

# Sankofa: The Critical Nkrumahist Theory

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on Pan-Africanism as a critical thought within lens used to engage and critique different approaches to disability of the body. The paper uses the Sankofa (return to the source) conceptualization process as a way to revisit/resurge the Nkrumah's ideology in order to better understand the disabling structures that have created disablement in Africa, which has led to disabilities for people in Africa. Therefore, it is argued that such a resurgent will lead to a critical Nkrumahist Pan-African disability theory that views disability and disablement from a pre-colonial cultural social political economic context, rather than from a biological or restrictive social lens.

## Preamble

Reading African thought and African knowledge producers has been an enlightenment, as I read in ways that I have never read before and dissected the writings of great critical Pan-African leaders with passion and in-depth connection to the issues uncovered. African thoughts, discussion and reading is a getaway avenue, a place where I can seek solitude away from the whiteness of knowledge production that created an intellectual bankruptcy for those of us not seeking knowledge legitimacy from the hegemony. Walking the shadows of my ancestors was invigorating, but why did it take so long to find this safe space? Why wasn't I taught about my ancestors from childhood, why was this void left within me? Will it take this long for younger generations of African people to find these safe spaces in their academic journeys? Will they be subjected to the current debilitating intellectual bankruptcies, leaving them with only knowing, embodying and using emancipatory tools created by the white hegemony? It is important to interrogate how humanness is constructed from early childhood and carried on in oppressive post-secondary educational systems that continue to deny safe spaces in which to learn or engage in revolutionary theories that could dismantle and break the yoke of white hegemony. However, it is equally important to engage within these non-safe spaces – to prepare the next generation to stand in opposition to spaces that erase their bodies, knowledges and lineage. Critical Disability Studies is well situated to create a door of return that allows African people to *Sankofa* some of their ways of knowledge emancipation and how they contextualize disability to refuse to be erased from the ever-growing disability discourse.

It is time to engage in a critical Nkrumahist Pan-African disability theory that views disability and disabling from a pre-colonial-cultural-social-political-economic context rather than from a biological or restrictive social lens. Dei (2012) placed a particularly important call for African scholars to “have uncomfortable conversations sometimes about our history and what has happened to us long after some of these ideas [of African freedom fighters such as Nkrumah] were expressed” (p. 44). This call is particularly important as many contemporary African philosophers and knowledge producers are “caught in the seduction of a post-modern, post-racial world” (Dei, 2012, p. 44), being lured away from the critical issues and continuous atrocities that Africa and African people face in today’s ‘neo-colonial’ politics, continuing to bankrupt our intellectual revolution. Dei (2012) also made African scholars aware that “given the post-colonial challenges facing African peoples today, African intellectuals have a responsibility to revisit some of [Nkrumah’s] pioneering ideas as we seek to design our own future” (p. 42). It is with this call that I seek to Sankofa, a return to the source, as the Twi language states, but not without a return to the roots to learn, hear and listen to what and how Pan-African nationalists, specifically Nkrumah, envisioned victory for African people and Africa (Dei, 2012). This call is important because “anti-colonial practice begin by asking new and critical questions [which brings] . . . certain questions to the foregrounding of radical African scholarship [therefore] . . . the search for answers entails that we engage a critical Pan-African vision and radical African-centered scholarship” (Dei, 2012, p. 42).

## Introduction

In this paper, I will unpack Pan-Africanism to place into context how disability was represented within Pan-African thought; and specifically, the relevancy of Pan-Africanism and Nkrumanist ideas in terms of disability and the disablement of Ghana/Africa. Pan-Africanists such as DuBois, Garvey, Padmore, Nkrumah, Nyerere, Cabral, Thiong’o, Lumumba, among many others, have shaped Africa and African lives (both in Africa and Diaspora) through their struggles to bring independence, social, cultural, economic and political justice, African unity, and decolonization of the mind to people of indigenous Africa. The core critical lens of Pan-Africanism is ‘One Africa, Unity,’ especially the unification in economics, culture, spirituality and collective consciousness of the African people. To further my research in Pan-Africanism as a critical thought within the Critical Disability Studies discourse, I will specifically draw on Nkrumahist thought and its significance in Ghana and Africa. The goal for this paper is to explore the history of critical Pan-Africanism while unpacking the work of its key theorists in order to clarify how we can Sankofa, reading *Sankokin*, listening *Sankotie*, and embracing and anchoring “our analysis in how Euro-colonial processes of knowledge production, interrogation, validation and dissemination has either denied or invalidated our humanity, self-respect and our cultural sense of knowing” (Dei, 2012, p. 47).

The hope is that this will lead to Nkrumah's thoughts, in relation to disability, and the concept of disablement. To start this reflective journey, I begin by contextualizing the emergence of Pan-Africanism, its founding Fathers and its historical mapping followed by critical Nkrumahist ideology.

