African Studies in a Canadian Academy: A Tool for Liberation or Marginalization?

A Paper Presented at the Annual Dean's Graduate Student Research Conference: Diverse Perspectives in Education

By E. Fredua-Kwarteng, Department of Theory &Policy Studies/OISE

African Studies in a Canadian Academy: A tool for liberation or marginalization?
By Eric Fredua-Kwarteng , OISE/University of Toronto

Abstract: This research uses critical race theory (CRT) as a conceptual perspective to study and analyze the experiences of ten students of African descent who enrolled in several African studies courses or related courses in an Ontarian university**.** The students, two females and eight males were interviewed between June and August 2005, using structured questions**.** The result of the study indicates that the organization of African studies program, the appointment of program coordinator/professors of African studies, selection of course materials/ readings, and the pedagogical practices of professors in that university tend to marginalize students enrolled in those courses and the program itself. Marginalization takes a variety of forms, including emotional torture, a sense of powerlessness, trivialization of African intellect, and tacit exclusion of Africa from intellectual discourses. The paper concludes by suggesting diversity policies that should be pursued by the academy in order to address marginalization of Africa studies.

Introduction

Student population in Canadian universities is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Statistics Canada (Website, Beyond 2020) reports that in 1991, more than 17.1 percent of full-time and 15.3 percent of part-time students in Canadian universities were peoples of non-European descent. More specifically, in 1994 students of non-European extraction attending the University of Toronto comprised 40.4 percent of the student population (Henry & Tator, 1994) and those attending York University were estimated at 21 percent (Grayson, 1995). It is likely that these figures are increasing rather than decreasing as the immigrant share of Canadian population increases at an exponential rate (Preston & Murnaghan, 2005). Most Canadian universities have responded to or are responding to this diversity by establishing women studies and ethnic studies programs— African studies, Asian studies, Caribbean studies, Native studies, South American studies-- in an attempt to include these groups in the university curricula.

 Connell (1993) describes ethnic and women studies programs in the universities as oppositional curriculums, because they are separated out from the mainstream university

curriculum instead of being included in it. According to Connell (1993), courses in these programs are "deliberately set out to embody the points of view of the named group in the design of the curriculum" (p.52). However, such oppositional curriculum is not without its critics. Connell (1993) argues that it absolves educators from the responsibility of constructing an inclusive curriculum that would validate the histories, cultures, and experiences of disadvantaged groups. As well, Connell states that such curriculum leads to academic enclaves that eventually lack recognition within the mainstream university community and the appropriate resources to achieve its mandated goals.

McMahon (2003) also criticizes school boards for managing diversity through different course offerings for special groups such as Black History, Women studies, or Native Studies. She contends that this situation is similar to the metaphor of cutting off and putting the foot of an elephant into the refrigerator instead of fitting the whole body of the elephant into the refrigerator, so to speak. That is, social justice would be served if the histories, ontology, and cultures of all students were integrated in the mainstream curriculum. She further argues that Anglo-Canadian students who take those courses are few, because of the negative stigmas attached to those courses. She concludes that such oppositional courses contribute to the marginalization of those courses in the school system.

Major political and social events in the United States and Canada provided the impetus for the establishment of women studies and ethnic studies in universities in both countries. The civil rights movement and student unrest in the 1960s were a catalyst for the establishment of women's and ethnic studies in universities across the United States

(Butler and Schmitz, 1992; Milton, 1997). As well, the independence movements that swept across the African continent in the 1960s sent a message to the U.S political leaders that Africans were serious about taking control of their own destiny. The U.S federal government responded by financing graduate education programs in African Studies in major U.S universities. The main objective of the program was to have specialists with competence in African affairs to advice U.S policy-makers and business leaders (Gordon, 1976) on policies on Africa.

By contrast, in Canada as Cameron (2002) states, a combination of factors contributed to the establishment of ethnic studies which consists of African studies, Asian studies, Caribbean studies, Native studies, and South American studies. According to Cameron (2002), ethnic studies in Canadian universities were a bureaucratic response to Prime Minister Trudeau's 1971 federal policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework. The main objective of the Multiculturalism Act was to encourage the development of ethnocultural groups in Canada (Kymlicka, 1997). Regardless of the social or political forces that led to the establishment of ethnic studies in Canadian universities, the rationale for ethnic studies was to mirror the multicultural nature of Canadian society and to allow an equitable representation of all ethnocultural groups in Canadian universities curriculums.

The paper is organized into five sections. The first section outlines the research purpose and questions. The second section discusses my personal interest in African studies. The third section discusses the conceptual framework that informs the discourses in the paper. The fourth section reports the research finding: organization of African studies; recruitment of coordinator/professors of African studies; selecting course

textbooks/materials; pedagogical practices. The fifth section concludes the paper. In this section, the moral obligations of university administrators and professors of African studies toward students are stressed.

Research Purpose and Questions

Ethnic studies, be it African studies, Asian studies, South American studies or Native studies, are supposed to reflect the worldview, ontology, epistemology of the group concerned. In this way, students belonging to that group and those with interest in that group would have the opportunity to study the cultures, language, and worldview of the named group, without essentializing the ethos of any population group. However, the question is, has the establishment of African studies program in Canadian universities empowered African-Canadians? How is African studies organized at the university level and in the classroom? Have African studies courses provided students of African descents opportunities to engage in critical interrogation of the continent's history, economy, and sociological development? How do professors of African studies interpret African pre-colonial past, colonial past, and post-colonial present and post-colonial future? These were the research questions which can not be critically answered without analyzing the experiences, stories, and narratives of students of African descent who have taken or are taking African studies courses in Canadian universities.

