

## **Contributions of Africana Scholars to the Theory of Human Rights in Sociology**

### **Abstract**

*Eurocentrism dominates and distorts human rights discourse as is the case with almost every other topic in sociology. The assumption is that human rights are Western values with the best exemplars of the tradition to be found in western liberal democratic states based on theoretical and legal-philosophical ideas developed by the Enlightenment and by the Western scholars who inherited that tradition. By neglecting other communities of interpretation on the human rights discourse, Eurocentrism contributes to the stunting of social thought the way ethnocentrism usually does. This papyrus departs from the Eurocentric approach by focusing on the profound contributions of people of African descent to the theoretical clarification of human rights issues and to the heroic historical struggles to advance the practice of human rights for all of humanity.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Human Rights; Eurocentrism; W.E.B. Du Bois; Jacques Derrida; Marx; CLR James; Fanon; Rodney; Africana studies; Western feminism; Intersectionality*

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### **I. Introduction**

... one feels how necessary social study is, - how widespread in modern times is our ignorance of social facts and processes. In such matters we still linger in a Middle Age of credulity and superstition. We print in the opening chapters of our children's histories theories of the origin and destiny of races over which the gravest of us must smile; we assume, for instance, elaborate theories of an "Aryan" type of political institution, and then discover in the pits of the South African Basutos as perfect an agora or tungemot as ever existed among Greeks or Germans' (Du Bois 1903, 160).

The Magna Carta (1297) and the American Bill of Rights (1789) were the models for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Much earlier in 1236, however, Mandingo Africans in Mali proclaimed a charter of rights for 'every human being' and not just for 'freemen' as the Eurocentric versions stress (Niane, 2008). And even much earlier, ancient Africans practiced a moral and ethical life guided by the principle of Maat which respected the equal rights of men and women, rich and poor, citizens and strangers alike as recorded in a case in 1786 BCE when a daughter sued her father to restore her property rights (Karenga 2003, 357).

In contrast to the assumption that human rights did not exist in non-western societies (Donnelly 1982; Ake 1987; Taiwo 2010), it has been argued that individual and group rights were observed as inseparable in pre-colonial black Africa (Niane 2008; Pearce 2001; Williams 1987; Azikiwe 1960; Awolowo 1968). In contrast to Eurocentrism, an Africa-centered approach to human rights does not presume the inferiority of Western thought (though error-proneness is ever present in science) the way Eurocentrism proceeds self-assuredly by denigrating Orientalism (Said 1978). Rather, Africana-centricity simply assumes, quite rightly, that when the focus of our study is the human rights struggles of people of African descent, for example, or even if it is the search for a theory of human rights in general, the nature of our subject demands that our theoretical perspective should be Africa-centered or we would be prone to flaws of trans-planted essentialism and internalized racism or snobbery (Asante and Karenga, 2006). No sociological theory of human rights discourse will ever be complete without adequate attention to the contributions, experience, and the peculiar history of people of African descent.

Contrary to the assumption (Turner 1993; Pearce 2001) that sociologists have generally tended to neglect human rights in their theories of the nature of society or abandoned such theoretical concerns to political theorists, philosophers and investigative journalists, sociologists of African descent have, over the ages, made human rights discourse the corner-stone of their social thought implicitly and explicitly. Without the slightest reference to the rich human rights theorizing by people of African descent, Aboriginal scholars, Asian theorists and American Indian Native thinkers, unlike Pearce (2001) who focused on African contributions, Turner (1993) reviewed the works of Marx, Durkheim and Weber and concluded that while Marx wanted to advance the discourse of human rights beyond bourgeois rights to include the rights of the proletariat, Durkheim and Weber ignored human rights issues almost completely by trying to dismiss the Marxist call for a revolutionary transformation of society as the foundation for progress by the human race. Turner was critical of Marx for making the solution to the Jewish question conditional on the solution of the working class problem. Many Africana theorists would also reject Marxism as a Eurocentric paradigm (Asante 2007; Norment 2007). However, most leading critical thinkers of African descent would agree with the emphasis that Marx placed on the need for the revolutionary transformation of society.