Such analysis is needed as critical Pan-Africanist and Critical Nkuamahist theory allows for African people to reclaim their humanness, within a 'neo-Colonial' globalized Africa which exploits Her material and intellectual resources creating material, economic, cultural and intellectual bankruptcy. While also creating "violent inter-state and intra-state conflicts, still-born pluralistic governance systems, rapidly deteriorating social services, all of which have culminated in spiraling poverty" leading to disability (Oduor, 2009, p. 1). Oduor (2009) prompted an important question that should awaken each African intellectual: "how does [Africa] ensure [She] is a formidable player in the global scene, without [Her] culture being swamped by foreign worldviews that often encourage ravaging individualism in the place of constructive communalism?" (p. 2). This question which will not be unpacked within this paper and the latter comment by Oduor (2009) is an entry point for African critical disability scholars to re-think the world of disablement within a broader context. The continuous Westernization of Africa and African countries has brought nothing but a dystopic new-colonial state that has enveloped Africa while draining Her blood through the exploitation of Her land and people. This disablement of the continent is a reflection of the disablement of African bodies, creating several layers of disability. In particular, the extraction of resources and appropriation of lands from rural areas creates is disabling especially because farming and a spiritual connection to their lands is necessary for survival. This paper seeks to 'Sankofa' Nkrumah's critical Pan-African vision as it allows for an "epistemological query, an intellectual and political journey through which the geo-African body comes" to be the central focus for thinking through the complexity of a neo-colonial door of no return ideology (Dei, 2012, p. 52).

Critical Pan-Africanism/critical Nkrumahist theory will guide me through this critical comprehensive stage by centering 'Africanness' while decentering Eurocentric colonial constructions of the African and Africa identities. However, Dei (2012) cautions, "there is a challenge for scholars who embark on such journey, stating that one should, . . . intervene with a more comprehensive concept of Pan-African Personality that reflects the distinct cultural character of African aspirations globally" (p. 45). With this knowledge, it is my privileged position to enter academia and engage with critical disability studies within critical Pan-African and critical Nkrumahist theory especially, to understand how disability and disablement are conceptualized. And how policies have been systematically structured affecting the continent, the countries within, Her governments, Her people and the knowledge production of Her people, leading to the disablement of the entire continent. Understanding the above, contextualizes how a Pan-African "personality embodies the historical memory . . . collective consciousness, artifacts, social institutions, innovation and creative vision of the composite African people" (Dei, 2012, p. 45).

The question then becomes, how comprehensive is the claim of a critical Pan-Africanism and an African Personality when the disablement of the continent is afflicted through systemic atrocities led by a larger system of imperialism that extends beyond the continent? This analysis of Pan-Africanism, creates a lens that provides a ‘multifactorial’ vision of the African people; meaning their social institutions and collective consciousness is relevant to the ‘humanness or one-ness’ of critical Pan-African and critical Nkrumahist ideology while being open to the creativity and fluidity of carefully merging with the critical disability lens from a disabling point in order to find a way forward; a centralized location that produces fecundity which allows for total liberation of the mind, body and soul as it attaches to the land of the continent. Regardless of some of the questions and discourses that I have engaged with above for context purposes, the main questions that I will be unpacking in this paper are: What are critical Pan-African theory and critical Nkrumahist theory? How can critical Nkrumahist which was stemmed from Critical Pan-African theory be associated with western critical disability studies and why this association is an important discourse for the emerging Critical Disability Studies program.

## **The Invention of Pan-Africanism**

Pan-Africanism has seen its fair share of discord within academia and across the continental even down to whether the word ‘Pan’ or ‘pan’ should be capitalized. Shepperson (1960) provided some context of when and why the interchangeable small or capital letter can be used. He states that Pan-Africanism should be capitalized because it refers to a movement. Writing pan-Africanism with a lower case ‘p’ does not refer to a recognizable movement, but Shepperson (1960) suggested it would be helpful to declutter all the inconsistencies that have been written about a nationalist Pan-African movement if upcoming scholars can trace the “origins of ‘Pan-African-ism’ employing the term accurately in studies. . . . But if a collective term is required, ‘all-African’ [should be] used” (p. 346). And I agree with Shepperson’s call in regard to writing the capital ‘P’, as this paper is a form of reawakening the movement.

Researchers have claimed that the theory of Pan-Africanism was started by slaves in the diaspora (Nkrumah, 1963; Shepperson 1960; Esedebe, 1994), while others claim that its inception dates back to Egypt B.C. (Legum, 1965; Nantambu, 1998; Wiredu 2004). To further the claim that Pan-Africa evolution began 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Nantambu (1998) presented some facts that show its evolution from ancient Kemet:

In the B.C. era, African peoples in ancient Kemet (Egypt) resisted and fought against the following conquerors:

Hyksos or “Sheperd Kings,” in 1783 B.C

Assyrians, now known as the Syrians, in 666 B.C.

Persians, now known as the Iranians, in 552 B.C. and 343 B.C.

Greeks, the world’s first Europeans, under Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.

Romans, Europeans, in 30 B.C.

Arabs in 642 A.D.

French, Europeans, under Napoleon Bonaparte on May 19, 1798

British, Europeans, in 1881. (p. 568)

Such an account raises the question of where Pan-African ideology really emerged from and how it has been contextualized as a tool of resistance, emancipation and centering African people and Africa. But these differences in the timelines of Pan-Africanism also bring to question who the founding Fathers are and what their real vision/framework was. For these reasons, it is important to sankofa the relationship between Ghana’s Nkrumah (acclaimed founder of Pan Africanism and Africa) with Pan Africanism as a movement that rose to resist white domination and the enslavement of African peoples.