After analyzing the experiences of ten students of African descent, the paper argues that the organization of African studies courses in one Canadian university, the appointment of coordinators/professors for the program, the selection of instructional materials and resources for the courses, and pedagogical practices of professors of the courses have led to the marginalization of students of African extraction and African

studies in that academy. The meaning of marginalization used in this paper conforms to

Young's (1990) definition of marginalization. According to Young (1990, quoted in

Gerwitz, 2002),

> Even if marginals were provided comfortable material life within institutions that
> respected their freedom and dignity, injustices of marginality would remain in the form of
> uselessness, boredom, and lack of self-respect. it involves the deprivation of cultural,
> practical and institutionalized conditions for exercising capacities in a context of
> recognition and interaction (p.53-55).

The organization of African studies program, along with its pedagogical practices tend to

prevent African students from participating in the useful intellectual activities of the

university institution where this program of study exists. In addition, African students

who took African studies courses experience emotional torture, disempowerment,

intellectual deprivation, and cultural powerlessness due to the racist and propagandist

manner in which the courses are taught in the classroom settings. As well, African

students who took those courses invariably engaged in self-pity and psychological

denunciation of their Africa identity and connectivity.

My Personal Interest in African Studies

I am an African by race and Ghanaian by nationality. My interest in African studies

started during my undergraduate studies. In graduate school in the same university, I

became deeply involved in organizing presentations, workshops, and seminars on Africa

with an eye to protect African image and history against intentional or unintentional

distortions. From my personal experience, image and histories of the African continent

are not only misrepresented in the popular Western media, but also they are distorted in

the university community.

However, for this paper I have two principal reasons for opting to write on this topic.

One reason is that much of the literature in the field deals with under-representation of

racial minorities in university administration (Nakhaie, 2004), and in university faculties and the lack of racial justice for minorities in Canadian educational institutions (Henry and Tator 1994; Margolis, 2001; Ng, 1993; and McConaghy, 1996). Some of the literature generally focuses on anti-racist education at the high school level (McMahon, 2003; Baker, 2005; Thompson, 1997). Others also deal with racial stereotyping, biases, and marginalization of African American students in the teaching of American history at both elementary and high school levels (Lintner, 2004; Swartz, 1992).

Traore's (2004) research documents the negative schooling experiences of continental African students in a high school in Philadelphia. In that research, the African students expressed their frustrations and disappointments at the distorted information about Africa and the lack of interest in Africa on the part of their teachers and peers. Dei (1995) also writes about how to decolonize African studies in Canadian schools and how other forms of oppression could be addressed within African studies. In addition, Martin and Warburton (1998) studied racism at the Victoria University, using a qualitative approach. Among others, they investigated the experiences of minoritized students in relation to the classroom, curriculum, and professors' behaviours. However, none of the literature deals specifically with the experiences of African students enrolled in African studies courses at the university or college level. Therefore, this is an area that needs the immediate, serious attention of diversity-oriented researchers like me.

Another reason for embarking on this project is that I want to use it as a symbol of my profound sympathy to and solidarity with the students I had the conversation with—-who one way or another have endured humiliations and emotional pain and suffering for enrolling in African studies courses in that institution of higher education. I also hope to

publish this work in an academic journal in order to join the struggle for diversity policy at the university level.

Research Setting and Data Collection

The paper is based on the narratives of ten respondents of African descents who had taken or were taking African studies courses. I met the first five respondents when I went to Brent University with a friend of mine for the 2005 summer convocation. We engaged in conversation with a student of African descent in the cafeteria about African Renaissance as articulated by the president of South Africa Thabo Mbeki. Other students of African descents who were passing by were attracted to participate in the conversation. Soon the number of students grew to five. In the course of time, the tenor of the conversation shifted to African studies in Canadian universities and how African Renaissance could be integrated in the content of African studies courses. During the conversation it became clear that all the students had taken at least one African studies or related courses. I asked the students for their permission to write down what they were saying and to use their narratives to write a paper about marginalization of African studies. I also ensured them of their anonymity and confidentiality in using the narratives and their right to withdraw from any future follow-up I might make on their narratives.

When I was about to leave with my friend, I asked for their phone numbers in case I wanted to contact them again for clarification of their narratives during the conversation. While my friend was driving me back home, I looked critically over the students' narratives about their experiences in African studies courses. I noted the common themes running throughout the narratives-- organization of African studies, appointment of co-coordinator/professors, selection of course materials, and pedagogical practices – which I

have used to organize this paper. As well, I wrote down a number of questions and the clarifications I needed about the narratives. Two days later on, I contacted the five conversants on the phone for a clarification of some parts of their narratives, to ask further questions about their narratives and referral of other students who might be interested to participate in the study. The conversants suggested the names and telephone numbers of seven other students, who they believed might be interested to participate. In fact, my contacts with the conversants necessitated the need to read out each person's narratives for verification of what he/she actually said during the conversation. Each contact lasted approximately half-hour.

The second phase of the data collection involved contacting the other seven students whose names were suggested to me. I contacted them a week after by phone, but two of them declined to participate in the study. For each of the five who agreed to participate, I explained the purpose of the study and their right to anonymity, confidentiality, and withdrawal from the study. I scheduled a thirty minutes phone interview with each based on their experiences with African studies courses or related courses. Each interview session was audio-recorded and transcribed. The themes identified in the interviews were similar to the first five set of respondents.

