ON RELEVANCE, DECOLONISATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY INTELLECTUALS

V. Msila

Thabo Mbeki African School of Public and International Affairs

University of South Africa, Irene Conferencing Centre

Centurion, South Africa

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8875-0644

ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of intellectuals in building and sustaining engaged African universities. These intellectuals have enormous roles in conjuring and nourishing the vision of enhanced, working institutions. As guardians of nationalism and progress, they cannot and should not eschew aspects such as the politics of identity, social consciousness as well as other pertinent philosophies. It would, for example, be inconceivable to contemplate the African institutions' transformation without reflecting on concepts such as *decolonisation* and *Pan-Africanism*, and these are scrutinised in the ensuing discussion. The article also explores the dynamic, painstaking roles that intellectuals have to engage in. The topic on relevance and community engagement will always be important as debates on decolonisation continue. Intellectuals inside and outside the academe will always be useful in transforming society and its institutions. Yet, the work of intellectuals and their influence are buoyed by the characteristics that intellectuals possess. Whether one is a denialist, loyalist, knower or planetary intellectual will inform society of their role in mobilising communities and universities for transformation. Furthermore, the article examines the role of all intellectuals rather than those based at higher education institutions only. Oftentimes when society speaks of intellectuals, it is not the subaltern that they refer to – people outside the university who have been dominated by the hegemony displayed in higher education institutions regarding knowledge ownership. Antonio Gramsci postulates that this hegemony encompasses cultural, moral and ideological leadership over the subaltern. The findings in this debate demonstrate that it will be conscientious and selfless intellectuals who will fortify intellectual engagement for transformation of higher education institutions. The conclusions demonstrate that intellectuals have a judicious responsibility in safeguarding stability and meaningful transformation.

Keywords: decolonisation, intellectualism, Pan-Africanism, transformation

INTRODUCTION

Ali Mazrui (2005, 56) defines intellectuals succinctly when he perceives them as people who have "the capacity to be fascinated by ideas and have acquired the skills to handle many of them effectively". For Furedi (2004), being an intellectual denotes social engagement; and

intellectuals are those whose interests are broad and those who face critical social issues of their time. Similarly, Barney (1991) avers that intellectuals refer to a group of individuals who are concerned with knowledge or wisdom for its own sake; furthermore, these people engage in the practices of the proliferation as well as analysis and critique of that knowledge. However, for the purposes of this article I will use Gramsci's (1971) definition where he points out that all human beings are intellectuals. Gramsci (1971) also maintains that the challenges, obstacles and lessons people are exposed to in their lives – their material conditions – reveal their intellectual work. It is from these experiences that people are able to play a role in creating a transformed, free and fair society.

Apart from trying to explicate the concept *intellectuals*, this article seeks to uncover their roles in developing society. The intelligentsia underscores the role of education, whilst the Marxists highlight that there should be a link to means of production and that as the intellectuals produce culture, they are opposed to the production of inequalities, dominance and power (Landsiedel 2004). Euron (2019, 2) cites Gramsci (1985) as he spells out that the new intellectual in society should not merely be a specialist in his or her subject area, but they should go a step further and be a cultural and political leader with a specific purpose: "The function of the intellectual has to be defined according to the needs of a determined society; he must create cultural and political hegemony. The intellectual must be recognised by its organic nature."

The "new intellectual", as an organic intellectual, should be able to direct and organise the people. Gramsci (1971) highlights the theory of cultural hegemony, which describes how the capitalist class or bourgeoisie utilise cultural institutions to hold on to power in capitalist societies. Gramsci (1971; 1978; 1985) also maintains that the working class has a role to play in bringing about what is called working-class culture and a counter-hegemony that would build working-class intellectuals who would use their intellect to oppose the status quo. Some have claimed that Gramsci's theory later influenced Paulo Freire's (1970) theory, underscoring the need for consciousness-raising among the non-literate working class in Brazil. This suggests that the communities can be sites of political struggle and intellectual contestation. In Africa, true intellectuals should be able to unbundle the oppression of colonialism and open discourse for social justice and freedom. At the same time, they use ideas to engage role-players for liberatory thinking.

Recent literature underscores the need for the creation of a public platform where there is a meaningful dialogue between the public and intellectuals (Furedi 2004; Brahimi et al. 2020). Nevertheless, in South Africa, there have been setbacks in the discourse among intellectuals regarding decolonial debates (Pillay 2021; Msila 2022). These challenges have negatively affected the engagement of all role-players. The intellectuals' egos have dominated the debates,

and fellow scholars have tended to look at who says what rather than what the person is saying. Professional prejudices have often eclipsed the arguments as, on the one hand, those who defend Eurocentrism, often euphemised as globalisation and progress, shoot down those who believe in the need to decolonise society before the attainment of cognitive and epistemic justice. Some traditional intellectuals get into a trap of explaining why some ideas would not work; for example, decolonisation would hardly work because it is against the globalisation of society or anti-transformation that it purports to support. Marks (2017) cites Daniel Drezner (nd), who argues that when intellectuals intervene in the market of ideas, they tend to explain why some new policies are not likely to work rather than as thought leaders who see the potential of the change efforts. Drezner then differentiates between the two kinds of intellectuals; on the one hand, there are the thought leaders who are optimist inductive thinkers whilst, on the other hand, there are traditional public intellectuals who are pessimist deductive thinkers.