Appiah (1992) Nantambu, (1998) Williams (1961) and Williams (1961) argued that Pan-Africanism as a tool of emancipation, contrary to popular portrayal, was not racially motivated. It was driven by economic exploitation of African people through slavery, a process justified by European imperialism. Nantambu (1998) provided some clarification explaining that:

Slavery was an economic institution of the first importance. . . . The origin of Negro slavery . . . was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. As compared with Indian and white labor, Negroes slavery was eminently superior. In each case. . . . It was a survival of the fittest. Both Indian slavery and white servitude were to go down before the blackman’s superior endurance, docility, and labor capacity. The features of the man his hair, color, dentifrice, his “subhuman” characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to Negro labor because it was cheapest and best. (as cited in Nantambu, 1998, p. 565).

Williams makes clear that the original formation of Pan-African nationalists, “resisted European economic exploitation as embodied by slavery, not racialism, and because slavery was initially based on economic, culture and class struggle. It is [therefore] historically incorrect to conclude that the Pan-African Nationalist movement was born as a reaction to racialism” (as cited in Nantambu, 1998, p. 564).

Nkrumah (1963) concurs with Williams stating that this distortion “invented the myth of colour inferiority . . . which supported the subsequent rape of our continent with its despoliation and continuing exploitation under the advanced forms of colonialism and imperialism” (p. 1). Understanding both Nkrumah and Ntantambu (1998) are important especially because European domination over Africa’s economy and politics is not a recent development, rather one that dates back 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (Ntantambu, 1998).

It is important to note that this myth of the invention of Pan-Africanism changed over time especially within the context of contemporary South Africa. Domination went beyond the theft of resources and cheap labour to extend to the construction of a racial hierarchy in order to justify the domination of black men by white men. This was clearly outlined by Mandela (1978) where he stated that “[white] men regard it as the destiny of the white race to dominate the man of colour. The harshness of their domination, however, is rousing in the African feelings. . . . And these can no longer be suppressed” (p. 12). Hence why Mandela (1978) warned Africa that it is “imperative for the African to view [their] problems and those of [their] country through the perspective of Race” (p. 13), if not, he argued that the world will be misled that the “[white] men . . . is helping the African on the road to civilized life . . . (p. 13), creating a ‘white man savior’ mentality. Therefore, Nkrumah and Mandela makes one understand that though they are from different eras, their ideas still falls under the hegemony dominating Africa and African people as the “lesser race”.

The Nationalist “Pan-African Movement [is used] as an aid to the promotion of national self-determination among Africans under African leadership for the benefits of Africans themselves” (Ntantambu, 1998, p. 561). The Pan-African movement was for the benefit of African people looking to end European domination in Africa through a diasporic and collaborative effort. According to Esedebe (1977), critical Pan-African evolution was created with a manifesto that embodies a fraternal solidarity for Indigenous African people in the diaspora and Africa for the sole purpose of breaking free from political, economic, spiritual and cultural oppression (p. 561). Chrisman (1973) depicted the movement for liberation and the progress of African people and nations as:

The Pan-African vision has as its basic premise that we the people of African descent throughout the globe constitute a common cultural and political community by virtue of our origin in Africa and our common racial, social and economic oppression. It further maintains that political, economic, and cultural unity is essential among all African people, to bring about effective action for the liberation and progress of the African peoples and nations. (p. 2).

The vision of critical Pan-Africanism is summarised below as embracing a collaborating arrangement that seeks for a ‘United Africa and African’:

The sense that all Africans have a spiritual affinity with each other and that, having suffered together in the past, they must march together into a new and brighter future. In its fullest realization this would involve the creation of an African leviathan in the form of a political organization or association of states. . . . It might involve an almost infinite variety of regional groupings and collaborative arrangements, all partial embodiments of the counter-embracing unity which is the dream of the Pan-Africanist. (Emerson, 1970 as cited in Nantabutu, 1998, p. 562).

Similarly, Mbiti, a Kenyan-born Anglican Priest, in his book *African Religions and Philosophy*, provides a thorough overview of the collective and binding nature of African traditional religions. For Mbiti (1990), to be human in Africa “is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community” (p. 2). These communitarian principles provide the driving force for the critical Pan-Africanist movement. This call for unification of both Indigenous African people and diasporic African people s was complex; this is because their vision was to shield Africa, setting Her free from political, cultural and economic bondage through spiritual affinity while using both an African lens and a diasporic western lens.

As stated above, a united Africa and African was to protect Africa’s political, cultural and economic borders. It was a way of reclaiming sovereignty through ending colonialism and the later enslavements and the displacements of African peoples around the globe; this call for an all-African critical thought as a weapon for emancipation. But this all-African emancipation has been debated by researchers such as Romero (1976), Wiredu (1980), Appiah (1992), Nantambu (1998), Imbo (1998), and others who argued that the founding Pan-Africanist was by diaspora African people in the Caribbean and United States of America (USA) such as: DuBois, Padmore, Millard, Makonnen, James, Blyden, Crummell and Garvey. Specifically, Appiah (1992) provides a clarity by stating that “Alexander Crummell and Edward Blyden began the intellectual articulation of a Pan-Africanist ideology, but it was W. E. B. DuBois who laid both the intellectual and practical foundations of the Pan-African movement” (pg. 28)

It is important to note that Garvey is known among Pan-African groups as an idealist and the head of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey advocated for a radical response to racism in the US with “the return of black people to their African homeland” (Warren, 1990, p. 18). An almost impossible solution to imagine as the task of mapping each African diaspora’s lineage after centuries of transnational slave trade alone would be prohibitive. What processes would need to be put in place to make Garvey’s appeal materialize? And could this call still be possible today or could this set Africa up for failure? Asking such questions today allows a better understanding of what is possible to reclaim and revisit within a contemporary critical Pan-Africanism.