Conceptual Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is the theoretical framework that informs the discussion, analyses, and critiques in the paper. Historically, according to Lynn (2002), CRT emerged from the critiques of the critical legal studies movement in the1980s and its

refusal to acknowledge the role of racism in critical legal scholarship. Solórzano and Yesso (2002) identified five fundamental elements of critical race theory. The first is the centrality of race and racism and other forms of subordination such as gender, class and ethnicity. According to Parker and Lynn (2002), racism is so pervasive in the United States of America that it is regarded a normal part of life. Racism is also embedded, though in subtle ways, in Canada (Bolaria and Li, 1988). Thus, Canadian universities as subsets of Canadian society are not insulated from societal racism and issues bordering on race.

Second, CRT challenges the dominant ideology of objectivity, meritocracy, race neutrality, equal treatment and colour-blind in educational institutions (Parker, 1998). Third, CRT is committed to social justice; that is, it is a transformative tool (Tete, 1997). Its primary objective is to create a society devoid of racial and other forms of oppression. Fourth, CRT places tremendous importance on experiential knowledge (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Scheurich &Young, 1997; Bell, 2003; Lopez, 2003; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Lived experiences of racialized minorities, according to Solórzano & Yosso (2002), are embedded in their stories, family histories, biographies, and narratives. This suggests that CRT privileges the voices of the disadvantaged segments of society (Duncan, 2005) in research. Finally, CRT uses diverse disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, women studies, law, and ethnic studies in order to understand the experiences of racialized others.

Research Findings

Organization of African studies

Women's studies and ethnic studies are usually accorded a program status in most universities in the U.S and Canada. Butler and Schmitz (1992) argue that university administrators invariably assign program status to women's and ethnic studies because of their lack of conviction of the legitimacy of these fields, and also it gives them the ability to control curriculum and staffing in these programs. Butler and Schmitz (1992) further indicated that,

> The drawbacks of program structures for students and for curricular stability are evident. It is difficult to mount coherent curricular for certificates, minors, and majors, and engage in long-term planning, when the necessary faculty members owe allegiance to more powerful departments. Program directors must usually negotiate with department heads on a term by term basis to develop and schedule courses (p.38).

As a result, African studies program is normally an interdisciplinary program, requiring students enrolled in that program to take courses in other departments in order to complete their degree program. The program status usually accorded ethnic studies in most Canadian universities disadvantages these programs. Apart from the lack of curriculum stability for these programs, they are subjected to the ideological dictates of other departments under which they are placed. As a result, these programs have no academic autonomy relative to dominant programs with a department status.

Price (n.d) reports that ethnic studies at York University, Toronto, including African studies, is facing a steady enrolment decline with the result that these programs have more professors than students needed to enroll in them. Price (n.d) has suggested two major reasons for this decline. First, students have less interest in ethnic studies than they did in the 1970s. This is likely to be the result when a positivistic method such as quantitative approach is used to study the phenomenon of course enrolment decline in African studies. In fact, I doubt that the decline in course enrolment in African studies is

simply the lack of interest on the part of African students. Ann's narrative is a counter-story to the dominant notion that African students are not interested in African studies,

> As students, we tell other students of our negative experiences in African studies courses. We tell them the humiliation we had to endure, the emotional wounds we had to nurse, and the persistent doubts we had to entertain about our identity as Africans as a result of the African studies courses we took at the university. When these students heard our experiences, they decided to stay away from these courses as a sort of protest or resistance. So the problem is not that students of African heritage are not interested in African studies. It may be true for White students, who may have no interest in African studies because of the current political, economic, and social problems besetting the continent.

Thus, Price's (n.d) assertion that African students are not interested in African studies courses may be regarded as the public transcript that the university has accepted but the hidden transcript challenges the public transcript (Bell, 2003).

Second, Price (n.d) also contends that ethnic studies courses in the academy, using York University as an illustration, are assigned elective status rather that core course status. Core courses are of higher academic status and are compulsory for those who intend to major in that field of study. Again, in terms of CRT race and racism has a great deal to do with the marginalization of African studies, because it may be regarded as less important in relation to the dominant courses. Accordingly, Kelvin, one of the respondents, made the following observation:

We should not put any weight on what the university says about African studies in its brochure. Rather, we should look at how it treats African studies in comparison to mainstream courses. If many African studies courses are elective rather than core courses for those who want to major in that field, tell me if African studies is equally important to the university?

Further, Price (n.d) states that ethnic studies exist in universities that were historically established to propagate the culture of European charter groups. Price (n.d) concludes that "universities in Canada are ethnic institutions and the ethnicity they assume, reflect, and teach is an ethnicity of European heritage" (p.193).Consequently, racism in African

studies in Brent university is institutional rather than isolated individual acts. Gaine (2000) and Scheurich &Young (1997) conceptualized institutional racism as a form of discrimination in which organizational rules of operations and cultures hurt minoritized groups and advantage members of the dominant group. In view of this, the organization of African studies as a program, its elective status, and its cultural exclusion from the university macro-political and social discourses are all part of the strategy that have contributed to the marginalization of African studies.