To Durkheim (1947), the agitation for a revolutionary enterprise would result in an anomie-prone forced division of labour, a moral project unbecoming of sociologists who should be concerned with what are social facts *sui generis* and not with what ought to be, especially when the attendant anomie would be undesirable in a world in which deviance is both necessary and natural for the survival of the society. To Weber (1947), rational bureaucratic rules and professionally trained officials would provide a level-playing field, despite the tendency to ossify into an iron cage, for all participants in their various social strata and thereby negate the need for revolutionary disruptions of the status-quo internally and internationally, guaranteeing modernization much better than any irrational types of administration could.

Turner (1993) went on to conclude without citing any sociologist of African descent (except Derrida) that what makes human rights necessary is because human beings are frail and in need of protection which attracts collective sympathy for the plight of others, calling on the western liberal state to engage in humanitarian action to safeguard citizens of other countries from human rights violations, as if the western nations are purely human rights havens. In pursuit of this kind of research, quantitative analysis is used to measure the amounts of foreign aid that are given by the various Western countries to see whether they correlate with human rights records in the receiving countries. The results indicate that in many cases, the greater the human rights violations, the greater the amount of foreign (military) aid given to the countries in question (Neumayer 2003; Carey 2007). Some others question whether human rights regimes

are just empty promises (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui 2005) or whether the enforcement of such regimes by the international community signifies a change in the conceptualization of sovereignty (Levy and Sznajder 2006).

Any scholar who is familiar with the work of W.E.B. Du Bois could not start from the flawed thesis that human rights theory is absent from sociology unless sociology is defined narrowly to mean Eurocentric sociology. Du Bois published his doctoral dissertation on *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade* in Harvard University in 1896 while Durkheim was writing the text on *Suicide*. Despite the fact that slavery has since been recognized as a crime against humanity, attempts to theorize human rights in Eurocentric sociology hardly ever mentions slavery the way Du Bois expected. From that historical sociology, he went on to deliver the monumental classic, *The Philadelphia Negro*, which was the first empirical critical sociology of human rights at a time that Durkheim and Weber shied away from both empirical research and scholar-activism against racism, sexism and class exploitation. Along the way, Du Bois brought out such popular theories of human rights as can be found in *Dark Water* and also in *The Souls of Black Folk* before delivering the incredible magisterial volume on *Black Reconstruction in America* – a veritable theory of human rights sociology if ever there was one (Du Bois 1995; 1998; 1920; 1904, 1903b; 1898). Feagin, et al. (2001) concur by highlighting Du Bois as a pioneer liberation sociologist.

Du Bois went beyond setting up the first ever Sociological Research Laboratory to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which continues to organize, litigate, mobilize, educate and advocate across the US in support of human rights issues. The same way that students of African descent are made to read the works of dead white men who had nothing to say about the importance of human rights discourse in sociology, this papyrus suggests that European students would benefit even more when they are required to study the foundational works of Du Bois, among others, especially when they are interested in understanding human rights issues from the perspective of scholar-activists. Sadly, because of the globalization of Eurocentrism, even sociology students in Africa and the Caribbean may never have heard about the crucial contributions of Du Bois to sociological theory in general and to the theory of human rights in particular. Winnant (2000) argues that Du Bois was one of the first to debunk the ‘racist assumptions’ inherent in the field of sociology and Burawoy (2005) acknowledges that what he called public sociology was indeed pioneered by Du Bois as a paradigm for advancing Pan Africanism and anti-racism.

The thesis that African-centered contributions would enrich sociology as a whole is reinforced by the evidence that the successful struggles for human rights that people of African descent have won did not benefit only people of African descent but the whole of humanity, contrary to assumptions of sympathy for the rights of others as the basis of neo-colonialist human rights discourse. Similarly, in all the struggles of people of African descent, they have been supported also by allies who are not ‘black’ just as workers have also been supported by petty bourgeois intellectuals, poor women by middle class women and all women by men and vice versa.