When we contemplate engagement, we seek to see the intellectual discourse reaching all role-players. Yet, in countries such as the United States of America (USA), there has been a belief that public intellectuals are on the wane (Furedi 2004; Leo 2006). Nagy-Zekmi and Hollis (2012) affirm that intellectuals are frequently seen trapped between the academe and the "real" world, or between the private and public spheres. "Scholars, especially those in humanities and the social sciences, often (but not often enough) try to influence public discourse on economic, political and social issues; however, their ability to do so is usually curtailed by the shifting priorities of academic institutions evidenced by the hiring of more 'developers' (fundraisers) and fewer faculty ..." (Nagy-Zekmi and Hollis 2012, 3–4).

This article aims to understand the role of the university and public intellectuals in influencing society to move towards more inclusive and engaged debates on transformation and decolonisation. The question is whether public intellectuals have been able to ignite collective interest that evinces the decolonial discourse as more inclusive. As Said (1996) points out, the primary function of the intellectual is to speak truth to power, whilst Robertson (2012) talks about the marketplace of illusion inhabited by intellectuals. Additionally, Robertson (2012, 15) adds that there is a tendency in society to be intensely hostile towards successful thinkers as people exhibit "the passion for showing off democratic tendencies while not devoting adequate energies to their exercise". Robertson posits that the sophists use the concepts of "intellectual" and "elite" to humiliate thoughtful intellectual pursuit. In so doing, these sophists build a cabal for personal and factional gain.

This article, therefore, focuses on the role of intellectuals in the debates to transform higher education institutions through the transformation initiatives and forging engaged institutions. The discussion examines three themes:

i.   Examining the responsibility of intellectuals

ii.   Pan-African philosophy and intellectuals

iii. The challenges of engaged intellectual debates

INTELLECTUALS AND RESPONSIBILITY

In his book, *Intellectuals and society*, Thomas Sowell (2012) points out that intellectuals consider themselves as the "anointed" or as being endowed with superior intellect with which to guide the masses and those who have authority over them. Furthermore, Sowell states that intellectuals are "idea workers" who exert a lot of influence on policymakers and public opinion although they are not directly accountable for the results. Similarly in South Africa, there have been various debates across communities, scholars and interest groups, and these debates are critical in influencing decision making on policy makers (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Pillay 2021; Msila 2021). Furthermore, these debates are influencing the trajectory that should be embraced by African institutions as they engender new identities. Olukoshi and Zeleza (2004) pose several questions in the institutions' forging of a new identity, including their role in preserving local and national identities in the face of external powerful currents. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) bewails the harmful education internalised by African intellectuals in this search for a new identity of African universities. Additionally, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017, 51) points out that African intellectuals and academics need to "openly acknowledge their factory faults and miseducation, cascading from their very production by problematic 'Western-styled' universities, including those located in Africa, so as to embark on decolonial self-re-education". Msila (2021; 2022) underscores the need to bring the African identities and epistemologies into "new" African universities. Yet this identity cannot be fulfilled if the university's research, scholarship and curriculum remain couched in colonial models. Nyerere (in Msila 2022), Nkrumah (in Botwe-Asamoah 2005) and Mazrui (2005) have always underscored the need for universities to be relevant to their environments, but this cannot be achieved if the intellectuals are themselves not relevant. The huge challenge universities in Africa may have today is to have transformed systems, governance, management and curricula. However, these are useless if the intellectuals within institutions are poor and lack the vision of an African university that has found its own soul. Intellectuals are thus supposed to ensure that higher education institutions support global, national and local (glonacal) development (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev, and Gimranova 2021).

Ali Mazrui (2005) traces modern intellectualism from the amalgamation between Pan-Africanism and intellectualisation. He cites Vladimir Lenin's postulation that intellectuals or the bourgeois played a critical role in developing socialism. In 18th-century France, the

French Revolution was described as the revolution of the bourgeois who sought to overthrow the aristocracy as they started a new society (Mazrui 2005). This then means that the bourgeoisie led the revolution, the struggle for total change in France, and hence the French Revolution was always seen as the revolution of the middle class. Bell (2008) argues that for decades, the Marxian vulgate promulgated that the bourgeois were not present in France because few people would have acknowledged that they belonged to that class. Bell (2008, 323) further states that the Revolution delivered the bourgeois or, as he puts it, "thus the Revolution can be seen as 'bourgeois' not in the sense of having been caused by a rising bourgeoisie, but in the sense that it caused one to rise". Mazrui (2005) contends, as Lenin does, that the rise of the bourgeois came with the rise of economic forces, but these forces are not enough when they are not coupled with intellectual determinism. It takes intellectuals and educated minds to build an alternative social paradigm. Seeing the relationship between Lenin, intellectualism and his ideas of Pan-Africanism, Mazrui (2005, 56) postulates:

> "I have borrowed this Leninist idea of intellectual determinism from the domain of the origins of socialism to investigate the origins of Pan-Africanism. Just as Lenin was convinced that socialism without the intellectuals was a dead duck, I propose to demonstrate that Pan-Africanism without the intellectuals was similarly doomed."

