"A GREAT TREE HAS FALLEN": COMMUNITY, SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY AND AFRICAN EDUCATION

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Abstract

In African communities, the spiritual connections to the land and the Indigenous wisdom used to nurture it have been subjugated by Western development and the Eurocentric knowledges that buttress it. The Indigenous frameworks which inform the daily life of communities as they interact with their environments, have largely been replaced by Western scientific discourses which frame the individual as the primary social unit and which commodify the environment for consumption. This article examines how it may be possible to re-imagine the community in relationship with its environments, especially as it pertains to education in African contexts. In this process, community participation is a necessity and cannot be a sort of superficial bandage solution, but must involve the interrogation of the larger structures and discourses that underpin development and education in Africa. Development and education must meet the needs of the communities in a holistic way; not only in the daily physical sense, but also in terms of spiritual connections, knowledge production, and the valuing of history. This article takes up the example of carbon credit projects, especially those of community forests in Africa, as an example of the way that development in Africa has broken communities and distanced African Indigenous peoples from their sacred knowledge of the land. The article explores what this commodification means for African education and how a critical pedagogy based on Indigenous knowledges might be used to resist and disrupt Western educational discourses.

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Introduction

In some Ghanaian communities, when an elder dies the community is informed through a phrase that connects the elder to nature, "A great tree has fallen" (Dei, 1994). Much like the loss of an elder who is the keeper of vast wisdom and knowledge, as well as a physical link to the spiritual elements of nature, another great tree has fallen. In African communities, the spiritual connections to the land and the wisdom used to nurture it have been subjugated by Western development and the Eurocentric knowledges that buttress it. The Indigenous frameworks, which inform the daily life of communities as they interact with each other and with their environments, were largely replaced by Western discourses which frame the individual as the primary social unit and which commodify the natural environment, divorcing the community from the intimate relationships that have sustained it. As communities struggle and slip further into poverty, Western development looks to "community participation" and "participatory development" as a solution for failed aid. Instead of examining the frameworks, the discourses, and the power dynamics at play both within and external to the communities, Western development seeks out piecemeal practices and individual voices to justify their programs. Instead of bringing transformation, community participation becomes a "Trojan Horse" to hide the same Western colonial discourses of oppression and domination that were already there.

The goal of this article, then, is to examine what can be done to re-imagine the community in relationship with its environments, to see African communities in intimate spiritual relationships with the land that sustains them. Through the examination of Indigenous knowledges and epistemological frameworks, especially in terms of Indigenous spirituality, this article works towards resistance of dominant Eurocentric discourses that dominate development work in Africa, particularly in the realm of education. The use of "community participation" or even "Indigenous knowledges" cannot be a sort of superficial bandage solution, but must involve the interrogation of the larger structures and discourses that underpin development and education in Africa. Development and education must meet the needs of the communities; not only in the daily, physical sense but also in terms of spiritual connections, knowledge production and the valuing of history. That is, in a very holistic sense.

As part of this holistic undertaking, the natural environment must be conceived of as a vital and necessary part of community (Berry, 1996). The question then becomes: If we are to conceive of Indigenous spirituality and its connection to the environment as central to ideas of Indigenous community life, what are the implications for schooling in Africa? Further, how can concepts of Indigenous ecology and concepts of the environment be used to resist dominant development discourses in Africa? How can students be taught such embodied and active knowledges in school settings? How is this accomplished without romanticizing a static past or putting the image of the "noble savage" on a pedestal? How can issues of environment and community be used to disrupt dominant schooling practices in a transformative way? How do issues of the environment connect to Indigenous knowledges as well as issues surrounding justice, language and anti-colonial resistance? These are the questions that this article seeks to engage.

While this article seeks to engage with the broad ideas of discursive power, transformative pedagogy and spiritual ecology, it also explores practical examples and possible solutions. There is a need to lay out what is meant by Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous spirituality, as they are broad, potentially contentious, and not easily definable terms which have been appropriated and used in various ways for multiple purposes. From the groundwork of Indigenous spirituality springs the care and relationship with the environment, a sort of

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Indigenous spiritual ecology that was replaced by Western discourses which see land and the environment as commodities to be used and exploited. This article takes up the example of carbon credit projects, especially those of community forests, in Africa that seek to develop communities and economies by valuing natural materials not only as real commodities but also as virtual "carbon stocks" to be bought and sold (Purdon, 2010a). These projects remove any spiritual value of the land, with regard only given for economic value, serving to further distance communities from intimate relationships with their environments. Finally, this article explores what this commodification means for African education and how a critical pedagogy based on Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies might be used to resist and disrupt these Western development discourses.

Personal Location and Theoretical Frameworks
I arrive at this topic from a problematic position. As a white male who has grown up in North America, I carry with me the unavoidable trappings of white privilege which are steeped in and (re)produce the very systems of colonization, domination and exploitation which I am seeking to disrupt. Also, as a North American Christian I am aware of my position within systems of religious power that demonized Indigenous spirituality as pagan, barbaric and heathen and continues to buttress and support the subjugation of racialized peoples and their knowledge systems. Both of these positions implicate me in ways I can and cannot see; as Bourdieu postulates, "being born in a social world, we accept a whole range of postulates, axioms, which go without saying and require no inculcating" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 168). While I cannot deny the implications of my whiteness nor hope to ever truly leave them behind, I am acutely aware of the need for dominant bodies to speak out and expose their implications within systems of dominance, in an effort to rupture the discourses that allow oppression to continue unchecked (Howard, 2006).