## **II. The Human Race**

One name for another, a part for the whole: the historic violence of Apartheid can always be treated as a metonymy. In its past as well as in its present. By diverse paths (condensation, displacement, expression, or representation), one can always decipher through its singularity so many other kinds of violence going on in the world. At once part,

cause, effect, example, what is happening there translates what is taking place here, always here, wherever one is and wherever one looks; closest to home. Infinite responsibility, therefore, no rest allowed for any form of good conscience (Derrida 1994, xv).

Here Derrida was dedicating his *Specters of Marx* to Chris Hani, the South African hero who was assassinated by a Polish immigrant presumably because he chose to become the Secretary General of the South African Communist Party at a time that Western writers were proclaiming the death of Marxism. Derrida reminds us that the problem of apartheid was not just an isolated problem out there but a problem for us all wherever we may be, 'closest to home', it was not only in the interest of black South Africans that apartheid was ended, it was in the interest of the whole of humanity.

Of course, many sociologists of European descent have made significant contributions to civil rights theorization. For instance, Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1970) made a popular appeal for human rights violations to be treated like crimes because they satisfy all the definitions of criminality in law but continue to be treated as if they were civil wrongs when treated at all. Chomsky (1987) has been at the forefront of advocacy against the human rights violations of US government and corporations at home and around the world in their direct conduct and in their consistent funding of the worst human rights violators. Zygmunt Bauman (1989) theorized the holocaust as a rational bureaucratic exercise consistent with Weberian modernism. And Morrison (2004) has identified the crime of genocide as the companion that criminology forgot.

What is common to all these scholars of European descent is that they belong to a critical tradition that is closer to the critical scholarship privileged in Africana studies but even they remain largely silent on the immense contributions of scholars of African descent to the task at hand. The only exception is Derrida who insists that he is an African because he was born in North Africa. Derrida said repeatedly that his thinking was influenced by his African cultural background. He paid close attention to the contributions of especially South Africans to the struggle for human rights. His essay in which he expressed admiration for Mandela because of Mandela's admiration for justice (not admiration for the law, as Derrida put it) is often cited but without any acknowledgement that he wrote it as an African contribution to the critique of Eurocentrism (Derrida 1987; Agozino 2011).

However, perhaps due to the complex deconstruction approach of Derrida, even after reading his *Specters of Marx*, what remains relatively unknown is the fact that Marx developed his thought as a careful student of the struggles of people of African descent and their allies against slavery. To Marx (1954), the victory over the enslavement of Africans was the paradigm for the predicted victory of the proletariat over wage slavery, not the other way around. He wrote repeatedly that without an end to the enslavement of labor in black skin, there would be no end to the enslavement of labor in white skin, women and children in Europe. Marx used the 48-hour week to illustrate this thesis by emphasizing that that struggle was not won until African slavery was abolished.

It is a scandal in sociological theory that people have read the dozens upon dozens of references to the Negro, to slavery, to the human race and to the African (even to nigger and to kaffir just once each) in *Das Kapital* without even a passing acknowledgement of the influence of the Africana struggles against injustice on the thoughts of Marx who is simply dismissed as another European thinker who influenced Black Marxists and whose ideas are now dead anyway. The practical critique states that those countries that followed the ideology of Marxism in Eastern Europe, Asia, South America and in Africa did not excel in respect for individual human rights while white workers' unions discriminated against black workers. But

then Marx was said to have protested repeatedly in his old age saying, 'All I know is that I am not a Marxist', following the misapplication of his theory by those who preferred militarism among the French 'Marxists' (Engels 1890). When sociologists ask what human rights struggles have already done for sociological theory, sooner or later they will stumble upon the importance of Africa and the contributions of African thinkers to human rights discourse (Agozino, 2014).