Warren (1990) explained that “Garvey’s plan appealed to the masses because it addressed African diaspora’s concrete needs, offering a way out of poverty and showing them how to leave the land of racism, violence . . . [and] deceit” (p. 18). Warren also explained that DuBois opposed Garvey’s call, claiming that, “it was bombastic, wasteful, illogical, and ineffective and almost illegal” (as cited by Warren, 1990, p. 18). DuBois would rather fight for equality in a land that they were brought into to build, and toil rather than “willingly accept the position that . . . United States belong to white people” (as cited by Warren, 1990, p. 18). DuBois and Garvey have different visions for achieving Pan-Africanism, I argue that both their positions could have been materialised, creating a middle ground that fulfills the same goal, especially with current contemporary scholars seeking some form of belonging to a place called home, with an open door for their return. Could Garvey’s dream of diasporan African people returning to Africa be accomplished without any conflict complexity and if so, how can both African people in Africa and diaspora Africa people ns be mentally and physically prepared for such unification?

## **Unwrapping Critical Pan-African**

In *The Weapon of Theory*, Cabral (1966), the leader of Guinea Bissau, presents a radical theory that takes a stand against oppressors by refusing to surrender to oppressors’ and their language. Cabral provides an emancipating tool for countries seeking nationalist liberation and those who have already been liberated and are having “doubts . . . about the solidity, strength, maturity and validity” of their liberation (Cabral, 1966, p. 1). He argues that national liberation is more or less a facade because of the influence of external neo-colonial factors. Therefore, other African countries should not be ignorant “of the historical reality which their movements claim to transform” (Cabral, 1966, p. 3). Cabral (1966) warns of class as a form of imperialism and presents Cuba as an example of a nationalist revolution done well. Cabral explains that “classes within one or several human groups is a fundamental consequence of the progressive development of the productive forces and of the characteristics of the distribution of the wealth produced by the group or usurped from others” (p. 4). Therefore, a revolutionary consciousness leading to the decolonization of the mind and the awareness of such imperialistic social structure is required (see Cabral 1966; Nyerere, 1964; Nkrumah, 1962, 1963, 1965; Thiong’o, 1986). For a country to fulfill the “role in the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which they belong (Cabral, 1966, p. 15).

With such insight, one can conclude that Cabral’s call to “commit suicide” is a heavy call as committing class suicide in order to become a revolutionary worker will mean to enter spaces that will be uncomfortable and possibly dangerous, an idea which resonates with Dei’s (2012) discussion about entering uncomfortable spaces. Cabral’s call pushes academics to consider their privilege and provides a conscientious lens for reading between the lines of imperialist intentions while also understanding the power of embodying the ‘peoples’ lens of revolution.



Nyerere (1964), with his own ideology, questions the power of becoming free from Eurocentric ways of knowing and knowledge producing, stating that “the feeling of unity which now exists could, however, be whittled away if each country gets its independence separately and becomes open to the temptations” (p. 40). However, continental unity can only be acquired through the “decision of the people expressed through their elected representatives” (p. 40). This analysis can be extended to understand the danger of working in silos; Nyerere argues that fighting in silos does not work, as such structures opens one to the temptations of conforming to larger systemic structures of the hegemony. Nyerere (1964) further highlights that one of the dangerous tools used by the colonizers was the ‘Balkanisation of Africa’ (divide and conquer) in order to weaken the strength of the continent, that this separation opened the borders for neo-liberalism and different forms of imperialism to penetrate African countries; and is why the unification of the continent is desperately needed for the survival of the continent and the people (see Cabral 1966; Nkrumah 1963; Nyerere 1964). So, the question is, has Nyerere’s fear of whittled independency become an unfortunate reality in contemporary Africa?

Ngugi wa Thiong’o writings awakens intellectual senses. Thiong’o (1986, 2012) places imperialism on the map to map the loss of languages as a method of imperialist control over Africa claiming that colonialism is still well ingrained in Africa’s knowledge production system. Thiong’o (1986, 2012) therefore argues for the return of the use of the “Mother tongue,” but how can we confirm that current tribal languages are not a creation of the colonial atrocity after centuries of colonial rule? Thiong’o (2012) cautions scholars to question their writing, especially if they are trying to become revolutionary worker writing for and on behalf of the people, and to be cautious of using the oppressor’s language to disrupt their methodical colonial bondages as it can become convoluted. This is similar to the ‘class suicide’ that Cabral (1966) speaks about. Letting go of the oppressors’ language and becoming a coder of messages that can only be picked up by Indigenous African people of the continent/country could be a start on the long journey of decolonizing mindsets. It is time for revolutionary academics to stop translating Africa’s rich Indigenous ways of messaging into the oppressor’s language so it can end up in the oppressor’s depository resulting in intellectual bankruptcy for the continent.