In a time when universities in Africa respond to policy windows that have opened for Africanisation and decolonisation, the role of Pan-Africanism has never been so critical as a guiding light for intelligentsia that should lead the new social paradigms. It is a critical role for intelligentsia to be able to mobilise the people and for the communities to move towards transformation. When we look at higher education institutions, the Pan-African thought is supposed to develop and sustain the transformation beyond the university to the communities. The Pan-Africanism that intellectuals need to handle covers a broad agenda which does not embrace political economy only, but also African culture, aesthetics, poetry and philosophy. The role of intellectuals should therefore be to lead the society to the decolonisation of the mind in all aspects of society. Chinweizu (1987), like Wa Thiong'o (1986) and Mphahlele (1974), highlight the role intellectuals should play, which is to champion the fight against the vestiges of colonialism. In fact, that is a summary of the role of intellectuals in society: They should help magnify the African identity. This means there is a need for cultural renaissance and the struggle for relevant institutions. Indeed, the zeal of post-colonial leaders in obliterating colonial vestiges was very clear; Nkrumah (1966) talked of *conscientism*, Nyerere (1967) spoke of *Ujamaa* and Kenneth Kaunda (1966) emphasised African humanism. All these philosophies were incendiary initiatives to ignite anti-colonial intellectualism across the African continent,

and they were meant to spread the spirit of Africanisation and decolonisation. The sixties were a time of ideas where idealistic African leaders portrayed their vision for a free Africa. Numerous intellectuals were rethinking the role of intellectuals in building relevant institutions in Africa.

After the expression of these ideals, there was a decline of intellectualism, and Mintsa (2007) refers to this as intellectual neurosis. This is the neurosis Mazrui (2004) witnessed in Uganda and Kenya, where he had earlier seen intellectuals' vibrancy where people were fascinated by ideas. In East Africa, he attributed the death of intellectual culture to military coups. Idi Amin Dada's rule saw Uganda into eight years of dictatorship, and hence Mazrui himself ended up leaving Makerere University. Much earlier, though, in South Africa, the apartheid government started where the colonial governments ended. It was clear when the nationalist government took over power in 1948 that higher education would change, and intellectuals would be affected by apartheid policies (Roux 1972; Msila 2021). The apartheid government introduced the Extension of University Education Act, Act 45 of 1959. New universities formed or those in existence were divided according to tribal lines. For example, the University of the Western Cape in Bellville was reserved for coloureds; in Natal, the University of Durban-Westville served Indians; in Turfloop, the University of the North was for the Sotho-Tswanas; the University of Zululand for the amaZulu, while the University of Fort Hare was restricted to the amaXhosa (Roux 1972). This indeed had an impact on intellectualism, academic freedom and independent thinking because intellectuals worked under a government watchdog and within an almost homogenous culture. The Academic IB Tabata (1979) referred to this education as *Education for barbarism*. In this book, Tabata explains how the intellectuals needed to contribute to the revolutionary process to transform apartheid oppression upon the masses. Ncube (in Tabata 1979, 6) writes: "The revolutionary intellectual's role must be that of critical intervention; to explain to the masses not only their own action but the objective reality which surrounds them." Apartheid like that in Mazrui's military Uganda was inimical to intellectualism and intellectual freedom. Bantu education, under which apartheid institutions operated, robbed South Africa's citizens of African education and shut them "into a spiritual and intellectual ghetto" (Tabata 1979, 35). Tabata elucidates further and succinctly when he points out:

> "Under such conditions, where the whole institution is permeated by fear that grips professors and students alike, there can only be intellectual paralysis and stupefaction. Here is an atmosphere precisely calculated to facilitate indoctrination in all the perversities of *Apartheid*, a positive breeding ground for servile automatons. This *Apartheid* in university education is not simply a matter of separating the races at the universities. It is a result, the logical completion of a systematic

process not only of robbing Non-Whites of education but of turning a whole population back to barbarism. To put it another way: if Bantu Education is the bricks of that immense edifice, the retribalisation of a whole people, the Apartheid university is its coping stone."

The apartheid policy was so well entrenched in institutions that apartheid still looms large in institutions today. Colonialism and apartheid legacies have affected intellectual work. It is well documented how the apartheid government hounded those intellectuals who opposed it; Bantu Biko, Fatima Meer, Robert Sobukwe and David Webster were all followed by the apartheid police because of the ways in which they used their university work to engage with communities to better the lives of the masses (SAHO nd). For example, Webster as an anthropologist at the University of Witwatersrand included his academic critique of apartheid policies with anti-apartheid political activism (SAHO nd). Webster wanted the university to be more meaningfully engaged with the communities. Yet the barbarism of apartheid ensured that Webster was assassinated outside his home in Johannesburg less than a year before Nelson Mandela was released from Robben Island.

The South African intellectual in higher education institutions has walked a long road, but unfortunately, not all have realised that they are free to exert their academic freedom and independence. This then requires that decolonisation and Africanisation debates embrace robust academic engagements to transform education and society. In his book, *The decline of the intellectual*, Thomas Molnar (1994, 9) explicates how various ideologies shape intellectuals. Molnar argues that we cannot judge an intellectual outside her environment. "An intellectual cannot be measured by his mental powers, insights, and creativity alone. It is rather the social milieu of which he is a part, and the nature of his relationship to this milieu that determine his status and role as an intellectual." Some may argue that this is the paradox of the intellectuals; whilst they should yearn for freedom and independence, they should always be bound by the principles that make them part of their communities.