The sense of struggle that is born of these multiple positions, of both "within and against" dominant discourses, also brings with it a sense of caution – that the positions I cannot uncover or elucidate are the ones I cannot let go of and are, subsequently, the most insidious. This article demands an interrogation of relationships to power and views the connection between knowledge and action as very personal; this in turn demands recognition of my own implications and entanglement with this work. All of this is important; as Giroux (2001) demonstrates, "The mind must deal with its own thought process just as much as the material it works on" (p. 35). All scholarship is subjective and personal and comes from a specific location, stated or not; to think otherwise is foolishness. It is this personal connection to our work that helps move it from the strictly theoretical realm (the "ivory tower" ideal of knowledge for the sake of knowledge) to an active, political knowledge which engages actively with lived realities.

It is this explicitly political goal that this article seeks to engage with through the use of an anti-colonial discursive framework, with the primary goal of centering Indigenous knowledges, voices, and epistemologies in an attempt to disrupt and rupture dominant, colonial, Eurocentric discourses which seek to act as universal norms. The colonial is conceived of not simply in its historical or physical manifestations, nor merely as "foreign" or "alien," but, rather, as anything imposed or dominating (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). The anti-colonial framework gives discursive agency residence in the people, their communities and their lived experiences, valuing this embodied knowledge in ways that challenge the conceptualization of knowledge as

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singular and universal, looking instead to multiple knowledges and ways of knowing rooted in locations, people, experiences and communities.

The use of a discursive framework allows for fluidity and flexibility, for a process of dialogue rather than rigid rules by which to adhere (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Giroux (2001) positions the dialectal mode of thinking as one that "stresses the historical, relational, and normative dimensions of social inquiry and knowledge" (p. 34). Within this dialectical process, multiple ways of knowing are valued, exclusive notions of belonging and difference are challenged, and relationships are valued. The anti-colonial discursive recognizes how oppressions intersect along lines of race, gender, ability, sexuality, class, age, and culture (Dei, 2006). Within the discursive process, relationships and connections are sought out and valued in recognizance that no practice or person works in isolation. Within these relationships, power can be interrogated, exclusions challenged and silences rectified. These processes, relationships, and knowledges are explicitly political in nature, being ingrained and developed in the day to day existences of the oppressed. This article seeks to explore these relationships, especially in regards to schooling in Africa. Schooling is not separate from the societies it works within nor from the individuals who inhabit its processes. There are very real, day-to-day implications and consequences that stem from education and the power relationships at play within it.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is also important to this paper, examining how dominant bodies and groups impose their worldviews or habitus on others. In this, the dominated accept and legitimate their condition of dominance and are complicit in the domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). This complicity works to blur the simplistic lines between oppressor and oppressed, recognizing that "we are all part of the relationship between oppression and resistance" (Nabavi, 2006). This is not a dismissal of these categories altogether but recognition of the complex relationships and power dynamics that work within and between these categories, eschewing simple binaries. Symbolic violence occurs when intentions are left uninterrogated or misrecognized. I also recognize that in my position as an academic there is complicity; the symbolic violence that occurs within education is often left uninterrogated in favour of discourses that see education as a key tool in achievement, equality, and development, rather than the mechanism of oppression that it often is. As academics we are most intensely subjected to this symbolic violence in education and still complicit in its continuance (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The goal of this article is to work towards the recognition and resistance of this symbolic violence in education with the hope of transformation.

Indigenous Knowledge and Spirituality

Central to this article and an anti-colonial discursive framework is an understanding of Indigenous knowledges. It is a contentious term which has been operationalized in various ways and which houses a wide array of possibilities and, as such, is quite difficult to define. In mobilizing the term 'Indigenous' we need to avoid the essentialist tendency to see all Indigenous cultures as similar while still striving to see the connections between communities and understanding the worldwide oppression of Indigenous peoples (Semali & Kinchloe, 1999). Speaking on Indigenous knowledges in the African context is certainly different than speaking of it in North American or Australian contexts but there are similarities and connections that can be useful in marshalling resources for decolonization. Not only is there the inherent problems of constructing such an "umbrella" term, but also the challenge in even confining a term such as "Indigenous knowledges" to a set definition. As Battiste and Henderson (2000) argue, not only is

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the need for definitions based in a Eurocentric need for containment and reification but, "the quest for universal definitions ignores the diversity of the people of the earth and their views of themselves" (p. 36-37). There needs to be room in any understanding of Indigenous knowledges for movement and for connections, rather than rigid lines; as Davies (1994) points out, "at each arrival at a definition, we begin a new analysis, a new departure, a new interrogation of meaning, new contradictions" (p. 5).

As Agrawal (1995) argues, too often Indigenous knowledges were used in ways that sought to reify it for display in academies, museums or other institutions. Instead, Indigenous knowledges must be seen as active and embodied, refusing to be contained either in institutions or in a sort of "blind romanticism" of the past. These knowledges are based in personal experience, locations and communities. Battiste and Henderson (2000) explain, "Indigenous knowledge is so much a part of clan, band, or community, or even the individual, that it cannot be separated from the bearer to be codified into a definition. Those who have the knowledge use it routinely, perhaps every day, and because of this, it becomes something that is a part of them and unidentifiable except in personal context" (p. 36). In refusing a rigid definition, there is the recognition that for too long Indigenous bodies and knowledges have been defined by others for the purpose of control, confinement, and domination. The goal then is a sort of "working definition" in which there is room for fluidity and change.