Recruitment of Coordinator/Professors

Since universities in Canada are European-oriented in their basic philosophy and pedagogical practices, it follows that the racial and ethnic backgrounds of professors who teach African studies are more likely to be European descent than African. Nevertheless, in the 1990s administrators of some universities in both the United States and Canada started recruiting professors of African descent to teach African studies courses. These university administrators, from my perspective, might have thought that the faces of professors must on the grounds of social justice also mirror the diversity of student population in these universities. They might have also thought that there is the tendency to misinterpret African history for racist agenda; hence their preference for racial minority professors to teach African studies. Accordingly, James (2004) offers his insight into such social justice initiative,

> They favoured African or racial minority not because of their colour primarily, but
> because they figure that such a teacher would be willing to address issues of racism.
> Their preference for a minority teacher is also based on their own experience in the
> school system which is a product of a historical legacy and on-going problem of
> marginalization in the school curriculum. They understand that teachers are not neutral;
> hence, the course content and pedagogical approach will reflect the teacher's particular
> bias. It is not that White teachers would not be able to teach such course, but such a
> course must be taught in a way that enables students to understand the issues from an
> African-centred perspective. For example, they felt that such approach to teaching would

not place emphasis on" what Columbus did to African people but how African people coped and survived their situation successfully (p.47).

Though most of the respondents endorsed the idea that hiring minority professors to teach African studies courses is just the beginning of creating conducive learning environment for African students enrolled in these courses., they also cautioned that professors of minority background could also propagate a Eurocentric posturing.

However, the recruitment of professors of African extraction to teach African studies courses has stirred the ire of Africanists, a group of predominantly White Americans who have arrogated to themselves as experts on Africa (Gordon, 1976). Curtin (1995), for example, alleges that university administrators advertising faculty positions in African studies tend to favour candidates of African descent. According to Curtin (1995),

> This strategy ghettoizes African history, by making the field an enclave within the university set aside for black scholars. The flip side of the strategy is the *de facto* requirement that black historians must teach African or African-American history, no matter what their actual specialization…The lack of a genuinely competitive market for historians specializing in Africa means that the quality of work in the field is likely to decline, as some able White graduate students are pushed into other areas of history (p.A44).

Curtin's (1995) article has a racist overtone. The reason is that the quality of African history is ultimately judged by Africans, not Curtin and his Africanist colleagues. Even if it is true that university administrators are showing a strong preference for candidates of African descent to teach African studies rather than balancing the racial/ethnic proportion of professors in the program, Curtin fails in his article to explain why this is the case.

The other reason is that Curtin seems to imply that professors of African descent in the field of African history have nothing of substance to contribute to the field; hence, the quality of work in the field is likely to deteriorate if professors of African descent were hired. But he does not present any shred of evidence to substantiate his point of view.

Furthermore, Curtin criticizes the possibility of emerging Black enclaves in African

studies, but he indirectly endorses White enclaves that had characterized the field for

decades.

Curtin's (1995) article has also attracted critical responses from African professors

engaged in the field of African studies. Atkins et al (1995) wrote:

> Black presence in African studies unduly disturbed the distribution of power and
> resources in the field, but most of which are still controlled by the men of Curtin's
> generation and their first set of PhD students. The major professorships in African history
> at leading universities in the country, as well as the directorships of the top African-
> studies centres, are held largely by individuals fitting this description. Moreover, not a
> single mainstream Africanist academic journal in North America (or Europe) has a black
> scholar as a working editor. Similarly, there are no black editors of the principal
> Africanist book series such as the ones at Cambridge University Press and Heinemann.
> Little wonder, then that there are so few blacks on the committees of foundations that
> fund much of the research done by U.S-based scholars in Africa; after all membership of
> these committees tends to reflect the power dynamics of the field (p.B3)

It is true that some university administrators have been recruiting professors of African

descent to teach African studies courses; the field of African studies is still dominated by

White Euro-American males. And this has marginalized African studies in the academy,

in that these White professors have a political agenda that is diametrically opposed to the

interest of Africa and of African students. As Owomoyela (1994) has rightly pointed out

"… Africanists' practice, while purporting to be responsive to the best interest of Africa

and Africans, in fact has the effect of perpetuating notions of an Africa that never was"

(p.78). More generally, Law (2003) has criticized Eurocentrism that characterizes the

field of ethnic studies in British universities. He blames the stagnation in the ethnic

studies field on White professors' ideological stance on issues affecting non-White

groups.

Selecting Course Textbooks/ Materials for African Studies

The selection of course materials for African studies is a subjective rather than objective

process. Bischoping's (2003) research into course material selection practices of

professors at one university reveals that while the professors wanted students to be

exposed to a variety of sources, they disagreed that authors of diverse backgrounds

should be included in the reading list for a course. Unfortunately, Bischoping's research

did not probe for reasons professors of that university had taken that ideological posture.

Bischoping's (2003) research also reveals that professors have an absolute autonomy in

deciding the reading list for a course. Consequently, professors choose course readings

that conform to their own political or ideological beliefs. These ideological beliefs are

racist in nature with the ultimate goal to maintain Euro-American cultural hegemony.

Given that most students who take courses in African studies at Brent University are

of minority cultural background, one would have expected that professors who teach

these courses would balance course reading materials to reflect the anchoring and

ownership of African studies. But this is not the case. Mike, one of the students I

conversed with, stated that professors who teach these courses select course materials that

reflect their own political or ideological beliefs, with the view to locate the anchoring and

ownership of African studies within the paradigm and epistemology of European

scholarship. In other words, African studies courses at Brent University are a tool for

marginalization rather than liberation of Africans.

