in general.... I think now footballers should... talk about the wider issues that really affect the black community in the UK who are disenfranchised, disempowered, whose kids are giving up hope because they are not given an education or social opportunities... The way of tackling (racism) is to stop talking about getting more black coaches or black people in positions of power, and to start changing the perceptions we have of the average black man in the street, not black superstar footballers, or Barack Obama, or Beyonce”.

The outspokenness of footballers like Sterling has compelled the EPL to take measures to curb racism, augmenting the efforts of initiatives such as Kick It Out. Bigoted fans are banned from stadia, or alternatively they are named, shamed and prosecuted in line with English anti-discrimination laws.

## **Positive role of permanent education sites**

The article analyses public performances, articulations and other signification of content that connote or denote racism, and ascertain their implications in a globalising world. Audiences receive such signification and interpret variously. Whether the content influences receivers to become racists, or it invokes public outrage is not fully established through empirical means in this study. However, what is noticeable are the measures that are taken to curb racism. Campaigns remain optimistic endeavours that planned interventions can positively influence the public against prejudices. Again, other researches provide empirical details on the prevalence of racism amongst football fans who attend matches in stadia, and posit that positive influences lead to positive behavioural and attitudinal outcomes. Structured interventions are therefore premised on the belief in causes and effects. For instance, deterrents of manifestations of racism are extolled as effective, hence the justification of campaigns such as Kick It Out, and punitive measures such as banning from stadia against culprits or arrests for breaching laws on discrimination. Football clubs condemn, disown and reject racist fans as a “backward” minority fringe who do not represent the teams’ values that the majority of the fans share and practise. Similarly, efforts that influence and cultivate tolerance are celebrated and publicised. Cases in point are positive exceptional performances of sportspersons of colour that influence club fan bases to appreciate the humanity of the



sportsperson. Ironically, Ala' Alrababa'h, William Marble, Salma Mousa, and Alexandra Siegel (2019) associate a sportsperson's excellence with the reduction of racism in the area where the club is supported. The Liverpool FC fan chants eulogising Egyptian footballer Mo Salah inspired Alrababa'h et al's study. After a spell of extraordinary goal scoring Liverpool fans sang heart-warming chants that gave the impression, sport has the potential to fight off racism and Islamophobia. A popular chant at Liverpool FC's Anfield stadium goes: "Mo Sa-la-la-la-lah, Mo Sa-la-la-la-lah, If he's good enough for you, he's good enough for me. If he scores another few then I'll be Muslim too. If he's good enough for you, he's good enough for me. He's sitting in the mosque, that's where I wanna be." (Alrababa'h et al 2019).

Unfortunately, the upsurge of racism in European football as a whole in 2019 stirred pessimistic conclusion with some conceding losing the fight. The problem of racism in all English leagues is so serious that a documentary film *Game of Shame* has been produced to highlight the scourge. It documents black players' reservations about the sports authorities' commitment to weed out racism. Instead of empathising with victims, at times there are defences, denials, or outright blaming of victims for provoking fans' racist rantings! Numerous attestations to soaring racism in the game and confessions that sanity might be losing the fight against racial bigotry certainly forebodes worse. However, the majority of fans will provide the panacea especially if they stand together and weed out primitive elements amongst them. The player solidarity against fan vulgarity displayed in a top flight Bundesliga match between Bayern Munich and Hoffenheim on 29 February 2020 could be decisively employed when fans racially attack players. The players aimlessly passed each other the ball without intention to score. Such interventions compel fans that they stand to directly lose the beauty of the sport.