Younger generations can be taught earlier to write/code in their mother tongue in order for writings to become accessible to those without academic privilege. In that sense, this can become a new form of unification and process for freedom and disrupting imperial neo-colonial spaces. This validates, Cabral’s earlier call for revolutionary suicide. If this revolution were to happen in the way that Cabral envisioned, Nyerere’s fears of a weak independence would be nullified. In Addition, Thiong’o’s decolonization would naturally materialize. Therefore, I argue that the way forward to emancipation and the reversal of intellectual bankruptcy is to start seeding the revolutionary mindset early in a child’s development in order to make it easier for them to navigate their environments, especially the uncomfortable spaces, this can also help with reclaiming the African way of knowing while grounding critical Pan-African theory in the minds of the future of Africa.

Thiong'o (2012) asked a very provocative question to those willing to carry out the revolution “[what] is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without [Euro-American] languages?” (p. 124). This question cannot be answered within this paper but should be used as a starting point, for all Euro-American trained African people and African scholars, to open dialogue that allows one to question if and how it can be possible to carry on the revolutionary stand.

Nkrumah's idea of a revolution appears to be more radical and transformative. Given that some of his ideas materialised during his political leadership in Ghana, it is important to focus attention on Ghana as an experimental case in Pan-Africanism. In this section, the paper will review Nkrumah's (1963) vision of the weapon of critical Pan-Africanism to take Ghana to independence, his claim to unite and decolonize the minds of African people s of new subtle forms of colonial mentality; reclaiming African politics, culture and borders. Nkrumah approaches his work by adopting a critical disability lens to the entirety of the colonial enterprise. He rationalises that the colonial experience has disabled African people structurally, mentally, physically and economically and the way to emancipation is through a methodological eradication of such disablement of the African/Ghanaian people. Critical Nkrumahist theory, in this way, can be read as a Pan-Africanist intervention to the field of critical disability studies.

## **Critical Nkrumahist Theory**

Ama Biney (2008) argues that decolonization of the mind of his people after colonial rule was “central to the major debates and issues” of Nkrumahism (p. 3). Therefore, to better understand how Nkrumah's structural disablement method can be applied within Critical Disability Studies, it is critical to explore some major discourses within disability construction. Gleeson (1998) contextualizes disability as a “term which has many different uses in various places and is therefore impossible to define objectively” (p. 6). Gleeson continued by stating that “[disability] may refer to a considerable range of human differences – including those defined by age, health, physical, and mental abilities, and even economic status – that have been associated with some form of social restriction material deprivation” (p. 6). In other words, the “social restriction and material deprivation” African people face because of slavery and colonialism leads to a form of disability. In this case, disability is conceived of in macro-structural terms. With such knowledge, one can use an Nkrumahist thought to analyse the different ways that disablement hovers over the African continent (Macro), a nation (Meso) and a community/individual (Micro) and can be decolonized.

Nkrumah's zeal to lead Ghana out of years of colonial rule was realized through his association with the Founding Fathers of Pan-Africanism and his love for Ghana and Africa. Research shows that Nkrumah was heavily influenced by Garvey's radical stand for the mass political movement of peasants, his dream to unite Africa, and his work on building solidarity (see Reed, 1975; Romero, 1976).

Mekonnen another name of the Pan-African movement pushed for Nkrumah to accept the “invitation to return to Ghana and begin the action for independence” (as cited by Romero, 1976, p. 327). Both Padmore (Nkrumah’s mentor) and Makonnen aided Nkrumah to leave London to lead Ghana to Her independence (ibid).

As a way to understand some of the new Pan-Africanist dreams of Nkrumah and his new administration, Nantambu (1998) highlighted the various ways Pan-Africanists specialized within the movement, encompassing, “intellectual, geopolitical, scientific, and cultural” Pan-Africanists (p. 570). He identified DuBois, Williams and Casley-Hayford as the intellectual Pan-Africanists, these are those that “their research advance the analytical course to achieve liberation” (p. 570). The geopolitical Pan-Africanist nationalists such as Nkrumah, Garvey and Biko relate the macro and create linkages to a global liberation struggle. The scientific Pan-Africanist nationalists are those whose work on revolution is linked to science, including Fanon

and Toure. While the cultural Pan-Africanist nationalist are known to focus on challenging the oppressive Eurocentric status quo, those who seek to liberate the “African Personality,” and those who continue to seek to relocate African people and Her knowledge back to Africa, such as Cabral (1966), Cesaire (2001), Nantambu (1998) and Thiong’o (1986).

With the above account, especially on the different ways each Pan-Africanist have contributed to the Pan-African movement, one can argue that Nkrumah dreamt and fought to geopolitically revolutionize Ghana and nationalize his push for the unification of Africa. Knowing the above is relevant in order to better situate the strengths that each Pan-Africanist brought to the table for emancipation. In His book, *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah (1963) shared his vision to not only unite Ghana through decolonizing their minds, but also to create a self-sustaining Sovereign Africa “to live free from the shadows of fears which cramp their dignity when they exist in servitude, in poverty, in degradation and contempt” (n.p). Nkrumah believed that to be free, people/African people must live free with dignity, without poverty and humiliation. Simply put, Nkrumah’s revolutionary fight sought for the ‘Humanness’ of the Ghanaian and African people “[the] ideology of Nkrumahism, reflected in the writings, speeches and policies of Nkrumah, [it] provides a coherent body of ideas...It addresses the concerns of African centeredness, empowerment, economic independency, cultural liberation and vitality (pg.149).