As Dei, Hall & Rosenberg (2000) emphasize, Indigenous knowledge is intricately tied to the land and to the lived experiences of the people on that land and, as Agrawal (1995) notes, "Because indigenous knowledge is generated in the immediate context of the livelihoods of people, it is a dynamic entity that undergoes constant modifications as the needs of the communities change" (p. 429). It is not a traditional knowledge reified in the past but an active and changing body of knowledge, constantly adapting and growing in response to challenges and intersecting knowledges. Indigenous knowledges are not isolated from other forms of knowledge but recognize the necessary intersections and diversity of knowledges and viewpoints. There is, in this recognition, an affirmation of the necessary diversity of social realities that are subject to diverse and often oppositional viewpoints (Dei, Hall & Rosenburg, 2000).

Intricately tied to Indigenous knowledges is a sense of spirituality which is grounded in relationships to individuals, communities, environments and larger frameworks. Spirituality is also a problematic term because either it is inherently imagined as part of organized religion or, in more recent times, it has come to be imagined in ways that position it as a solely private endeavour focused on "feel good" moments. This endeavour has all too often simply appropriated various Indigenous practices and beliefs and muddled them together, often to legitimize privatization, Western individualism and white privilege (York, 2001; Schneiders, 2003; Brown Spencer, 2006). Too often spirituality has focused on the individual's journey into themselves, ignoring the vast realm of connections around them and playing into the very Western liberalism and individualism that spirituality often purports to challenge (Ritskes, 2011a). Instead, Indigenous spirituality is grounded in relationships. It breaks down the "hegemony of me" (Dei, 2002a) and is built through "the engagement of society, culture and nature interrelations" (p. 5). Dei (2002b) provides this comprehensive starting point in saying that spirituality is "The building and rebuilding of the human spirit to embrace the gentleness, humility, and compassion in learning about others and ourselves. It is about a powerful force beyond the immediate and more physically observable culture, one that directs social action

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beyond the perspective of human control in terms of what can be counted, evaluated, and physically grasped" (p. 38).

Indigenous spirituality is not a negation of the self but a refusal to engage in the self/other dichotomy in which it is possible to conceive of the self as autonomous from the community, from the environment, or from the larger economic, political, or cultural frameworks that shape our personal experiences; as Kinchloe (2006) states, "A human being simply can't exist outside the inscription of community with its processes of relationship, differentiation, interaction, and subjectivity" (p. 192). This spirituality is explicitly political and part of the knowledge production processes. It seeks to encourage and establish connections of interdependence among individuals and groups, valuing individual and communal experiences and knowledges and how they interact with each other (Ritskes, 2011a). Spirituality is wrapped up in the community, "In the African world view, social life was dominated by spirituality" (Wangoola, 2000, p. 265).

Community and Indigenous Ecology
It is impossible to divorce terms from their historical contexts and, in the case of "community," it is necessary to interrogate how it has been used in the past, especially how it has been used in Western development discourses. Gujit and Shah (1998) show how "community" became the by-word of Western development in the 1990's. Within this movement was the push to add more local voices to projects in an attempt to gain local support and to create local stakeholders who had a larger investment in the development projects. Unfortunately, this push for community participation was a "Trojan Horse" of sorts, a rubberstamp to hide the same Western, Eurocentric frameworks of development under the guise of "community participation." In these Western frameworks, the Indigenous community is perceived as dichotomous to Western civilization and the use of "community participation" only works to further "other" local populations. Andrea Smith (2006) explains this logic of "othering" as one of the three pillars of white supremacy, wherein the West needs to define itself as superior through the construction of an oppositional "other" who is exotic and inferior. Not only has this, but the use of "community" been used to obscure power relations within and among communities. Gujit and Shah (1998) explain that communities were too often naively seen as "a harmonious and internally equitable collective" (p. 1) which obscured the voices of the powerless. Daniels (2009) echoes this sentiment in her work in South Africa which explores how the use of "community" works to obscure the contributions of women, especially in spheres beyond the family or the home.

Through Western development discourses, community was seen as static and bounded, projecting a unified voice which could be discovered and tapped into to create a more equitable development project and, ultimately, a more equitable society. Unfortunately, like so many other projects which attempt to include Indigenous perspectives, the focus of community participation is on instituting individual, isolated practices rather than challenging or overhauling the underlying cognitive frameworks, which constitute the Eurocentric discourses that underpin development theory. As Dudgeon & Berkes (2003) note, "development science remains the final arbiter" (p. 77). Sardar (1999) drives home this point when he argues that "Development continues to mean what it has always meant: a standard by which the West measures the non-West" (p. 49). The result is fragmentary and disempowering for Indigenous communities. Not only this, but, as Young (1990) points out, this static perception of community privileges unity rather than diversity in an attempt to "boil down" the Indigenous perspective to one, easily transferable opinion. Smith (1999) shows how this is accomplished through the search for an "authentic" indigenous voice or perspective:

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> [Debates about authentic voices or authentic communities] are designed to fragment and marginalize those who speak for, or in support of, indigenous issues. They frequently have the effect also of silencing and making invisible the presence of other groups within the indigenous society like women, the urban non-status tribal person and those whose ancestry or 'blood quantum' is 'too white'... At the heart of such a view of authenticity is a belief that indigenous cultures cannot change, cannot recreate themselves and still claim to be indigenous. Nor can they be complicated, internally diverse or contradictory. Only the West has that privilege. (p. 72-74)

This idea of the community as static, contained, and somehow "authentic" fails to portray the power of the fluid, dynamic Indigenous community and falls prey to what Agrawal (1995) fears, the undermining of the power that Indigenous people have over their knowledge and ultimately, their development and education.