Du Bois took Marx seriously especially in *Black Reconstruction in America* in which he analyzed the conditions of the White Planter, the Black Proletariat and the White Proletariat and wondered why the white poor were always easily mobilized by rich whites to serve as the storm troopers against the human rights of their black counterparts when both sectors of the working class could have united to vote working class leaders into office to enact policies in the interest of all the poor people. Du Bois (1998) cited Abraham Lincoln as saying that he proclaimed an end to slavery not because he wanted to end slavery but because he knew that he could not keep the nation united if millions of Americans remained in slavery and with that proclamation came more than 200,000 fighters of African descent who helped to defeat the confederate forces. In spite of the hostility of the poor whites to the black officials elected into office after the American Civil War, and despite dismissive assertions by historians of the day, Du Bois explained that their policies of Black Reconstruction succeeded in founding public schools for all children, black and white. Partly as a result, many more white children were able to access formal education along with black children, segregation and all, demonstrating that human rights benefit all human beings and not only the ones currently excluded.

Jim Crow segregation and apartheid tried to sabotage any progress with lynch mobs but African Americans and their allies battled on mainly non-violently to eventually win desegregation and the protection of their voting rights (Mandela 1994; Wells 1972). The white people who supported the struggles of African Americans were not doing so out of sympathy or as an act of charity but out of the realization that they too would not be truly free if millions of their fellow human beings remained enslaved, terrorized and deprived of opportunities to serve their communities. With the abolition of slavery, millions of African Americans were overnight paid wages for the first time and guess what, they spent those wages in the American economy and turbo-charged the sluggish economy to enable it to take off as an industrial power that slumbered in hundreds of years of chattel slavery. Ditto for the enfranchisement and paid employment of women. In other words, the abolition of slavery benefited the whole of American society and not just African Americans; in fact, African Americans arguably benefitted less from the abolition of slavery than the rich white industrialists who saw slave labor as unfair competition against products from factories where workers earned what Marx called slave wages.

CLR James (1980) provided the unprecedented analysis of the first ever successful human rights revolution that was waged by people of African descent in San Domingo. *The Black Jacobins* is a Marxist analysis of the Haitian revolution by enslaved Africans and how they were able to defeat the invading forces of three European nations in quick succession only to be subjected to economic sabotage and blockade to cripple their aspiration for a nation characterized by racial equality. Eric Williams (1948) published his doctoral dissertation from Oxford University with a convincing thesis that European capitalism was based on the centuries-long enslavement of Africans as Marx argued and not on the mythology of the protestant ethic as Weber had imagined. Frantz Fanon (1963) followed these radical traditions by calling for Europe to pay reparations to Africans and to the other colonized subjects for the crimes against humanity committed by the imperialists who were always talking about human rights while abominating human beings wherever they found them.

Walter Rodney (1972) convincingly demonstrated *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* from the centuries of slavery to the century of colonization and the continuing era of neocolonialism. With specific reference to apartheid South Africa, Harold Wolpe (1972) analyzed how cheap labour and capitalist accumulation in South Africa were engineered through the articulation of race, class and gender relations consistent with the analysis of Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*. Stuart Hall (1980) extended this analysis to show the importance of studying the gender, race and class articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation (similar to, but not identical with, what Crenshaw calls intersectionality, given that intersectionality assumes parts of the streets that lie outside the intersection while articulation assumes that relations are always already being articulated) in societies structured in dominance. To Hall, the theory of articulation would help us to understand the dialectics of human rights struggles better in Europe itself and not just in places like apartheid South Africa. Articulation proves more fruitful than focus on only one of these social relations, race-class-gender, in isolation as if they are ever experienced in isolation from one another. Though different, they are never separate social relations in practice and in theory. Stan Cohen (2001) posed the puzzle, why Western criminology indulges in a culture of silence regarding human rights crimes with the result that a human rights crisis in Palestine hardly receives any mention in huge textbooks.

### **III. Western Feminism and Africana Womanism**

In considering the race-based activities of...early Africana women and countless other unsung Africana heroines, what white feminists have done in reality was to take the lifestyles and techniques of Africana women activists and use them as blueprints for framing their theory. They then proceed to name, define, and legitimize it as the only substantive women's movement. Thus, in defining the feminist and her activity, they are identifying with independent Africana women, women whom they both emulated and envied (Hudson-Weems 2000: 210).