His drive leading to Ghana’s independence became a bedrock for freeing other neighbouring African countries from colonial rule and this, Nkrumah (1963) claimed, was the “voices of Africa” and its rebirth (p. x). But as a geopolitical revolutionist, Nkrumah made an early declaration that “not all the ramparts of colonialism have yet fallen” (p. x). At this point, Nkrumah’s Pan-African dreams were being actualized in Ghana once it gained independence. With his goal of “Africa must Unite” he was very vigilant of western imperialists resurging and recolonizing the continent while it was still vulnerable, in the immediate post-independence era. He referred to this as “neo-colonialism,” a more dangerous form of imperialist empire.

As an ex-prime minister of the colonial rule, one can argue that Nkrumah was an insider informant, having privileged accesses to colonial conversations, coming across highly classified documents that showed the methodical plots of the continuation of imperial empire. Or could it be because of his “considerable extent [of western education] . . . that have moulded [his] intellectual processed and political philosophical thoughts” (p. xii)? With in-depth archival research on the life of Nkrumah to better contextualize his relationship to the colonials during the colonial era (which I intend to further in my work), one will be able to link his awareness of what is to come of his zeal to wanting and advocating for the unification of ‘one-Africa’ leading to the reclamation of his work. Nevertheless, Nkrumah in his fight for emancipating Africa from the bondage of economic, social, education and cultural imperialism and shackles, provided an extensive account of his view on the objectives of the most powerful force, imperialism. Nkrumah (1963) illustrates that:

[Imperialism] controls our economics. It operates on a world-wide scale in combinations of many different kinds: economic, political, cultural, educational, military; and through intelligence and information services. In the context of the new independence mounting in Africa, it has began, and will continue, to assume new forms and subtler disguises. It is already making use, and will continue to make use, of the different cultural and economic associations which colonialism has forced between erstwhile European masters and African subjects. It is creating client states, which it manipulates from the distance. It will distort and play upon, as it is already doing, the latent fears of burgeoning nationalism and independence. It will, as it is already doing, fan fires of sectional interest, of personal agree and ambition among leaders and contesting aspirants to power. . . . These and many others will be the devious ways of the neo-colonialism by which the imperialists hope to keep their stranglehold on Africa’s resources for their own continued enrichment. To ensure their continued hegemony over this continent, they will use any and every devise to halt and disrupt the growing will among the vast masses of Africa’s populations for unity. Just as our strength lies in a unified policy and action for progress and development, so the strength of the imperialists lies in our disunity. We in Africa only can meet them effectively by presenting a unified front and a continental purpose. (Nkrumah, 1963, p. xvi).

Nkrumah’s analysis of imperialism brings to context how methodical the imperialist forms of oppressions are and how such a plan will be the future of Africa if care is not taken. One can also see how this vision is echoed by Thiong’o’s (1986) cultural imperialist warning, Mandela’s (1978) call for the unification of Africa, and Cabral (1966) and Nyerere’s (1964) calls to decolonize the several systems imposed through imperialism.

Nkrumah's (1963) claim that different structural controls will be used to continue colonial control over Africa's economy appears to be materialising through various development initiatives and programs. For instance, African Millennium Development Grants are to tackle development challenges, or the 'crippling' impacts of the International Monetary Fund, or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were created to "end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity" (Sustainable Development Knowledge, 2016, n.p). Escobar in the *Invention of Development (1999)* also concurs with Nkrumah on the disabling development program created in the name of eradicating African poverty:

Development was –and continues to be for the most part –a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach that treats people and cultures as abstract concepts, statistical figures to be moved up and down in the charts of progress.... It comes as no surprise that development became a force so destructive to the third world cultures, ironically in the name of people's interests. (Escobar, 1999, p. 382).

Vigilance is therefore required as the 'white hegemony race' is not in the business of returning wealth to where it was extracted, which I argue has affected the dignity, peace and prosperity that development organization claim to have set as a universal goal. Because it objectifies African people s for the benefit of the hegemonic countries. Nkrumah (1963) was clear that the colonizer's new form of penetration will be subtler and will use "every devise to halt and disrupt the growing will among the vast masses of Africa's populations for unity" (p. xvi). Nkrumah provides a warning to African people not to fall for hegemonic imperialist plots as Africa's "strength lies in a unified policy and action for [their own] progress and development" by their own unified African people, and will therefore bring peace for all people to enjoy (p. xvi). Nkrumah warned that their imperialist plot can only materialize and take over Africa through 'disunity' of the continent. Such an intense geopolitical Pan-Africanist dream could have painted a different Africa today if he was given the opportunity. As stated by Nkrumah (1963):

We have to be constantly on the alert, for we are steadfastly resolved that our freedom shall never be betrayed. And this freedom of ours to build our economics, stands open to danger just as long as a single country on this continent remains fettered by colonial rule and just as long as there exist on African soil puppet government manipulated from afar. Our freedom stands open to danger just as long as the independent states of Africa remain apart. (p. xvii).