Instead, African Indigenous communities need to be understood in fluid and dynamic ways that focus on interdependence, diversity, and relationships rather than confinement and borders. Dei (1993) states it in this way, "Everything is either relative to everything else or every person is related to every other being" (p. 30). Knowledge in these contexts does not belong to individuals who can own it but it is produced and shared in collaborative processes. As Dei (2005) points out, there is the need to value "diversity in unity" in the effort to gain a collective knowledge and dialogue, rather than privilege the false unity that is seen in current development and nationalistic discourses. In an attempt to conceptualize this fluidity and diversity, many have fallen on Benedict Anderson's (1983) "imagined communities" but, as Dei & Asgharzadeh (2001) aptly point out, despite the fluidity and diversity contained with 'community' it is not merely an 'imagined' or relative term but it is real in its meaning and evocation and has profound material consequences for the Indigenous and formerly colonized peoples in Africa.

The relationships encompassed within African Indigenous communities extend beyond the connections with individuals and into the environment and beyond, a viewpoint which is intricately wrapped up in Indigenous spirituality. Wangoola (2000) states that, "Community means the living, the unborn, the dead, and nature as a whole" (p. 271). Within African Indigenous knowledges and spirituality, there is an understanding of humans as not apart from nor above nature but as part of an intricate, reciprocal relationship that is vital to maintain. Kesby (2003) explains the connection between the spiritual and the physical in this way, "The physical aspect of daily human existence is assumed to be a kind of 'skin' in the surface of the metaphysical. The two are in intimate and inseparable contact, and the detailed events of the physical are interpreted by way of the underpinning connections of the metaphysical" (p. 214). Mazama (2002) states, "There can be no dichotomy between so-called natural and supernatural worlds" (p. 221). There is an intimate connection between the land and the people, captured by their everyday interactions as through breath itself. There are many aspects of this connection that vary according to location and community. Dei (1993) explores how land is seen as a bridge between the living and the dead ancestors in particular communities in Ghana. Fairhead & Leach (1997) look at how communities in Guinea are connected to 'founding trees', which are linked to past leaders and act as markers for the establishment of contact with the land spirits, as well as how forest sacred spaces can be gendered. Wane (2000) looks at how social relations are

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constituted through the land, harvest and food preparation in Kenyan communities. Whatever the situation, it is in these personal connections that the dynamism of African Indigenous spirituality is realized.

From this understanding of the intimate relationship between African Indigenous communities, spirituality, and nature, stems the concept of 'sacred ecology' as part of a broader Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Berkes (2008) describes TEK as "a cumulative body of knowledge, practice and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment" (p.7). A sacred ecology recognizes the spirituality imbued in these connections to the environment and with each other. In a sacred ecology, the earth and nature are honored and respected as life-givers, as equal partners in a reciprocal relationship; as Appiah-Opuku & Hyma (1999) note, "failure to honor the spirit of the earth or acknowledge its magnanimity in this way, may provoke anger and vengeance in the form of natural calamities such as famine, excessive rainfall, or death" (p.16). This knowledge has developed over long periods of time, through observation of natural patterns, and through experience. It imbues ecological protection with both spiritual and practical implications; as Kwashirai (1999) shows in the case of the Ndebele in Zimbabwe, they turned Mukute groves into shrines because they contained valuable spring water and must be protected.

Many accounts of TEK and spiritual ecology have fallen prey to romanticized notions of the "ecologically noble savage" (Buege, 1996; Grande, 1999), a fetishisation of Indigenous knowledge that only serves to reproduce and enhance the primitiveness and exoticism of the "Other." Within this framework of sacred ecology, there needs to be a willingness to interrogate what undergirds such romanticism and a willingness to question how Indigenous spirituality can exist in relation to other forms of knowledge; as Dei (2000) states, Indigenous knowledges cannot afford to sit in pristine fashion outside of other knowledges, it is meant to be used and to "get its hands dirty." There is also the need to recognize, as Brown (2003) points out, that the meanings of sacred ecology are contested even within communities and are deeply embedded, making it difficult to unravel the implications and complexities of the ideas. There must be a commitment to a diversity of ideas and a willingness to not settle for simplistic answers. In this way, spiritual ecology is both a complex framework that guides decision making processes as well as actions and choices made by Indigenous communities in how they interact with their environment.