Below, the discussion will show the quagmire in which intellectuals may find themselves, that is, the difference between being an individual and being part of the group, and how the Pan-African ideal throws a spanner in the works of people who are used to entrenched colonial and apartheid systems. The debates on the transformation of higher education in South Africa have given rise to different kinds of intellectuals. Molnar (1994) mentions the intellectual as a Marxist, the progressive intellectual as well as the reactionary intellectual. I add, the African intellectual, the reluctant/stagnant intellectual and the activist intellectual. While I will not discuss all of these in detail, I will mention them when they become part of my argument.

The main challenge to transformation and decolonisation, nevertheless, is created by the intellectuals' inability to reflect on the needs of the masses. Instead, they are reduced by their

egos because each one of them thinks they are more anointed than the other. Even then, many debates on decolonisation have not been without suspicion. This has often led to the decline in scholarship as many think that Africanisation and decolonisation are mere ghettoization of education as we know it.

PAN-AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND INTELLECTUALS

Transformation and decolonisation of institutions does not need Pan-Africanists, but it needs the knowledge of Pan-African philosophy. Mazrui (2005) argues that modern intellectualism and origins of Pan-Africanism are intertwined. Mazrui succinctly put it that we can imagine intellectualism without Pan-Africanism, but we cannot contemplate Pan-Africanism without intellectualisation of African condition. Pan-Africanism emerged as an agency of restoration of African subjectivity challenging the intellectual roots of colonial historicity (Eze 2013). Eze (2013) also underscores the need to look at modern Pan-Africanism to transcend ethnocentrism, hence a need to move beyond race. He states that Pan-Africanism is racially inclusive of all people whose research is related to the geo-political world of Africa. Sobukwe, the first president of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania, which was formed in South Africa in 1959, maintained that South Africa needed Pan-Africanists. The future of South Africa /Azania should be Pan-Africanism among Africans. An African to Sobukwe was anyone who pays his or her allegiance to Africa and is prepared to be loyal to African majority rule (Sobukwe 1959).

Sobukwe was a strong believer in an Africanist future for South Africa and rejected any model suggesting working with anyone other than Africans, defining African as anyone who lives in and pays his allegiance to Africa and who is prepared to subject himself to African majority rule. These were also similar aspirations demonstrated by Biko, the Black Consciousness leader who envisaged a future of non-racialism with no distinction between black and white (Biko 1987). Eze (2013, 671) speaks of a new kind of Pan-Africanism:

> "This new ideal of pan-Africanism is not shackled to whites versus blacks, them versus us; it rather adopts an authoritative voice to speak on behalf of all oppressed people in the world, all those discriminated because of their race, religion, gender or orientation is lifestyle ... it (pan-Africanism) is a project not provincialized to racial consciousness but on the shared universality of human experience. This is the new meaning of pan-Africanism grounded in universal humanism."

Intellectuals for a new Africa cannot eschew from the Pan-African philosophy if they are interested in transforming African institutions. There is much need to continue intellectualising decolonising debates. The society can hardly decolonise without anchoring some tenets in Pan-African thought. Without the understanding of Pan-African theory, intellectuals will

achieve hollow decolonisation and barren Africanisation. The Pan-African thought always utilises conscience to bring back the scholarship of transformation to the realities of the communities. Without understanding the ideals of Pan-Africanism, it can be easy to paralyse the goals of catering for Africa. Pan-African thought encompasses intellectual thought, the genesis of epistemic decolonisation and the division of Africa. It is also critical to begin from the start when colonisation killed culture, robbed Africa of its history and decimated indigenous languages. Intellectuals who do not start here will miss understanding the necessary revolutionary changes. Transformation and decolonisation that do not begin here will be superficial and even defeat the whole purpose of transforming institutions meaningfully. Genuine African scholarship starts with African intellectuals who understand the incipient struggles of Pan-Africanism. The challenge we have today is that some intellectuals may not believe in the great role Pan-Africanism has in reasserting Africanness and promoting African intellectualism for Africa's progress. On the other hand, Pan-African ideals will always remain a guiding beacon to intellectuals thus ensuring that they address human conditions in Africa.

Africa needs a reinvention and Pan-Africanism might provide answers for intellectuals who have been looking for ideological direction. Yet some may be wary of Pan-Africanism because it has merely led to ideological crisis in some African states (Chinweizu 1987; Nwankwo 1995). Nwankwo (1995) states that some African states have suffered under internal contradictions where leaders had to "abandon, reorientate or substantially qualify the ideological direction of society". Julius Nyerere (1970), who is among the fathers of Pan-Africanism, could not rid his country of poverty and achieve the ideal of development demanded by Pan-Africanism. Yet, despite the flaws of Pan-Africanism, it remains a model for dispelling the myths about Africa and its people. The transformation agenda by intellectuals utilising Pan-Africanism is a testimony that Africa had a history, and some of it can be the basis of transformation. When scholars talk of African renaissance, this is a way of asserting Africa's hidden image. One wonders whether all Africans can be Pan-Africanists. Chinweizu (1987) labels some Africans cowards for wanting to universalise everything as they try to include white people. Chinweizu will find cowardice to intellectuals who try to adopt whites as Pan-Africanists. Mazrui (as cited by Adem, Mutunga and Mazrui 2013) identifies useful elements in European heritage although it is largely negative. Before the use of any European heritage or accepting whites as African intellectuals, the white-black cleavage which is the social injustice white privilege and rule must end (Adem et al. 2013). Furthermore, Mazrui argues that in the international system, Africans should refuse dependency on Europe.