While doubting the compatibility of Marxism and feminism, Western feminists tend to join Marx in expressing skepticism about the abstract formal equality guaranteed by rights discourse under capitalism given the substantive inequality that is engendered by patriarchy (Mackinnon 1983). However, noting the tendency of Marxists to essentialize class analysis and the equal tendency among feminists to prioritize gender analysis, theorists of African descent insist that the protection of human rights, inadequate though they are, is an important part of the struggle for social change in line with critical race-class-gender theory, the need for a revolutionary transformation of the entire society notwithstanding (Crenshaw 1988). Michelle Alexander suggests that it was the day after Martin Luther King Jr. called on activists to see the Civil Rights movement as going beyond the demand for the legislation of political rights and adopt a human rights approach that addresses the rights of all of humanity, especially those of the poor and the colonized, that he was assassinated (Alexander 2010, 245-47).

Western feminists assume that patriarchy is universal contrary to the findings of Africana womanist theorists that patriarchy is a uniquely Eurocentric contraption that was foisted on the rest of the world partially through the centuries of European domination, imperialism and via white supremacist religious doctrines. European feminists used to think that there was something called universal sisterhood based on the assumption that all women were subjected to the oppression of patriarchy irrespective of age, religion, class and race. To their surprise, Africana womanist thinkers have differed by stating that the yearning by European middle class women to be liberated from boring household chores so that they could engage in paid employment outside the home was not the major concern of black women who have labored in the fields outside the home or in the homes of white women for centuries only to return to their own homes to

labor some more for their own families. Ifi Amadiume (1987) argued that some roles that are supposedly only patriarchal in Eurocentric discourse, such as 'male' or 'husband' are played equally well by males and females in some Igbo cultures. Oyeronke Oyewunmi (1997) argued that the concept of woman was invented by European men as a category to be understood only within the patriarchal nuclear family quite unlike the family structure in Yoruba societies. Nkiru Nzegwu (2006) advanced this thesis further by suggesting that gender and patriarchy are far from universal categories because there are societies such as the Igbo of Onitsha where the relationship between men and women was not gendered or patriarchal but was dichotomous and relatively equal until it was distorted by European invasion in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Samora Machel of Mozambique stated that the liberation of women is not an act of charity, the result of compassionate considerations on the part of the men, it is the precondition for the revolution without which all attempts to transform the society with emphasis on human rights and human dignity would flounder (Agozino 1997). However, in accordance with Eurocentrism and white supremacy, white women who struggled for the suffrage often discriminated against black women who wanted to support the struggle precisely because they did not want the struggle for white women's rights to be confused with the struggle for black rights in the minds of white-supremacist men in America. The example of Sojourner Truth is widely known as a black woman who stood up to challenge a white preacher who had told a gathering that equality between men and women was against the ordinance of God and his intention that men should be the leaders who protect women and children. Against attempts by white women to shout her down, she asked the preacher rhetorically, 'Ain't I a Woman?' (Hooks 1981).

The winning of the right to vote by black men in America directly gave poor white men the vote and indirectly gave support to the demand by women to gain the right to vote. However, separatism was the strategy preferred by white workers in trade unionism for long and for white women who, for instance, campaigned against nuclear weapons in Greenham Commons, England, and also protested against men joining the protest because they saw (white) men as part of the problem of militarism (Young 1990). That differs from the holistic strategy of black women who have always welcomed black men and all men and women who would struggle alongside them as allies the way that Harriet Tubman did when she conducted the Underground Railroad to help defeat slavery without saying that it was for the sisters only. Similarly, Angela Davis (1980) cautioned white feminists who agitate for severe penalties for alleged rapists by insisting that the discourse of rape has historically been used by white men as a terroristic strategy for the control of black masculinity regardless of the guilt or innocence of the alleged rapists. For instance, the death penalty for rape was abolished after it was shown in the case of *Furman v. Georgia* that nearly 90% of the men executed for rape in the US from the 1930s to the 1970s were black men and there was no way black men were responsible for that many rapes in America, a society structured in race-class-gender dominance (Agozino 2003).