Brown (2001) observes that while professors who teach African-related courses in

four universities in the British Columbia may include token African scholars in their

reading list, no African or African Diaspora scholars are among the list of great thinkers

or scholars. She also observes that Africa is never part of the academic discourses on economic, cultural and political globalization. She asked, "How is it that Africa has been variously inferiorized, marginalized, eased, and omitted from the intellectual discourses in the academy?" Neusner (1989) perhaps offers a fitting answer to this question,

> It is a simple truth that science and technology emerged out of Western philosophy, not out of the philosophy of India or China or any of the African nations…I think it is time to stop apologizing and start analyzing what has made Western civilization the world defining power that it is. Study Africa, India, Japan, Latin America? Of course. But what is it that we want to know? (p. B1).

The respondents related that if professors who teach African studies courses believe that Africa or African scholars have nothing to offer, then they would not put African scholars on the reading list of their courses, or include Africa in any intellectual discourses in the academy. However, what Neusner (1989) does not acknowledge is that the West does not exist all by itself. The history of the West is inextricably linked to that of the other parts of the world. As well, Neusner (1989) is guilty of civilization racism, which is the belief that Western civilization is inherently superior to those of the others (Scheurich &Young, 1997).

The choice regarding course materials in African studies indicate Eurocentric biases, prejudices, and stereotypes of Africans and their culture. In accordance with CRT concept of social justice, a topic such as Europe conquest of Africa should not include only the texts written by Eurocentric apologists such as those of Robinson and Gallagher (1981); and Curtin (1985). But it should also include critical opposing studies by Rodney (1985); Boahen (1987); and Uzoigwe (1981). Joe, one of the students who participated in the conversation, related that the inclusion of these texts would show that Africans did not derive any sensual pleasure from European domination of the continent and that Euro-America is implicated in African underdevelopment. The respondents believe that

with diverse sources students would then obtain a multidimensional understanding of the conquest of Africa, instead of being presented with one dimensional view point that patronizes them toward genuflection of Euro-American colonialism. In fact, CRT's approach to British conquest of Africa would give a voice to Africans to tell their part of the conquest narrative instead of taking the public transcript as an absolute truth.

Even where African authors are included in the course list, white professors take a particular interest in maligning the works of those African authors as the following narratives of Mike demonstrate,

> I don't understand why this professor goes to a considerable extent to discredit the works of Walter Rodney as intellectually shallow and methodologically flawed. I think we the students should be allowed to critique Rodney's work, not the professor. And when this professor critiques Rodney's work, he fails to present any verifiable evidence. He fails to present evidence that African underdevelopment is solely the responsibility of Africans. I see his critiques as mere propaganda orchestrated to shield the moral guilt that overweighs the consciences of White Euro-Americans.

Kofi, a respondent, also related the following: "where the works of the 'others' are included they students are rushed through them. In that case, it is difficult to give the text any serious reflections or critique individually or as a community"

In accordance with CRT, race and racism plays a considerable role in the selection of course texts and materials in African studies courses. The issue of political economy of slavery described in some history and anthropology texts that are used in African studies courses assigned disproportionate blame to Africans for organizing the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Wolf (1990) states that in West Africa, where a bulk of the slaves were taken from, it was the African middlemen who built castles along the coast, went into the hinterland to bring the slaves, stored them in the castles, and sold them to the Europeans traders for shipment to the Americans. Wolf (1990) wrote,

> Europeans financed and organized the trade. Capture, delivery, control and maintenance of captives while waiting for ocean transport remained mostly in African hands. Ocean transport "seasoning"- the process of habituating the captives to their new conditions—and the sale at the point of arrival, in turn, were carried by the Europeans (p.204).

However, the following narrative of Joe, one of the participants in the conversation, challenges that public transcript,

> No empirical evidence exists to the effect that Africans constructed any castles on the coast of Ghana or else where for the storage of slaves awaiting transportation to the Americas. The castles on the coast of Ghana, for example, Winneba, Christiansburg, and Elimina castles have architectural designs that are totally foreign to the country. Instead, these castles bear striking architectural similarities with Aleppo castles in Syria, Dournenburg castle in Holland, and Marksburg castle in Germany.

More recently, Inikori (2000) argues that the existence of market for slaves was the primary reason for the existence of supply of slaves. However, Wolf's (1990) intent in that text, in my view, is to emphasize the role of Africans in the Slave Trade and in effect diminish that of Europeans. From a CRT perspective, the Slave Trade should be presented as an atrocity against humanity rather than a time for intense politics of blame apportionment, name-calling, and finger-pointing. CRT also requires that texts discussing strategies that the slaves used for resistance should also be included in the reading list for a course on Slave Trade. In this way, students would hear the voices, stories and narratives of the enslaved as well as the slaving masters. Students would then be in a better position to evaluate critically whether the slaves enjoyed being tortured and humiliated.

It should be noted, as Manning (1974) has emphasized that, "the review of a historian's work is incomplete until one has considered his/her social origin and allegiance, and the ways ideology may have influenced his/her writing" (p.6).Identifying ideology in any historical writing is not an easy task; that is why students taking African

studies courses have to be exposed to variety of voices, including those of African

authors whose voices are hardly heard in the mainstream academic discourses.

Pedagogical Practices in African Studies

Brown (2001) takes pedagogy to imply a combination of knowledge, attitudes and

teaching practices with the purpose of effecting learning. Thus, pedagogy is more than

teaching practices and strategies; for a professor's sexist, racist, or homophobic attitude

affects how students learn in his/her course. The importance of pedagogy is summed up

by Ohmann (2004),…"But if pedagogical relations have political consequences at all …

they are worth taking seriously for that reason, as well as because they make a difference

in how well students learn" (p.28).