## **Mediatisation of cases that sparked allegations of Chinese racism**

In October 2017 the Hubei Provincial Museum in China removed an exhibition that juxtaposed photographs of animals with portraits of black Africans. The exhibition sparked complaints of racism after more than 141 000 visitors had viewed them. The exhibition was removed "to show respect for African concerns", but not before the curator tried to defend it. According to Wang Yuejun the curator, in Chinese culture comparing people to animals is an innocent act since zodiac signs identify people with animals depending on their year of birth. He also said the target audience for the exhibition was mainly Chinese, but accepted the images offended their "African friends" (Haas 2017). A story in *The Guardian* explains how the exhibit titled "This is Africa" first drew public protest from Nigerian Instagram user Edward E. Duke who asked in a post why the museum "put pictures of a particular race next to wild animals." Journalist Benjamin Haas (2017) notes that "racial sensitivities are often muddled in China", and

that “China is rife with examples of tone deafness to race”, such that “cultural stereotypes dominate Chinese popular discourse on the (African) continent”. China’s multi-purpose micro-messaging, social media and mobile payment application, *WeChat*, was forced in the same week of the Hubei debacle to apologise after its software used the insulting N-word to translate a Chinese phrase that generally means “black foreigner”.

In 2016 a laundry detergent television advert featured a black man smeared with paint getting cleansed in a washing machine resulting in him becoming a light-skinned Asian man. There was again an outrage against the racial insensitivity. The BBC quotes the owner of the pernicious Qiaobi laundry detergent saying he did not know much about the offensive advertisement, and strangely, that “he did not realise it was racist until it was pointed out to him”! (Tsoi et al 2016). Tsoi et al (2016) list other examples of racist advertisements and they conclude these are effects of Chinese socialisation into the racist European colonial order, although the majority of Chinese people want a non-racial equal society.

Socially responsible Chinese scholars have condemned reprehensible xenophobic online and offline activities by fringe Chinese groups against African immigrants (Liu and Deng 2020). While conducting ethnographic research on intermarriages between Chinese and Africans in Guangzhou, Liu and Deng discovered a xenophobic website on the dominant Chinese microblogging Chinese social media platform Weibo. The Weibo account named “Black Issues in China” dissuades Chinese men and women from getting into romantic and sexual relations with Africans. It blames Africans for the spread of HIV. This manifestation of pathological cyber-nationalism has unfortunately gone on without censure from the Chinese government. The latter paradoxically wields a strong control over the use of internet by its people over areas it deems retrogressive to its philosophy.

All these cases circulated on permanent education sites whose influence is unimaginable. Hubei Provincial museum is one of the most prominent museums in China, and it enjoys immense national government patronage. In 2017 the museum entertained close to two million visitors, attracting eminent visitors like President Xi Jinping and India’s Prime Minister Narandra Modi in April 2018.

By 2018 *WeChat* became one of the world’s largest standalone mobile apps with over one billion active users (902 million daily active users) and Weibo is the dominant Chinese microblogging social media platform. Just like the Hubei Provincial museum, this is a permanent education site whose power to influence opinions and attitudes is immense, especially within the Chinese ubiquitous public sphere. Chinese cultural institutions thus have an ethico-political responsibility to practice thorough due diligence before publishing sensitive racial materials. Admittedly, the Chinese government of Xi Jinping espouses friendly relations with other countries. In spite of China’s diplomatic soft power, immediate censure of transgression of its cultural affiliates are important. The state’s inability to censure its own wayward people and institutions has caused observant

Chinese scholars to criticise government of being complicit and tolerant of racism against Africans in China (Liu and Deng 2020). Africanist scholarship must not shy from condemning manifestations of racism amongst the Chinese. The decolonial project spares no one in its quest to change the world order. Decolonisation is a disruptive historical process in which critical scholars and activists discern manifestations of racist neoliberalism. The historical form, content and intent of the racist neoliberal system and its colonial vestiges or epistemic groundings must be eradicated without fear or favour (Fanon 2008: 2).

## Conclusion

An intersectional critical race theoretical approach allows for analytical tools drawn from diverse Art, Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines to identify and explain the existence of racism in the era when legally enforced racism is no longer a reality. Colour blind racism remains a strategic tool of orthodox racism that has its roots in colonialism (Collins 2013: Hall 1997). Racism inflicts psychological, cultural, and physical violence but it is better confronted and fought when both victims and perpetrators “understand the logic of how it works” (Jhally 1997). This can only come with a clear comprehension of the discursive, symbolic, and metaphoric significance of racist content (Hall 1997).