Just as black women ally with other women on gender struggles while struggling with their allies on issues of racism in anti-sexist organizations, black women tend to ally with black men even more passionately in the struggle against racism even while struggling against the manifestations of sexism in anti-racist organizations. For instance, Michelle Wallace (1990) narrated the struggles in the Black Panther Party by black women who insisted on gender equality in the struggle against racism and imperialism. For that reason, the Black Panther Party has the unique distinction of being perhaps the only political party in America that allowed women unprecedented equal access to leadership positions in the history of political parties in America or anywhere else for that matter in recent history (Brown 1992).

Similarly, Bell Hooks and Cornel West (1991, 124) indicate how tolerant black communities have been regarding homosexuality in a world that is characterized by homophobia. Some of the leading black thinkers of the freedom movement or teachers and choir masters were known to be of a different sexuality but were not hounded out, attacked or killed unlike the tendency in white-supremacist organizations guided by the ideologies of imperialism and patriarchy. For instance, in all the African and Caribbean countries where homosexuality and abortion remain crimes and the death penalty remains an option for murder, none of those countries made such laws but simply maintained the policies that were introduced by European authorities that have since ended such laws in their home countries.

Of course, there remains wounds of prejudice in the black community as in all communities but given the relative lack of power to institutionalize discrimination (with desperation visited more likely against other poor black folk as is the case in any poor community) and given the desperate need to welcome all those who are willing to take the risk of opposing discriminatory practices in societies structured in dominance, black communities are much less prejudiced than they are given credit for. Black thinkers have made a lot more contributions to the struggle for human rights than they are given credit for in sociology. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) illustrates how black feminist thought has helped to transform the whole of sociology by taking seriously the struggles of poor black women who were engaged in the civil rights struggle to end racial segregation while working to clean toilets that were designated 'for whites only', cooking and cleaning for lecherous white men, and resisting sexism in their own homes in ways that enrich sociology by challenging the adversarial Eurocentric paradigm of master narratives in favor of the perspectives of the outsider within, the Afrocentric perspective in a white supremacist world and its academy. Hudson-Weems (2000) prefers the term Africana womanism to black feminism because other animals could be female but only human females could be women.

#### **IV. Africana Studies and Human Rights Sociology**

Obsessive fears of revolts and violence from oppressed inferiors partially account for the "armed siege" and police-state mentality in evidence during the Civil Rights rebellions and the increased practice of incarcerating generations of black and brown males. These fears also contribute to the economic costs of prejudice that result from a dearth of skilled workers and subsequent loss of purchasing power, increased health and social welfare problems, substandard education, maintenance of slums, and problematic international relations with nations of different races and religions (Young 2000, 226).

Unlike most academic disciplines and theoretical paradigms in existence today, Africana Studies or Black Studies is distinguished by the fact that it was students and community activists who rose up during the revolutionary era of the 1960s to demand that the white-supremacist neglect of the immense contributions, history and struggles of people of African descent in academia should be halted in favor of increased Africa-centeredness in curricular, faculty and students. Initially, the demands of the students were rebuffed by Eurocentric administrators and professors who insisted that African people had no history worth studying and that they made no contributions worth recognizing in universities that were supposedly meritocratic. The militant black students insisted that it was a matter of human rights that they and all students who are interested in paradigms, histories and achievements other than, or in addition to, European ones deserved to be given the opportunity to learn. Eventually, university administrators across the US relented and provided funding for programs in Black studies and Africana studies (Asante 2007; Norment 2007; Aldridge and Young 2000; Burgess and Agozino 2011).