Colonization and the Environment

Unfortunately, in many parts of Africa today, the core tenets of spiritual ecology are not being practiced or recognized. These Indigenous knowledges continue to be demonized as unscientific, primitive, folklore, old wives tales and foolishness; tossed aside and confined within the past or outside the status quo as an unreliable relic in favour of Western scientific knowledge. As stated earlier in this article, colonization is not something that ended with the political independence of Africa, primarily during the 1950's, but something that continues in Africa today. While some have termed these continued relationships of domination as "neo-colonialism," this ignores how, despite what I call "flag independence" which gestures to the superficial nature of this independence, colonial relationships between Western nations and Africa continued unabated. The break between the colonial and the neo-colonial is an artificial one that masks the historical roots and trajectory of current oppression in Africa. Despite national independence, colonization in many other forms continues and Fanon (1963) is clear that colonization of the mind is the

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more dangerous and lasting form of colonization that underpins the more physical manifestations. Smith (1999) further describes the insidiousness of colonization, disconnecting people from "their histories, their landscapes, their languages, their social relations and their own ways of thinking, feeling and interacting with the world" (p. 28). Even in the realm of ecology and sustainable development, which Western science has tried so hard to posit as value-free and as "pure science," Harvey (1993) notes that "Ecological arguments are never socially neutral" (p.25). Through this lens, the colonization continues today through the degradation and devaluing of African Indigenous frameworks which guided how communities interacted with each other and with their landscapes.

The sacred ecology of Indigenous knowledges was and is replaced with a mechanistic, capitalist based model which views nature as something to be subdued and used for gain. Sale (1995), in her history of the Luddites, traces the rise of this capitalistic model within Western societies, and the subsequent breakdown of community, back to the Industrial Revolution:

> All that community implies – self-sufficiency, mutual aid, morality in the marketplace, stubborn tradition, regulation by custom, organic knowledge instead of mechanistic science – had to be steadily and systematically disrupted and displaced. All the practices that kept the individual from becoming a consumer had to be done away with so that the cogs and wheels of an unfettered machine called 'the economy' could operate without interference (p. 38).

With the breakdown of communities and the rise of the economy also came a reliance on Western rational science. This mechanistic, reductionist, consumptive worldview saw the environment as a machine with many parts, as isolated and efficient, and as inherently rational and discoverable through Western science, which was seen as inherently value-free. Nature was seen as "a collection of commodities which had no value until humans make use of them" (Dudgeon & Berkes, 2003; p. 83). It is this model that shaped Europe in the modern era and this model that was the social backing for European colonialism in Africa. They justified it through the need to expand markets, bring reason and civilization to "uncivilized" peoples, and to find more raw resources to feed the economic machine.

In Africa, as in other parts of the "developing" world, Western science worked to dismiss and devalue Indigenous sciences and knowledges. As Dei (2006) notes, "Colonialism reinforces exclusive notions of belonging, difference and superiority....It also establishes sustainable hierarchies and systems of power. Colonial images continually uphold the colonizers' sense of reason, authority and control" (p. 3). Western science was held up as rational and incompatible with the superstitions of African Indigenous knowledges. Spirituality was seen in opposition to science and was used to discredit Indigenous knowledges, which were seen as "spiritualism," mythology, or folk tales and thus incompatible with evidence and value-free science. This intellectual colonization and its reliance on Western science are also tied to the rise of Christianity and religion in Africa. As Sarfo-Mensah & Oduro (2010) explore the context of Ghana, they find that religion is used to devalue and discredit local beliefs, subsequently leading to the commodification and degeneration of the local forests. The belief was and is that Africa, mired in its superstitions and backwards ways, was in need of Western science, religion and development. Africa needed saving and this was the "White man's burden." Western science

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continues to demand an either/or approach intended to denigrate Indigenous knowledges, as seen by this statement:

> Today the greatest divide within humanity is not between races, or religions, or even, as widely believed, between literate and illiterate. It is the chasm that separates the scientific from prescientific cultures. Without...natural sciences – physics, chemistry, biology – humans are trapped in a cognitive prison... They invent ingenious speculations and myths about the origin of confining waters, of the sun and the sky and the stars above, and the meaning of their own existence. But they are wrong, because the world is too remote from ordinary experience to be merely imagined. (Wilson, 1998, p. 45)

African Indigenous knowledges were discredited through their willingness to embrace value-laden frameworks; Western science, instead, continued to ignore the reality that no production of knowledge can ever be value-free or devoid of a cultural context. Africa becomes the "pre-scientific," trapped in a cognitive prison, and just plain "wrong." Not only this, but Indigenous knowledges are said to be static, refusing to move out of the antiquated, barbaric past; all this, despite the numerous studies in Africa that demonstrate the adaptability, flexibility and evolution of Indigenous models (Niamer-Fuller, 1998; Scoones, 1999; Marais & Marais, 2007; Sheridan & Nyamweru, 2008).