Permanent education sites carry both damaging and liberating content with potential to influence mass audiences’ attitudes and behaviour. Committed social scientists must create synergies with progressive activists in permanent education sites such as social media, popular journalism, sports and museums in the relentless promotion of consciousness against racism and its institutional structures. The synergies established between academia and other permanent sites of education are a normative political necessity in producing social justice. A transactional pedagogue must emerge between scholars and other actors in permanent education sites. Information and a humanist radical consciousness arising from cross fertilization of experiences and ideas is indispensable in the decolonial and deracialized struggles. Africanist intellectuals should ideally act as articulate informants and ‘organic intellectuals’ that theorise the interactions adopted by a community within itself and with ‘outsiders’. They play a public watchdog, whistle-blowing and transformation role to ensure the humanizing and democratization of global and local communities. Permanent education sites inclusive of social media are proving to be extremely useful in recording insidious materials published about Africans and other people. They are also sites for contestation over such toxic materials. Ease of access and reduced barriers to entry make these sites convenient instruments in the epistemic struggle against institutional racist capitalism. Academics should therefore monitor social media for harmful publications, and promptly respond to these. The cases discussed in this paper reveal that some social media participants raised alarm on publications denigrating

Africans. Public condemnation of expressions and manifestations of racism resulted in public apologies, denials, retractions and the pulling down of offensive publications and exhibitions. That is not adequate without the total overturning of the racist capitalist system and its institutional legacies founded in racist colonialism. Decolonial thinkers across races and geopolitical spaces must reclaim their moral responsibility and struggle for genuine transformation. The term 'organic intellectual' (Gramsci 1971) has a normative predicated on the advancement of the best interests of their communities. Such thinkers are located and embedded in the communities they live and work in as such. Such individuals are critical components of the community and the agents of radical education in a hegemonic structure. Gramsci's (1971:350) insight on educative culture is that "[e]very relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship". This implies that education is a cultural pedagogical practice that takes place across multiple sites as it signals how, within diverse contexts, education makes us both subjects of and subject to relations of power (1971: 350). Cultural politics scholar Henry Giroux (2004: 114,138) further explains Gramsci's conception of education as a system which "assigns critical meaning to action, connects understanding with engagement, and links engagement with the hope of democratic transformation". Educative culture stretches across formal schooling institutions. It is a precondition for producing subjects able to create their own histories within diverse global economies of power and politics. Critically cognizant African scholars act as articulate agents in their communities strategically positioned to communicate with both 'insiders' (majority marginalized Africans of color) and 'outsiders' (visiting NGOs, scholars and researchers, development agencies, film makers, journalists and other producers in distributors of sites of permanent education). "Blackness" now assumes a far broader classification inclusive of all oppressed marginalised peoples and social movements. The new black is a social movement straddling physical race; it is a way of thinking. Whilst heterogeneous in racial composition, the committed pan African scholarship is demonstrating a homogenous consciousness that locates it as a concerted radical program informed with organic synthetic studies. Unity of purpose amongst progressive forces is crucial at a time when myopic nationalists are the contemporary vanguard for a racist capitalist neoliberal order (Virdee and McGeever 2018). Africanist organic intellectuals and think-tanks unapologetically insist on what anthropologist Jay Ruby (1992) has termed "speaking for, speaking about, speaking with or speaking alongside" those historically negatively 'othered': supporting and fighting alongside the people in global struggles for socio-economic and cultural parity and justice, especially with regard to local people's traumatic encounters with (post)modernity in the racialised globalised context. Analytical journalistic articles cited in this paper show that it is possible to take academia to popular permanent education sites. There, narratives are published in accessible language, and this is helpful if social scientists remain cognizant that most purely academic articles are reaching fewer audiences, and even fewer are cited within academia itself (Tomaselli 2020).

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