Unfortunately, Africa is now home to puppet governments being manipulated from afar by invisible or camouflaged hands that have tied the continent with the violent effect of 'barbwires,' which has left "Mother Africa" bleeding for their own self-interest. I argue that such mechanisms for continuing the "blood draining" of African and Africa's resources is still very much visible as the call for the unification of Africa for African people without any influence or domination of the outside world has not yet materialized. One can see such political and violent instability in many of Africa's natural resources producing nations such as: Libya a country that gained independency in 1947 but is currently in shambles: Sudan, a nation that gained independency in 1956 but still had to face the genocide in Darfur DRC. And these are the moments which Nkrumah feared so much; this fight for unity, economic control for and by African people, the policing of Africa's borders and policies therefore, requiring one to Sankofa in order to "foment the revolt of the majority of the world's inhabitants against their oppressors" (p. x). And until the latter strategy can be materialized, it will only "destroy us one by one," until African bodies and land become ashes (p. xvii). Nkrumah foresaw the poisonous neo-colonial plot that awaits a 'disunited Africa' through the use of the African bodies themselves.

Nkrumah (1963) provided direction on how to gain freedom, his freedom first attainment embodies a decolonizing framework for concrete action, and as Tuck (2000) boldly stated, "decolonization is not a metaphor" (n.p). Nkrumah's first step in decolonization and African emancipation from colonial mental slavery requires every Indigenous person to conceive and embody a mental attachment to the struggle, to decolonize their minds from colonial mental slavery. He explained that "a people subjected to foreign domination [do] not find it easy to translate [their] wish into action," therefore, guidance is needed (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 51). First the revolutionist will need to "center their mind" back to their pre-colonial identity in order to reclaim some indigenous identity that allows for the decolonizing of the mind to become a reality. How is this possible after so many years of domination? Setting the 'self' free from acedia and fostering faith while encouraging them "to take part in the freedom struggle" (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 51).

Nkrumah's words had spiritual undertones, making it easy to connect his thinking to Mbiti's (1990) survey of African Spirituality that claims that every African is spiritual and cannot exist without their community. After decolonizing the mind, stage two requires a strong and united political party that is knitted "together by a [program] that is acceptable to all members" who are willingly ready to submit to all political visions of freedom and unity (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 51). Nkrumah (1963) puts this as "[seeking] ye first the political freedom" (p. 51). Here, the biblical language that ties back to the King James Version of the Bible becomes visible where it states, "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew, 6.33). This similarity brings into question how African Nkrumah's Critical Pan-African vision really is; is it based on African spirituality or continued to be influenced by the colonizer, as he stated "[if] there does at times appear to be an emphasis upon the British pattern and upon events in Ghana, it is because they are part of my personal experience" (p. xii).

His Pan-African vision was informed, and I argue contaminated, by his western education that he received from both Europe and North America. Reed Jr (1975) also concurs that, Nkrumah's African Personality assumption "is what is left after all other foreign influences" (p. 86): Letting one question Nkrumah's Critical Pan-African and African Personality spiritual essence and its pure Africaness.

To further accomplish a thorough Critical African nationalist decolonizing of the mind and the journey towards emancipation, Nkrumah (1963), poses that a 'Resolute Leadership' is the next stage that is required to fully abolish the neo-colonial rule. A leader that will, "go to the people, live among them, learn from them, love them, serve them, plan with them, start with what they know, [then] build on what they have" (p. 55) in order to reach for the main goal. This third stage of Nkrumah's decolonizing is similar to Cabral's (1966) revolutionary call for committing suicide to remove any lingering particles from their past positions of privilege which stand in the way of becoming people's revolutionary servant. Knowing the above about Nkrumah, the ability to complete or meet the goal of decolonization will require a larger structural form of demolition that goes beyond the boundaries of Ghana. Nkrumah believed that "foreign-imposed disruptive influences are to be extirpated and 'natural' social harmony restored" (Reed Jr, 1975, p. 95). Nkrumah argued that:

The basis of colonial territorial dependence is economic, but the basis of the solution of the problem is political. Hence political independence is an indispensable step towards securing economic emancipation. This point of view irrevocably calls for an alliance of all colonial territories and dependencies. (Nkrumah, 1963. P. 61)

This quotation demonstrates a complex form of acquiring territorial dependence of Nkrumah's goal which is similar to a 'Multiscalar' framework that requires first settling of the minds of the local Indigenous while also putting 'the house' in order (micro), before tackling political independencies (meso), then building an alliance of colonial territories for economic, political, cultural and spiritual emancipation (macro). His plan for emancipation through decolonizing was thorough, he looked at the various ways imperialism as a structure over Africa becomes or can become a "disabling" factor from all levels – through the lens of the micro, meso, and macro system. This lens can be used to understand how disability of the body and land in Africa/Ghana should be located, spoken about and for, while creating the space for it to be taken away from the lens of universality that creates a compound body politics that dislocates instead of centralizing it. Below are some of Nkrumah's account of how colonial was and the neo-colonial systems became a disablement for Africa and African people s leaving them in a state of no return, but with the hope that when one Sankofa, then we can create the door of return that allows for the rebuilding of the African continent.