The movement towards rational Western scientific knowledge and the colonization of Indigenous ecological knowledge separated communities from their relationships to the land and thrust them into commodity based models that ignored the realm of spirituality. It moved the emphasis away from the collective and focused squarely on individual profit. It fragmented the knowledge that intertwined the land, the communities, and spirituality. Not only this but Indigenous individuals and their communities were demonized as ecologically destructive and thus in need of saving from Western science. Indigenous communities were "read" as destructive to the environment, despite their ecologically sustainable and reverent beliefs. Practices such as "slash-and-burn" farming were seen as examples of Indigenous environmental methods, despite their connections to and roots in colonials' presence. Fairhead & Leach (1996) explain how this "reading" of the landscape is important in their study of Kissidougou, Guinea, especially in terms of who has control of resources and ecological frameworks: "The view of Kissidougou's landscape as degraded and degrading has justified state action to take resource control from local inhabitants, and repressive policies to reorient what has been seen as destructive land management" (p.4). Despite the communities' claims, which dispute the governments, they have lost control and connection to their land. Brown (2003) documents a similar pattern and argues that, by reading forests as depleting, governments in Africa were able to wrest control of forest land through a veiled paternalistic rhetoric of helping communities. Similar arguments have been made in the cases of soil erosion in Africa, where poor farmers are blamed for soil erosion to justify close regulation by colonial governments (Anderson, 1984; Millington, 1987; Showers, 1989). The discussions revolving around traditional ecology and discursive frameworks are not merely academic ones; there are very real implications for Indigenous communities.

Carbon Credits in Africa
A recent example of this colonization of Indigenous knowledges and an example of the real implications for African communities can be seen in the carbon credit initiatives begun in Africa.

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Stemming out of the Kyoto Accord, the carbon credit program seeks to aid in the lowering of harmful greenhouse gas emissions into the environment which are the cause of global warming (United States National Academy of Sciences, 2008). Trees, vegetation and soils in forest, agricultural and other terrestrial ecosystems can act as a sort of "carbon stock" in a virtual economy where Western companies can buy these stocks to offset their own carbon emissions, giving companies flexibility in their total greenhouse gas outputs which would normally be capped at a hard limit.

Purdon (2010a) explores some of the current carbon credit projects in Africa which include the building and maintenance of community forests. He shrugs off criticisms of the projects which see them as a form of "CO_2lonialism" (Forsyth & Young, 2007), as well as arguments which are concerned about the displacement of communities, arguing instead that the carbon credit projects allow communities to overcome economy-of-scale and become more influential players in a global market. Purdon (2010a) references the "moral critiques" of such projects and explains that, while sympathetic to such concerns, the potential for economic gain is too much to ignore. He also recognizes that in the current model, "the rights of local and Indigenous groups are currently under-specified" (p. 16), but this does not seem to raise any lasting concern in his evaluation.

The inherent problem with such schemes is their reliance on Western models of development that inherently privilege and aid donors or foreign business more than they aid local communities. These models are built on Western Eurocentric discourses that refuse to view Indigenous knowledges and spirituality as valuable in any way. As an example of this, there was a recent advertisement campaign which highlighted Shawn Burns, CEO of Carbon Credit Corp, which stated that "A tree, until now, was only worth something when it was turned into lumber." The whole premise and language of carbon credits is built around ideas that privilege economy and monetary value with complete disregard for the spiritual value of forests and landscapes to communities. In the Western mechanistic/commodity model, the environment must be turned into resources to be bought and sold, otherwise it is worthless. Purdon (2010a) insists that the 'virtual' nature of the commodification somehow circumvents the need for interrogation but, as Bryant (1998) aptly points out in terms of ecology, "unequal power relations are as likely to be 'inscribed' in the air or water as they are 'embedded' in the land" (p.89). These colonial relationships are very real and there is nothing virtual about the implications of these relationships for Indigenous African communities.

Much like the previous example of how the land in Kissidougou was read, how the land is read in carbon credit projects has very real consequences. Purdon (2010b) explains that, through the Western driven carbon credits program, land was taken away from communities by the government to be used for these community forests. While the communities retained nominal control, the decision-making power was given to Western carbon credit agencies and central governments. Much like Furze, DeLacy & Birkhead (1996) document in the case of protected areas, joint-management did not mean that local communities had final decision making authority or that spiritual connection to these areas were respected. Both the governments and the Western agencies viewed the land as "unused" and thus acceptable to be given to development agencies. It was "bare land" that was not maximizing its economic potential.

Also, these reforestation projects cannot be divorced from the colonial history of Africa that was involved in various "reforestation" projects which, not only were used to bring control over local communities and integrate them into colonial economies, but were also responsible for

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the degradation of local ecological systems. Brown (2003) notes how the commodification of lumber through reforestation, as dictated by Western scientific conservation methods, not only divorced communities from the land but also, through the loss of autonomy over the land and staples such as lumber, the state was given control over local affairs which undermined the communities' ability to extract resources and pursue religious or spiritual practices. Much like current projects, control of traditional lands is being taken away from communities in the name of commerce with a refusal to acknowledge any notions of Indigenous knowledge or sacred ecology. Brown (2003) also notes that past reforestation schemes have "totally altered the landscape in terms of both vista and ecology" (p. 350). Instead of solving problems merely created a new set of ecological problems as non-indigenous species were introduced; the very same species that are used in current reforestation projects. These reforestation projects and their rejection of local communities and their spiritual practices happen despite opposition from communities and despite research that highlights the values of spiritual practices for local conservation. As Sheridan & Nyamweru (2008) note it must be conservation and reforestation on colonial terms.