If there were programs in Africana Studies in European, Australian, Asian, African and South American universities today the way they exist across many elite US institutions, then the claim that, 'As a general rule, sociology has neglected the empirical issue of human rights and has not developed any general theory of human rights as institutions' (Turner 1993, 489) would be unlikely to be made without challenges from students who are versed in the Africana paradigm. In other words, just as the contributions of people of African descent to the advancement of human rights practices around the world did not benefit only people of African descent, efforts to study and teach the contributions of people of African descent to human rights theory in sociology would benefit all students and not simply students of African descent. As a matter of fact, Africana Studies is found more in predominantly white institutions in the US than in Historically Black Colleges and Universities for funding and practical reasons that this papyrus will not go into.

Africana Studies continues to be practiced as a discipline that sees itself as a continuation of the civil rights revolution from which it emerged and therefore the discipline deserves to be given a central place in any attempts to construct a theory of human rights in sociology instead of being conveniently ignored or resolutely opposed as appears to be the case among Eurocentric sociologists (Asante 2007; Norment 2007; Aldridge and Young 2000). Such a paradigm that is part of the struggle for human rights cannot be neglected in the study of the sociology of human rights especially because the white supremacist attacks against Africana Studies programs and scholarship continue in anti-human rights ways that suggest that they are undeserving of participation in the still white supremacist spaces of academia in the US, Europe, Australia and even more so globally.

## **V. Conclusion**

We must combine our scholarship, the search for a transformationist theoretical paradigm for the twenty-first century, with practical struggles; our theoretical work must be infused with the passion of challenging the sharp inequalities which exist at every level of urban life and society. The pessimism and tendency to retreat into the illusions of liberalism will never permit us to 'fight the power' (Marable 1994).

The African philosophy of non-violent struggles that the great Gandhi (1940) claimed that he learned from the warlike Zulu is increasingly adopted across the world as an effective strategy for advancing human rights. The European paradigm privileges invasions and conquests under the assumption that other cultures are inferior to the European forms and so they must be conquered and subjected to the control of Europeans as part of the efforts to safeguard human rights as values that originated in Europe exclusively. Without denying that European thinkers have made contributions to the discourse of human rights in sociology, the conclusion here is that Europeans do not have a monopoly over such discourse and that even Europeans would benefit from studying the contributions to this discourse from other paradigms just as others have studied European paradigms seriously.

The greatest contribution from the Africana paradigm, second only to the very African philosophy of non-violence, is that human rights discourse is not simply an abstract philosophical or theoretical question for academic exercises but a practical struggle for scholar-activists to engage in within the classroom as well as in the community, written or spoken in action. This is not a prescription for sociologists but a description of how Africana scholars have approached the theorization of human rights as a

discursive practice involving scholarship and activism simultaneously. It is true that not all scholars of African descent live up to this expectation in the Africana paradigm and it is true that many European sociologists approximate it. Just as Africana scholars take European scholars seriously in their research, the conclusion here is that European scholars should begin to take Africana Studies more seriously by, for instance, demanding that programs be established in their universities to specialize in this emergent field, Africana Studies, that was developed by radical students and community activists for the transformation of university education through the continuation of the struggle to end racism, sexism and class exploitation globally.

Taking seriously the perspectives of scholars from histories of active resistance to human rights violations frequently orchestrated by Europeans or their puppet regimes would dictate that sociologists go beyond imagining theories and start conducting activities to make the world a better place because the point of explaining human rights violations is to change them. For instance, European sociologists should join the campaigns to end the racist war on drugs and to hold European countries accountable for the crimes of genocide, slavery and colonialism that they visited on Africans, by demanding that their countries should start paying reparations that would not be dependent on the will of the aid donors but would be set as a percentage of their GDP and paid as a legal obligation in addition to whatever is paid as aid, according to Fanon (1963) and Agozino (2004).

There is no longer any alibi left for why the labor of love from people of African descent will continue to be swept aside, ignored or resisted when there is proof that paying attention to Africana studies would strengthen sociological theory especially when the focus is human rights. Studying Africana contributions to sociology in general and to human rights sociology in particular is not simply a charitable gesture to others from Europeans but a task for all given that human rights violations are to be found everywhere and have repercussions for everyone while the African experience is truly peculiar. Studying the Africana paradigm will also reveal the premium placed on activism as part of any critical scholarship especially when the topic is human rights.

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