The above are the debates that African intellectuals have to take into cognisance. They need to be fascinated by these ideas as they try to solve Africa's challenges. Like Mazrui in

some way, Wa Thiong'o (2004) argues about the critical nature of interconnectedness and uses the term "globalectics" when referring to this. Pan-African intellectuals need to be conscious of this. Yet Chinweizu (1987) is concerned about black identity which may be eroded when blacks try to universalise Pan-Africanism. Chinweizu (1987, 168) is hard on this:

> "Those white-sponsored universalisms have strong appeal for those blacks who are anxious to escape their racial particularity into some alleged universality. They are usually people who, overwhelmed by white supremacist propaganda, have come to accept that the black race is inferior, despicable and only fit to be escaped from by anyone unfortunate enough to be born into it."

Like Chinweizu (1987), Mintsa (2007) disputes the role of other "heritages" such as Islam in Africa as he labels it as oppressive and colonial. In fact, Chinweizu is concerned about what he calls the bastardisation of Pan-Africanism, where Africans are united with Europeans and Arabs in the North who not only invaded Africa but also enslaved the Africans. All these are debates that African intellectuals should be conscious of as they influence society with ideas.

DECOLONIAL JOURNEYS, INTELLECTUALS AND STRUGGLES

The decolonial debates have illuminated extremes when it comes to intellectualism in (South) Africa. On the one hand, much fascination with ideas has been illuminated; on the other hand, there has been what Joe Mintsa (2007) refers to as "intellectual neurosis". Some debates among intellectuals have been energising in support of the transformation agenda as they support the evolution of higher education institutions. Other debates have, however, been refreshingly trying to build a stronger intellectual community through engagement (Mazrui 2005). There have also been other sceptical groups that have been egotistical and apathetic about transformation and see no role for communities outside the universities. In Africa's decolonial debates, intellectuals have become suspicious of any knowledge that appears to eclipse the global village and its agendas (Mazrui 2005). Three hurdles have been glaring in higher education's transformation and decolonisation debates.

The first one is what Mazrui refers to as de-Westernising globalisation. This is "the decolonisation of globalisation" with strategies that include indigenisation, domestication, diversification, horizontal interpenetration and vertical counter-penetration (Mwesigire 2014). Engaging with communities will ensure that higher education institutions can work with organic intellectuals as they find common ground with all role-players.

The second hurdle is accommodating heterogeneous approaches. This refers to the inability by some thinkers to utilise knowledges from the Global North as well as the Global South. Working with various role-players enables diverse intellectuals to be able to use various

approaches to transformation. Frequently, intellectuals refuse to accede that Africa is an intellectual melting pot where people may have to use creative eclecticism as an ideological alternative (Mazrui 1975).

The last hurdle encompasses the shunning of African intellectualism, regarding such issues as villagisation of knowledge. We cannot think of Pan-Africanism, however, without embracing African perspectives. Redressing epistemicides, historicides and culturecides demands us to think as progressive African intellectuals. African intellectuals should not only shed exclusive Eurocentrism but also other ills such as patriarchy, racism, hatred, and classism. At higher education institutions, several intellectuals have been revealed by decolonial and transformation debates. The debates have been characterised by varied strands which may and may not engage communities:

Knowers

The decolonial debates' fatigue has produced intellectuals who are knowers and claim to comprehend the decolonial theory. There are huge challenges when intellectuals regard themselves as knowers. This puts knowers under immense pressure to know everything. Leading transformation and decolonisation need intellectuals who will not only understand the world communities but also, more importantly, who are learners rather than knowers. Hinken (2018) points out that the strength of learners is that they operate from a "learner stance". Furthermore, Hinken points out that learners choose a mental posture that includes some of the following decisions:

(i)   They admit they are not achieving the envisaged results.

(ii)   They own responsibility for addressing prevailing unsatisfactory situations.

(iii)   They admit that to achieve desired results they might strive more than the resources they have at their disposal.

(iv)   They must be willing to be influenced.

Our society which needs to transform does not need more intellectuals as knowers, but more intellectuals as learners. Knowers are not the ideal type of intellectuals for constantly changing situations. Additionally, it is not negative to be a knower; it is the reluctance to unlearn that is usually the challenge for knowers. The intellectual as a learner, though, can learn to unlearn in order to relearn. Given the African past, no one will be a credible intellectual without unlearning the influences of colonialism and apartheid. Striving for cognitive and epistemic justice cannot be attained until we are willing to learn to unlearn.