Purdon (2010b) and others justify these projects through the voices of individuals in the community who approve of them on the basis that they bring in jobs, wages and other economic benefits. This is where Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic violence can be especially useful in making sense of these viewpoints. Bourdieu explains that symbolic violence is enacted when the dominated come to accept their condition of dominance as legitimate (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). They are unable to interrogate their own positioning and become complicit in the systems of dominance. Brown (2003) notes a similar phenomenon in her study of reforestation, where certain elite members of the community endorse the projects, seeking to further their economic gain through them. It is a continuation of traditional colonial frameworks through local proxies, such as government agents or local elites, much like Fieldhouse (1984) notes in his famous study of colonialism. Here we can see a concrete example of how, despite "flag independence," colonialism, its methods, and the logic that underpins it have maintained control. Those complicit in the rejection of Indigenous knowledges hold up Western scientific frameworks and economic reasoning without realizing the colonial power relations that undergird them.

Through projects such as carbon credit reforestation, local populations are controlled and brought under a Western capitalist framework which sees no value in their relationships with the land, divorcing them from their sacred connections and creating a dependency on the marketplace. This is a dependency that forces them to remain in subservient power relationships. This argument is not a rejection of global capitalism or a call to return to subsistence agriculture, but a challenge to interrogate global economic structures that negate and oppress local peoples, their land, and their knowledge of that land.

Implications for African Education

All of this discussion has vast ramifications for African development and the education system as a whole. With the continued colonization of the mind, social relations, knowledge production, and relationships to the environment, what is being taught in African schools is disempowering students by failing to recognize and encourage Indigenous forms of knowing and Indigenous connections to communities and their environments. The breakdown of community relationships is fostered by a Western, Eurocentric focus on individualistic competition and fragmented knowledges, which are devoid of the people's backgrounds, histories, and relationships to other forms of knowledge. Western imperial knowledge has devalued Indigenous ways of knowing

and learning, replacing them with Western models that not only separate individuals from their histories but from their relationship to the land. The breakdown of Indigenous knowledges and communities is directly tied to the ecological degradation and colonialism in Africa; there needs to be a change.

This article, then, is a call for the recognition and valuing of Indigenous knowledges and spirituality in schooling, as well as for curriculum, teachers and resources that recognize the relationships that bind individuals, communities, and their environment together. Through Indigenous knowledges, Western discourses of individualism and commodification can be challenged and resisted in powerful ways. Instead of a disconnected, fragmentary, and mechanistic model of learning, Indigenous knowledges can bring a connected, holistic, fluid and active understanding to knowledge production and learning. Indigenous knowledges recognize the value of multiple ways of knowing and value the personal experiences of the learner, as well as their connections to their environments, histories, families, communities and other frameworks. Dei, Hall & Rosenberg (2000) point out that we are facing a "crisis of knowledge" through the process of globalized commoditisation of knowledge; Indigenous knowledges can be used to resist this.

Dei & Doyle-Wood (2006) argue that Indigenous spirituality cannot simply be an aesthetic undertaking but one of activity and of resistance, a resistance rooted in the daily lives of the learners. Anticolonial writers such as Memmi (1969), Fanon (1963) and Said (1993) emphasize that the colonial powers never "give anything away out of goodwill" (Said, 1993; p. 207) and that the colonial situation can only be broken through sustained resistance. Dei & Asgharzadeh (2001) assert that to emphasize the "Indigenous" is to exist in a state of perpetual confrontation with the colonial order that seeks to negate all forms of opposition. Despite the inherency of resistance within discourses of Indigeneity, there must also be a willingness to interrogate this resistance and recognize the vast complexities involved in these power relationships; as Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) emphasizes in her work, resistance is too often romanticized and enshrined as necessarily beneficial. Giroux (2001) echoes this in realizing that not all oppositional behaviours constitute resistance. In enacting resistance there needs to be careful reflection and interrogation as not to replicate the very dichotomies and systems that Indigenous knowledges are seeking to bring down. All too often the "Indigenous" is set up in a dichotomy with "Western," where the Indigenous is good and the Western is evil. This good versus evil narrative is the very thing that has been co-opted by society to exclude Indigenous spirituality and label it evil, pagan and not relative to modern society. In this dichotomy, the Indigenous is always a return to a romantic, fetishized past, one that remains in stasis and unable to move into the future. This model does a great disservice to the power, adaptability, and active nature of Indigenous ways of knowing.

The resistance that Indigenous spirituality seeks to enact is one that emphasizes the power of creation. It is not simply a reactionary, defensive stance to Western hegemony but a constructive force that speaks through inclusivity and transformation. Through the exploration of community and connection, Indigenous spirituality seeks to empower individuals and groups to enact social change. This resistance is not some vague, universalizing "we are all one" project, but one that willingly and forcefully interrogates difference and dynamics of power. It is the hope that this informed resistance will bring about people who can recognize and identify their lived experiences and how they connect to other's experiences, how they connect to society and communities, and how they fit into the relationships between oppression and resistance.

"A Great Tree Has Fallen": Community, Spiritual Ecology, and African Education

Resistance is embedded in the day-to-day; through gestures, choices and actions, both by individuals and the collective, Indigenous spirituality is able to resist discourses that seek to silence it. It is not some grand, romanticized narrative of resistance that Indigenous spirituality enacts but one that is embodied in the people and their desire to construct something new.