  In Brent University's classrooms, seminars, and lecture halls African studies courses are

organized in such a way that professors' voices are dominant while those of the students

are marginalized. In such a learning environment African students are invariably

disempowered and oppressed. A classic example is the following narrative that Ben

attributed to a professor teaching an African studies course:

> Africans should be thankful to the Europeans for bringing them literacy, science,
> bureaucracy, Christianity, and modern technology. In fact, everything modern on the
> continent was brought there by the Europeans during colonization and then by the
> Americans. These things have helped Africans to build modern government and to
> establish formal education. You can imagine the state of Africans if they were left alone.
> We should look at the positive aspects of colonization instead of always attacking it as
> evil. That way, we would have a balanced view of what colonization was all about.

The above narrative was dominant in the classroom, no other narratives were allowed.

This is because the professor set up the course for only his narratives to be articulated in

the classroom, and not those of the students. According to Sue, one of the students I had

the conversation with, argued that the professor's narrative is a rehash of what Curtin

(1995) wrote,

> Europeans believed they had the true religion and their way of life was superior to all others. That is why they took it upon themselves to spread Christianity throughout the world. They believed that others would need the message when they heard it, recognize the superiority of Western culture as a whole and want it for themselves... if Europeans were indeed superior, it was argued, they had special obligations equivalent to those of fathers to minor children, of men to women, of the strong to the weak. These obligations were increasingly seen as the source of European moral right, even moral duty to establish colonial rule in Africa (p.424-425).

Nevertheless, such narratives have the effect of alienating both continental and Diaspora African students from the learning process in the classroom, because they tend to use moral obligations to justify racism, sexism, oppression, domination, and exploitation that European colonialism left in its trails. As an analogy to such dominant discourse, Don, one of the respondents stated:

> Not surprisingly, in contemporary times the United States invariably invokes the narrative of the so-called Euro-American moral obligations as a justification to interfere in the affairs of the others. However, the counter-narratives of resistance, revolt, and indignation against Euro-American Good-Samaritanism by the others are always either ignored or hidden under the carpet, so to speak.

Tuitt (n.d) states that students of racialized backgrounds enter university classrooms, lecture halls or seminars as personal, political, and intellectual beings. Thus, African students have personal and political narratives on colonization to share with theirs fellow students and professors. An interactive learning environment would help the professor and other students to hear African students' personal and political experiences with colonization. These personal and political experiences and theories are a valuable source of knowledge that would enrich the colonization discourses.

Some professors of African studies have negative perception about African students' academic ability. A professor of African studies course in Brent University is reported by Sue to have made the following comments on the first day of class,

> Most of you enrolled in this course because of your erroneous belief that you can easily earn credit for this course. If you enrolled in this course with this expectation, you better withdraw because it is not going to be an easy course for you to improve your GPA in order to go to graduate school. From my understanding,

most of you have poor writing and reading skills. Members of this group will have to consult with the academic writing centre regularly—I check every thing: grammar, style, logical organization of thought, and so on – if they really want to obtain credit for this course.

This professor did not find out from the students why they enrolled in the course. Nor did he know the students' level of writing and reading skills and whether they would have difficulties comprehending materials in English language and also expressing their ideas in English. Nevertheless, comments such as the above one tend to motivate African students to withdraw emotionally or physically from the course.

As well, such a pedagogical environment undermines the trust between the students and the professor. According to Curzon-Hobson (2002) trust is not simply a student's confidence in the professor but one of care and challenge. He adds that "trust is an integral part of higher learning and that higher learning is characterized by a transforming, dialogical learning environment. Without this sense of trust—primarily between the student and the professor—neither is encouraged nor willing to question and overcome their misunderstanding of the interrelationships in the world" (p.266). Therefore, when a perceptual barrier exists between the instructor and African students such as the example I have given above, no realistic learning could take place in the classroom.

To conclude this section, it is interesting to note that some professors of African studies deliberately manipulate the master script to silence minority students or malign their humanity. Swartz (1992) casts it in a more powerful language, "all other accounts and perspectives are omitted from the master script unless they can be disempowered through misrepresentation. Thus, content that does not reflect the dominant voice must be brought under control, mastered, and then reshaped before it can become part of the

master script" (p.341). However, such practices are not an education but propaganda (James, 1995).

Conclusion: Implications for diversity Policies

The marginalization of African studies program in Brent University may not be a phenomenon restricted exclusively to that university. It is most likely that African studies in other Canadian universities also face marginalization in so far as these universities are regarded as epicenters for the propagation of European culture and ethnicity (See Price, n.d). Nevertheless, such marginalization of African studies has serious implications for diversity policy at Brent University. Anti-racist and diversity activists within and without Brent University and other universities should demand that the university administrators develop a hiring policy that gives a priority consideration to the recruitment of professors of African descent to teach African studies courses. Indeed, the hiring of professors of African descent would not only balance the representation of Africans on the professorial class, but also it would enrich the knowledge content of African studies courses. The teaching of African history, for example, requires an embodied connection so that the experiences, stories, and narrations of African peoples would be accorded a greater space.