Loyalists

The loyalists concur with the debates but are not critical. They are agreeable even when they do not understand the fundamental debates. Furthermore, loyalists are likely to treat the communities outside the university as unable to engage in the intellectual work of the academy. Furedi (2004, 143) points out that "even institutions like Harvard University are busy creating an environment where students are treated as fragile children that need to be protected from the risks posed by intellectual disputes and conflict". Yet the university should be wary of entrenching a patronising attitude towards other role-players; what Furedi (2004, 143) refers to as infantilisation of role-players. Infantilisation of people by intellectuals demeans the ability of the public to think. In the minds of intellectuals:

> "... the public lacks the resources to engage with difficult intellectual or artistic encounters, and people are assumed to be incapable of rising to the occasion and overcoming the obstacles they meet. This view transmits the perception that people are children who need to have their hands held as they enter a university campus or pass through the door of a museum or a public library."

This infantilisation is against the social justice principles because it demeans. Intellectuals need to work on a premise that the public can be critical and be allowed to be critical. The public cannot be dumbed down. Infantilism of the public leads to the making of a docile society. A docile public can never be vibrant and cannot be purveyors of intellectual debates. The public needs its autonomy guided by truly meaningful and democratic intellectualism.

The problem with intellectuals who are mere loyalists is their tendency to go for philistinism, the belief that sees people following a mundane culture characterised by national interests that are commonplace. The use of the concept "loyalist intellectual" in the debate towards the embrace of decolonisation is rather ironic because it refers to uncritical intellectuals who consciously or unconsciously dumb down intellectualisation of decolonial debates among role-players. Policy agenda cannot be set by loyalists because their engagement with other role-players can be detrimental.

Denialists

The denialists oppose every innovation; they are reticent to make these come to fruition. In decolonial debates, they maintain that change of the status quo will not only drop standards, but such change is also not advisable if society seeks meaningful transformation. Denialism is one factor among intellectuals that has led to the stalling of decolonisation debates. Intellectual denial is meant to dumb down strong debates for decolonisation. Usually Western-oriented scholars, cautious of decolonisation taking over, deny the possibilities of success. Intellectuals

in denial refuse to believe that they do not support anti-colonialism. They want people to believe that the epistemologies we have are adequate without decolonisation. To denialists, decolonisation is a pipe dream that is not likely to replace the knowledges that work in society. Denialism by intellectuals refers to intellectuals who deny reality, especially empirically variable reality. Hambling (2009) points out that motivations and causes of denialism include self-interest, religion and defence mechanisms that are meant to shield the psyche of the denialist against facts and ideas; something which is frequently referred to as cognitive dissonance. Denialists can then be spurred by a number of tactics, which may include the following:

(i)   Conspiracy theories – dismissing observations by suggesting that opponents are muffling the truth.
(ii) Cherry picking – selecting research, literature and articles to make their opponents appear to be basing their arguments on weak research.
(iii) False experts – reimbursing experts in a field to give credence to their beliefs.
(iv) Moving goalposts – dismissing presented evidence by asking for alternative evidence.
(v)   Other logical fallacies – use of false analogies. (Hambling 2009)

It is dangerous to have powerful people who are intellectual denialists. This dumbs down the intellectualism of the masses and is detrimental to all those without power. Some intellectuals who are anti-decolonisation maintain that it is anti-globalisation, and the emphasis on Africa is unrealistic in building new and relevant epistemologies. Beeson (2020) argues that the problem with denialists is that they are poorly informed and cannot fully grasp science. He equally observes that some denialists may understand science, but they simply decide to undermine it, relying on their alternative facts to justify implausible and inappropriate practices. Denialism towards decolonisation is disastrous in the understanding of how to get rid of colonisation. Additionally, to deny decolonisation is to deny social justice and the redress to colonialism.

Planetary intellectuals

The decolonial struggles need planetary thinking: the belief in an eclectic approach to cognitive and epistemic justice. Planetary intellectuals believe in the de-Westernisation of globalisation and maintain that the society cannot avoid the "medley of a community of ideas" that anchor knowledges. They accept critical African intellectualism as well as de-marginalisation of African knowledge. The centre should not only embrace Eurocentrism but African knowledges as well. Planetary intellectuals' ideology is also based on coexistence and engaging

communities outside their domicile. Due to their openness, planetary intellectuals are progressive. The paradox of decolonising knowledge is the need to be aware of the global and local community (the glocal) in relation to the world community (the globalised). It is for this reason that Wa Thiong'o (2004) speaks of the interconnectedness of the world. This essentially suggests that cognitive and social justice can be attained only when intellectuals have a broader view of the world. Bierman and Kalfagianni (2020) underscore the "justice turn" in political dialogues on transformation with references to equity, equality and justice. They observed that conscientious planetary intellectuals pose sustained questions on whether or not decolonisation can help societies achieve planetary justice. Planetary intellectuals have thus a huge role to play in transformation, influencing the decolonial discourse whilst engaging all the role-players. Three elements have become critical for planetary intellectuals engaged in decolonial debates:

i.   Decoloniality
ii.   Cognitive justice
iii. Epistemic justice

Within these, planetary intellectuals have had to haggle with many pseudo-intellectuals whose work continues to alienate Africans by not addressing epistemicides, culturecides, historicides and linguicides. To this end, many intellectuals' work has simply affirmed Western hegemony, reflecting their reticence to move away from the Western canon. Regarding this, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, 14) contends:

> "What is disturbing, though is that despite the fact that African intellectuals have produced numerous books and journal articles speaking directly on pertinent issues of epistemic freedom and development, these works have not succeeded in replacing those of Western theorists such as Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Max Weber and Karl Marx, even within African academies. African intellectual productions have not yet assumed dominance in the field of global knowledge in the way that Marx, Derrida and Foucault are doing currently. The African academy has remained a site of inculcation of Western knowledge, values, ways of knowing and worldviews that are always taught as universal values and scientific knowledge. "

On this basis, the planetary intellectuals seek to bring Africa back into the debates as part of the broader debates in the world, hence the emphasis on the ecologies of knowledge. As Stocchetti (2012, 101) argues while citing Coser and Eyerman, intellectuals are not people who depend on ideas to earn a living, but they live for ideas, their own and those of others. Those who are scared of their political influence maintain that they earn a living off their ideas. Planetary intellectuals thus work to support change initiatives in society. Similarly, Olukoshi and Zeleza

(2004) contend that the university, as we know it, is rapidly changing as traditional boundaries are crumbling and new research agendas are emerging. These changes have necessitated "new organisational forms of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption" (also see Olukoshi and Zeleza 2004, 2). The decolonising and transforming university in Africa should work closely with progressive intellectuals, who in turn will lead debates between the academe and the communities as reflected in Gramsci's organic intellectuals. In fact, a lingering question should always prick the conscience of communities – who are universities for? In addition, what role can intellectuals play in re-Africanising and decolonising society? The role of intellectuals in knowledge production and dissemination is critical when we look at the need to spread the decolonial thought to redress epistemic violence. The South African struggle over decades was a struggle for a just system. Today, the struggle is for education to redeem society, and this is the huge task of intellectuals in the post-colonial era.

CONCLUSION

The discussion in this article demonstrates how critical it is for intellectuals to be well informed as they motion the society towards epistemological decolonisation and societal transformation through fascination with ideas. Whilst Mazrui argues that scholars in higher education institutions should lead intellectualism, this cannot be realised if the organic intellectuals do not become part of the transforming institutions. In fact, there can be no truly decolonised institutions if these are situated among colonised communities. The debates in this article also demonstrate why we need to decolonise community engagement. This means in the Gramscian fashion that organic intellectuals found in communities bring much to the debate about the evolving world of our institutions. Colonial education might have made many to believe that knowledge production resides in institutions of higher learning only, and that public intellectuals are those who are erudite. Dismantling epistemic violence will be realised when intellectuals' work translates to relevance and is congruent with societal values. The building of new public intellectuals should include new research where the community members do not become mere subjects of research. Higher education institutions should also perceive community members as co-creators of knowledge, especially when dealing with topics of decolonising knowledge.

REFERENCES

Adem, S., W. Mutunga, and A. M. Mazrui. 2013. *Black Orientalism and Pan African Thought; Debating the African Condition*. Trenton: Africa World Press.

Barney, J. 1991. "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage." *Journal of Management* 17(1): 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108.

Beeson, M. 2020. "The Dangers of Denialism." *The Strategist*. https://www.aspistrategist. org.au/the-dangers-of-denialism/. (Accessed 10 October 2021).

Bell, D. A. 2008. "Class Consciousness, and the Fall of the Bourgeois Revolution." *Critical Review* 16: 323–351.

Biermann, F. and A. Kalfagianni. 2020. "Planetary Justice: A Research Framework." *Earth System Governance* 6: 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esg.2020.100049.

Botwe-Asamoah, K. 2005. *Kwame Nkrumah's Politico-Cultural Thought and Policies: An African-Centred Paradigm for the Second Phase of the African Revolution*. New York: Routledge.

Biko, S. 1987. *I Write What I Like*. London: Heinemann.

Brahimi, M. A., A. M. Hernando, M. Morgan, and A. Perez. 2020. "Strategies of Public Intellectual Engagement." *The Sociological Review* 68(5): 982–998. https://doi.org/10.1177/ 0038026120931422.

Chankseliani, M., I. Qoraboyev, and D. Gimranova. 2021. "Higher Education Contributing to Local, National, and Global Development: New Empirical and Conceptual Insights." *Higher Education* 81: 109–127. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00565-8.

Chinweizu. 1987. *Decolonising the African mind*. Lagos: Pero Press.

Euron, P. 2019. "Antonio Gramsci: The Role of Intellectuals in Culture." In *Aesthetics, Theory and Interpretation of Literary Work*, ed. P. Euron, 143–146. Boston: Brill Sense.

Eze, M. O. 2013. "Pan Africanism: A Brief Intellectual History." *History Compass* 11(9): 663–674. https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12074.

Furedi, Frank. 2004. *Where have all the Intellectuals Gone?* New York: Continuum.

Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Gramsci, A. 1978. *Selections from the political Writings*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Gramsci, A. 1985. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

Hambling, D. 2009. "Microwave Weapon Will Rain Pain from the Sky." *New Scientist*. http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20327185.600-microwave-weapon-will-rain-pain-from-the-sky.html. (Accessed 23 July 2022).