More specifically, in the context of sacred ecology, a critical pedagogy of place is important (Gruenewald, 2003). Bowers (2001) describes this sort of critical pedagogy as one that emphasizes "an explicit understanding of relationships and processes, an embodied knowledge of community relationships and the ecology of place, and an awareness of the layered nature of interdependencies of life-sustaining processes" (p. 152). Beyond this is the need for recognition of the value of spirituality, something that has all too often been dismissed as irrational or of no value in schooling (Shahjahan, 2006). As Appiah-Opuku and Hyma (1999) state it, there is a need for "that which reconnects human beings to the biosphere and its bioregions, incorporating respect and implicit socio-cultural, moral, and spiritual expressions" (p.16).

As Agrawal (1995) and others have pointed out, Indigenous knowledges and sciences are not incompatible with Western science. There is no value in setting up a dichotomy between the two. As Tyler (1993) argues, the goal of a critical pedagogy of place can be to restore or re-establish "an emotional relationship with the natural world, to seek to 'reanimate' our scientific view of the world, and to restore a sense of spiritual stewardship" (p. 7). As noted before, too often when Indigenous knowledges have been brought into education or development discourses, it has been in piecemeal fashion and in ways that still privilege Western science as the creator and arbiter of knowledge. A critical pedagogy of place refuses to leave these power relationships uninterrogated and recognizes the cultural assumptions that divide Western and Indigenous sciences. It looks for ways to value the local, the adaptability of knowledges, and the connections that abound between various forms of knowledge.

There is no formulaic answer to how a critical pedagogy can be implemented. Just as Indigenous knowledges are dependent on place, location and personal experiences, how critical pedagogy is implemented is also dependent on these variables. Still, there are certain values that can be affirmed. Through the breakdown of the teacher/student dichotomy and the unilateral flow of knowledge from the teacher to the student, collaborative learning can be affirmed (Ritskes, 2011a, 2011b). This begins with self-investigation on the part of the teacher or educator. Dei (2000) calls the decolonization project one of self-implication and Howard (2006) emphasizes the importance for educators of voicing one's story of implication in colonial processes. Decolonization begins with decolonization of the self which, as Wane (2006) describes, is much more of a process than an isolated event. Bowers (2001) calls for the teachers to recognize and teach both positive and negative aspects of Western science, allowing room for multiple viewpoints and critical analysis.

A major component of this critical analysis is language; as Bowers (2001) states, "giving students the language that names the relationships and behaviours is the first step toward making the patterns [of colonialism] explicit" (p. 152). This language of difference is also necessary for students to "candidly explore all the emerging contestations, contradictions and ambiguities" (Dei, 2002, p.7) in a classroom setting. Diversity must be valued not only among students but in the experiences and knowledges they bring to the learning experience. Language is also important as it is a transmitter of Indigenous culture and knowledges (wa Thiong'o, 1986). Whether it is oral or written, language is a "critical link to knowledge given to us by our Creator who blessed us with our languages and in them gave us instructions for our development and survival" (Battiste, 1998, p. 17). Bowers (2001) calls languages "storehouses of knowledge of

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the characteristics of local plants and animals, weather patterns, and the integration of ceremonies with the natural cycles within the bioregion" (p.177). In language, the spiritual and the practical realities of a community meet and, through the use of language, power to resist is enabled.

Conclusion

It is impossible to ignore the role that location and culture play in the formation of knowledge and, subsequently, of education; despite the insistence of Western science which still holds tightly to their vapour-like beliefs of neutrality and universal truth. It is this quest for universal objectivity that has pushed spirituality away from the realms of the academy. Despite recent attempts to incorporate spirituality into education, most of these attempts have been plagued by a neoliberal emphasis on the individual and have refused to recognize Indigenous spirituality (Ritskes, 2011a). In Africa, through the continued colonization of Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous spirituality is still often misunderstood and passed off as "voodoo" or backwards folk tradition. It is this colonization of Indigenous knowledges, of the very cultures and grounding of communities themselves, which has left development and education in Africa devoid of real connections to communities and their natural surroundings and unable to live up to its transformational promises. The great tree, representing the intersection of ecology, spirituality, and lived experiences of the people, is cut down.

There are immense challenges in seeking to resist this colonization of the mind through Indigenous knowledges and spirituality and there is no easy, one-size-fits-all answer. There is always a web of power relations and dynamics to navigate, the messy world of reality; as Battiste & Henderson (2000) state, "Indigenous knowledge is the way of living within contexts of flux, paradox, and tension, respecting the pull of dualism and reconciling opposing forces" (p. 42). As difficult as it may seem, engaging with these messy realities and contestations is a necessary task if we are to continue to work for transformation of society into a more equitable place. There must be individuals and communities who willingly step up and claim Indigeneity, breaking free from the material and symbolic violence that has held so many communities for so long.

Finally, this project of resistance must be firmly rooted in the language of hope and creation; as Wane (2008) recognizes, "It is imperative that I stop spending my time critiquing the totalizing forms of western historicism and engage in the discourse of possibility, where the missing voices and knowledges can be heard and validated" (p. 194). The ultimate goal of anti-colonial resistance is the reinvigoration of Indigenous languages and voices and this must be achieved through the act of creation. Creation of new critical pedagogies; creation of spaces where learners are able to challenge and name unequal power relations and seek to forge new, equitable relationships with communities, individual and environments; and creation of empowered communities who, through the application of Indigenous knowledges, recognize the sacred responsibilities to their environment.

<div align="center">References</div>

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