## Nkrumah's Understanding on Disablement

As Dei, Cabral and Nyerere charged new scholars and those interested in becoming revolutionary workers to revisit some pioneering ideas in order to design our own future leading to Nkrumah's thoughts, in relation to disability, and the concept of disablement. Even though such lens hasn't been taken up yet, it is quite obvious that the disability and the disablement of African people and Africa was definitely a priority for Nkrumah. Such work on disability and the disablement of specifically Ghana was visible when Nkrumah (1963) explained the effects of colonial administrations on the health and the intellectual brain drain of African people s, specifically Ghana, stating that the lack of access to health care by African people s in the Gold Coast were limited, creating a debilitating effect, including: sterility in women, diseases such as "tuberculosis, yaws, and kwashiorkor [which took] a shocking toll of life and energy, and are immediately ascribable to poor nutrition. . . [leaving] . . . infant mortality rates appallingly high, and many surviving children . . . crippled or invalid" (p. 35). It is visible that these debilitating disablements were a result of the macro colonial administration's deliberate withholding of health care for the Ghanaian bodies.

These debilitating effects therefore, created "superstition" among the people leading to resistance of "white man's medicine" (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 36). These debilitating effects in place were also used as an exploitive tool as "many parts of native agriculture were discouraged in favour of cash crops; soil was ruthlessly exploited, sometimes causing erosion [death of the land]; and millions were turned into low-paid workers" as they were not able to compete with the colonials (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 37). The latter therefore created a representation that "**Africans** are poor because they do not produce enough," but the exploiters failed to critically analyse the cause for their lack of motivation and capacity to work which was as a result of severe malnutrition leading to fatigue, poor wages and others (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 37).

Such debilitating acts are also visible within the refusal to develop African intellectuals as colonialist failed to "enlarge our intellectual and social horizons" (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 36). Their reason for such disabling act was that the African was "incapable of education beyond certain limits; he would not respond to the incentives of higher standards of life. . . [creating] slander and calumny" (p. 36). One can therefore argue that such debilitating and disabling act on the intellectual advancement of a country and a continent has brought Africa to the state of intellectual bankruptcy, leaving their education system underdeveloped and left as the norm for knowledge. And this is where Wiredu (1980), Oduor (2009), and Appiah (1992) will argue that African knowledge production and the different ideologies that have penetrated Africa's school system is not distinct to Africa. Therefore, answering Dei's appeal on the reclamation of Critical Nkrumahist thought might be a call to answer regardless of the traces of westernized education that Nkrumah had privileges to.



But one can also argue that even though Nkrumah's higher educational knowledge was highly westernized, he was first and foremost an African: This therefore makes it difficult to fully ignore Nkrumahist thought but rather demonstrates the need to filter through to extract and customise the knowledge that best stands against oppression.

Nkrumah (1963) placed into context some of the disabling administrative acts that maltreated African people s and contributed to the theft of her physical, intellect and economy, as "African worker under colonial rule...only served to enrich non-Africans" (p. 37), leaving African people with nothing to "eliminate the economic conditions which assisted the incidence of death-dealing and energy-depriving diseases and maladies" (p. 35). These atrocities by the colonial/imperialist administrative policies have not changed, hence the call for a new mode of disability inquiry that encapsulates emancipation as its foundation of critical theory. Thus, it is time for a critical Nkrumahist Pan-African disability theory that views disability from a pre/post-colonial-cultural-social-political-economic lens rather than the biological or restrictive social and biological lens. A critical Nkrumahist Pan-African disability theory will allow for a critical engagement of all levels of debilitating policies that continue to drain the blood, while killing the land and the people of Ghana/Africa, and allow for a twenty first century emancipation that will allow Nkrumah, Nyerere, Cabral and all other African revolutionists nationalist ancestors to finally rest in perfect peace.

With the above comprehensive writings on African's Pan-African nationalists, it is therefore visible that nationalism and revolutionism leading to Pan-Africanism is a needed weapon to conquer the disablement that Nkrumah outlined especially within this current flow of globalization leading to what Nkrumah calls "The Last Stage of Imperialism" (1965).

## **Post-Script**

To further the critical analysis of Pan-Africanism and Critical Nkrumahist thoughts, it is clearly important to insert that the lack of women voices within such an historical emancipated journey can also be argued as a disabling structure that left women behind. One can argue that such erasure of women Pan-Africanist is due to the unfortunate traces of western knowledge that draws more attention to physicality of the body creating male superiority over women who are equally nationalist fighters. With an extensive research on the *Invention of Women* by Oyewunmi (1997), who clearly outlined the difference between the visualization of western theories and African subject as a structural amnesia. One can conclude that such structural erasure of women Pan-Africanist, is a reaction to their western education and the influx of western knowledge within African education system.

As Oyewunmi (1997) states, “[reaction], in essence has been at once the driving force.... [as it] does not matter whether any particular scholar is reacting for or against the West; the point is that the West is at the centre of African knowledge-production” (pg. 18). And for this, I argue that contemporary Pan-Africanist has a long way ahead to fully decolonize their mind from traces of western knowledge and the centering of western education in order not to become that theory/thought that leaves and erases years of women ontology in nation building.

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