Hinken, B. 2018. "Moving from Knower to Learner." *The Systems Thinker*. thesystemsthinker.com/moving-from-knower-to-learner. (Accessed 20 October 2021).

Kaunda, K. 1966. *A Humanist in Africa*. London: Longmans Green.

Landsiedel, C. L. 2004. "Who is an Intellectual and What should be the Role of Intellectuals be in Society?" Seminar Paper 2004. Grin.com/document/29639. (Accessed 12 October 2021).

Leo, J. R. 2006. "Public Intellectual, Inc." *Symploke* 14(2): 183–196. https://www.jstor.org/ stable/40550720#metadata_info_tab_contents. (Accessed 11 November 2021).

Marks, J. 2017. "We don't need no stinking thought leaders." https://www.insidehighered.com/ views/2017/07/11/why-academics-should-strive-be-public-intellectuals-not-thought-leaders-essay. (Accessed 16 October 2021).

Mazrui, A. A. 1975. "Eclecticism as an ideological alternative: An African perspective." *Alternatives* 1: 465–486.

Mazui, A. A. 2004. *Power, Politics and the African Condition*. New Jersey: Africa World Press.

Mazrui, A. A. 2005. "Pan-Africanism and the Intellectuals: Rise, Decline and Revival." In *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*, ed. Thandika Mkandawire, 56–77. London: Zed Books.

Mintsa, J. 2007. *What is Wrong with Black People?* Morrisville: Lulu Press.

Molnar, T. 1994. *The Decline of the Intellectual*. London & New York: Routledge.

Mphahlele, E. 1974. *African Image*. New York: Praeger.

Msila, V. 2021. "Entrenching the Soul of a University in Africa: A Search for a Liberating African Institution." *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations*, *Communities & Nations* 22(1): 1–15. doi:10.18848/2327-0020/CGP/v22i01/1-15.

Msila, V. 2022. "Bringing Africa into New Epistemologies: Rethinking the University in Africa." *Journal of Educational Research and Reviews* 10(3): 29–37. https://doi.org/10.33495/jerr_v10i3.22.106.

Mwesigire, B. 2014. "5 Strategies for de-Westernising Globalisation, by Ali Mazrui." https://thisisafrica.m"e/politics-and-society/5-strategies-de-westernising-globalisation-ali-mazrui/. (Accessed 18 November 2021).

Nagy-Zekmi, S. and K. Hollis. 2012. "Introduction: The Location of Public intellectual Discourse." In *Global Academe: Engaging Intellectual Discourse*, ed. Silvia Nagy-Zekmi and Karyn Holli, 1–14. New York: Palgrave.

Ncube, P. D. 1979. "Preface." In *Education for Barbarism*" ed. Isaac B. Tabata, 3–6. London: Unity Movement of South Africa.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. 2017. "The Emergence and Trajectories of Struggles for an African University: The Case of Unfinished Business of African Epistemic Decolonisation." *Kronos* 43(1): 51–77. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2309-9585/2017/v43a4.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. 2018. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialisation and Decolonisation*. London & New York: Routledge.

Nkrumah, K. 1966. *Consciencism*. London: Heinemann.

Nwankwo, A. A. 1995. *The African Possibility in Global Power Struggle*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing.

Nyerere, J. 1967. *Freedom and Unity: A Selection from Writings and Speeches 1952–1965*. London: Oxford University Press.

Nyerere, J. 1970. *Freedom and Unity/Uhuru Na Moja. A Selection from Writings and Speeches 1952–65*. Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.

Olukoshi, A. and P. T. Zeleza. 2004. "Introduction: The Struggle for African Universities and Knowledges." In *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul T. Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi, 1–20. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Pillay, S. 2021. "The Problem of Colonialism: Assimilation, Difference, and Decolonial Theory in Africa." *Critical Times* 4(3): 389–416.

Robertson, J. 2012. "In the Marketplace of Illusion: The Public Intellectual in a Landscape of Mediated Humanities." In *Global Academe: Engaging Intellectual Discourse*, ed. Silvia Nagy-Zekmi and Karyn Holli, 15–38. New York: Palgrave.

Roux, E. 1972. *Time Longer than Rope*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin.

SAHO. n.d. "David Joseph Webster." https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/david-joseph-webster. (Accessed 18 September 2021).

Said, E. W. 1996. *Representations of The Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. New York: Vintage Books.

Sobukwe, R. M. 1959. "Robert Sobukwe Inaugural Speech, April 1959." https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/robert-sobukwe-inaugural-speech-april-1959. (Accessed 15 September 2021).

Sowell, T. 2012. "Intellectuals and Society." National Review. https://www.nationalreview.com/2010/01/intellectuals-and-society-thomas-sowell/. (Accessed 14 September 2021).

Stocchetti, M. 2012. "The Enemy Within? Intellectuals, Violence, and the 'Postmodern Condition'." In *Global Academe: Engaging Intellectual Discourse*, ed. Silvia Nagy-Zekmi and K. Holli, 99–120. New York: Palgrave.

Tabata, Isaac, B. 1979. *Education for Barbarism*. London: Unity Movement of South Africa.

Wa Thiong'o, N. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Culture*. London: J. Currey.

Wa Thiong'o, N. 2004. *Globalectics: Theory and Politics of Knowing*. New York: Columbia University Press.