Anti-racist and diversity researchers also need to find effective methods to monitor the teaching of African studies courses to ensure that it is not used as a conduit for propagating the superiority of White Euro-American civilization. Despite that student evaluation of professors' teaching effectiveness is some times biased (Nast, 1999; Johnson, 2000; Olivares, 2003), it could be designed to solicit a critical feedback from students about their experiences in African studies courses. For example, Nast (1999) argues that evaluation forms should help students to develop critical skills in order to

make them socially and personally reflexive consumers of higher education. Hindman

(1996, quoted in Nast, 1999) has suggested the following questions for course evaluation

form, which I find very useful for African studies course:

> 1) Did you learn anything in the course? 2) Did anything about the course change your consciousness? 3) How has this course changed your worldview? 4) Did you ever become uncomfortable about any of your prior beliefs during the course of this class? 5) Did you ever talk about any of the ideas from this course outside of class? (p.110)

When the evaluation takes that form it is most likely to capture both the student's

cognitive and affective experiences in African studies courses.

   Moreover, anti-racist or diversity researchers should undertake periodic interviews

and surveys of students enrolled in African studies courses in order to garner their

experiences in African studies courses. These suggestions would ensure that African

studies, at a minimum, contributes to the liberation of Africa and African students from

the clutches of racist domination, oppression, and exploitation. Nevertheless, the

suggestion that anti-racist or diversity researchers conduct periodic interviews of students

enrolled in African studies, particularly if their race or ethnicity is African, may or may

not be accepted as legitimate.

   On the issue of Black researchers interviewing Black subjects, Rhodes (1994)

observes that as a political strategy, it tends to marginalize Black issues as well as Black

researchers in the research community. Rhodes's observation, by implication, suggests

that the narratives of African studies students I have cited in this paper may be read by

White university administrators with suspicion, or regarded as a figment of my

imagination because of my African background. However, the problem is that White

researchers are hardly interested in race and racism in Canadian universities. Another

reason is that racial discrimination in Canadian universities has no substantive impact on

White researchers relative to Black researchers. Though both White and Black researchers may enjoy a similar class status in the academy, the Black researchers, from my perspective, would be more comfortable investigating students' racist experiences in a university setting than White researchers would be. It is also unfair to suggest that it is okay for White scholars to research the marginalization/oppression of Blacks, but it is not okay for Black researchers to do the same.

Finally, anti-racist and diversity activists should demand that university administrators make it the university policy to incorporate authors of different races or ethnicities, especially those of African descent, into either current or future African studies courses. This is essentially a moral obligation to ensure that students of Africa descent receive an education not propaganda; that their voices are heard in intellectual discourses in the classroom, and that Africa is positively made part of the university's life. If the university administrators were able to achieve these diversity goals, then they have served the cause of social justice and democracy (see Woods, 2005).

Literature cited

Atkins, K. Higgison, J. and Odhiambo, A.. (1995). The significance of race in African studies. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 41(30): B3.

Baker, B.P (2005). The impact of cultural biases on African American students' Education. *Education &Urban Society*, 37(3):243-256.

Bell, L.A. (2003). Telling tales: What stories can teach us about racism. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 6(1), 3-28.

Bischoping, K. (2003). Selecting and using course readings: A study of instructors' Students' practices. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 33(1):1-16.

Boahen, A.A. (1987).*African Perspectives on Colonialism*. John Hopkins University
          Press, USA.

Bolaria, B.S & li, P.S. (1988). *Racial oppression in Canada*. Toronto: Caramond Press.

Brown, Y. (2001). African and the academy: History, language and literature, and
          pedagogy. Paper presented at the University of British Columbia conference
          on multiculturalism, October 19. Accessed May 25, 2005 from http://www.
          multicultural.edu.ubc.ca/pages/Africa_academy.html

Butler, J. and Schmitz, B.(1992).Ethnic studies, women studies and
           multiculturalism. *Change* :36-41.

Cameron, D.J. (2002). Ethnicizing Atlantic Canadian universities: The regional
           impact of Canadian ethnic studies program, 1973-1997. *Canadian Ethnic
           Studies Journal*, 34(2):1-22.

Connell, R.W. (1993). *Schools and social Justice*. Philadelphia: Temple University
           Press.

Curtin, P. (1979) *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture*.
           University of Wisconsin Press.

Curtin, P. (1995) *African history: From earlier times to independence*. New York:
          Longman Group Ltd.

Curtin, P. (1995). Ghettoizing African history. *The Chronicle of Higher
           Education,* 41(25):A44.

Curzon-Hobson, A (2002). A pedagogy of trust in higher learning. *Teaching in
           Higher Education*, 7(3): 265-276.

Dei, G. S. (1995).African studies in Canada: Problems and challenges. *Journal
           Black Studies*, 26 (2), 153-171.

Dixson, A. D. & Rousseau, C. K. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical
           race theory in education ten years later. *Race Ethnicity and Education*,
           8 (1), 7-27.

Duncan, G.A. (2005). Critical race ethnography in education: Narratives, inequality and
           the problem of epistemology. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 93-114.

Gaine, C. (2000). Anti-racist education in White areas: The limits and possibilities of
           of change. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 3(1), 65-81.

Gerwitz, S. (2002). *Post-Welfarist Schooling: A Social Justice Audit*. London:
           Routledge.

Gordon, J. (1976) Teaching the African experience: A pan-Africanist approach.
           African Studies Review, 19(3), 109-117.

Grayson, J.P (1995). Does race matter? Outcomes of the first year experience in a
           Canadian university. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 25(2):
                79-109.

Henry, F. and Tator, C. (1994). Racism and the university. *Canadian Ethnic
           Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada*, 26 (3): 74-90.

Hooks, B.(1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*.
           New York: Rouledge.

Inikori, J. (2000). "Wonders of the African World and the Trans-Atlantic
           slave trade. *The Black Scholar*, 30(1): 30-33.

James, E, C. (Fall 2004). Assimilation to accommodation: Immigrants and the
           changing patterns of schooling. *Education Canada*, 44(4):220-240.

James, W. (1995). *Immunization: The reality behind the myth.* Westport, USA:
      Bergin&Garvey.

Johnson, R. (2000). The authority of the student evaluation questionnaire. *Teaching
      in Higher Education*, 5(4):419-434.

Kymlika, W.(1997). Immigrants, multiculturalism and Canadian citizenship. Paper
      presented at the symposium on social cohesion through social justice.
      Canadian Jewish Congress, Ottawa, November 2. Can also be accessed at
      http://www.person-shoyama.ca/Hot_Button/

Law, I. (2003). University teaching in ethnicity and racism studies: Context,
      content and commitment. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 26(3): 517-522.

Lintner,T. (2004). The savage and the slave:Critical race theory, racial
      stereotyping and the teaching of American history. *Journal of Social Studies
      Research*, 28(1), 27-32.

Lopez, G. R. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory
      perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39 (1), 68-94.

Lynn, M. et al. (2002). Critical race theory and education: Qualitative research in the
      new millennium. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 3-6.

Manning, P. (1974). Notes toward a theory of ideology in historical writing on modern
      Africa. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 8(2), 235-253.

Margolis, E. (2001) *The hidden curriculum in higher education*. New York: Routledge.

Martin, Y. M & Warburton, (1998). Voices for change: Racism, ethnocentrism, and
      cultural insensitivity at Victoria University. Accessed Nov. 30,2005, from
      http://web.uvic.ca/~equity/antiopp/voices/vc-XV.pdf

McConaghy, T. (1996). A "chilly climate" at the university of British Columbia.
      Phi Delta Kappan, 77(6):452-453.

McMahon, B.(2003). Putting the elephant into the refrigerator: Student
      engagement, critical pedagogy and antiracist education. *McGill
      Journal of Education*, Spring, 38(2):257-270

Milton, M. (1997). The status of Black studies at the nation's highest ranked universities.
      The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 16:82-91.

Nakhaie, M.R. (2004).Who controls Canadian universities? Ethnoracial origins of
      Canadian university administrators and faculty's perception of mistreatment.
      Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada,36(1):92-105.

Nast, H. (March 1999). "Sex", "race" and multiculturalism: Critical consumption
      and the politics of course evaluation. *Journal of Geography in Higher
      Education*, 23(1):102-15.

Neusner, J. (Feb.15, 1989). It is time to stop apologizing for Western culture and
      start analyzing why it defines world culture. *The Chronicle of Higher
      Education*, 35 (23): B1.

Ng, R.(1993). "A woman out of control": Deconstructing sexism and racism in
      the university. *Canadian Journal of Education*, (18):189-200.

Ohmann, R. (Spring 2004). Politics of teaching. *Radical Teacher*, #69: 29-36.

Olivares, O. (2003).A conceptual and analytic critique of student ratings of teachers
      in the USA with implications for teacher effectiveness and student learning.
      Teaching in Higher Education, 8(2):233-245.

Owomoyela, O. (1994). With friends like these: A critique of pervasive

anti-Africanism in current African studies epistemology and methodology. *African Studies Review*, 37(3):77-101.

Parker, L. (1998). Race is…race aint: An exploration of the utility of critical race theory In qualitative research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11 (!), 43-55.

Parker, L & Lynn, M. (2002). What's race got to d with it? Critical race theory's Conflict with and connections to qualitative research methodology Epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 7-22.

Preston, V. & Murnaghan, A.M.(2005). Immigrants and racialization in Canada. *Canadian Social Issues*, Spring, 67-71.

Price, A. J. (n.d). Native studies versus the academic establishment. Accessed May 31,2005 from http://www.brandonu.ca/library/cjns/1.1price.pdf

Rhodes, P.J. (1994). Race-of-interviewers effects: A brief comment. *Sociology*, 28(2), 547-558.

Robinson, R.E. and Gallagher, J. (1981). *African and Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperalism.* Macmillan Education, Boston, USA.

Scheurich, J.J & Young, M.D. (1997) Coloring epistemologies: Are research Epistemologies racially biased? *Educational Researcher*, 26(4), 4-16.

Solorzano, D. G & Yesso, T.J (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-story telling as analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry,* 8(1), 23-44.

Statistics Canada (1991). Beyond 2020. Accessed on June 20,2005 from http://www.40.Statcan.ca

Swartz, E. (1992). Emancipatory narratives: Rewriting the master script in the School curriculum.*The Journal of Negro Education,* 61(3):341-355.

Tete, W.F (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22: 191-243.

Thompson, A.(1997).For anti-racist education. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 27(1):7-44.

Traore, L.R. (Jan, 2004) Colonialism continued: African students in an urban high school in America. *Journal of Black Studies*,34 (3):348-369.

Tuitt, F. (n,d). Realizing a more inclusive pedagogy. In A Howell&Tuitt, F (ed.), Race and Higher Education: Rethinking pedagogy in diverse college classrooms. Harvard Education Press. Accessed June 13, 2005 from http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hepg/race andhighereducation.html

Uzoigwe, G.N.(1981). *Britain and the Conquest of Africa: The Age of Salisbury.* The University of Michigan Press.

Walter, R. (1981). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Howard University Press.
.

Wolf, R.E (1990). *Europe and the people without history*. University of California Press, Berkeley, Loss Angles.

Woods, P.A (2005) *Democratic leadership in education. London*: Paul Chapman Publishing

Young, I. M (1990) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford University Press.