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Retelling education in emergencies through the black radical tradition: on racial capitalism, critical race theory and fugitivity

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ABSTRACT

This article asserts that the Black Radical Tradition (BRT), grounded in historical and structural inquiry, offers tools to reinterpret EiE radically—the BRT encompasses a tradition rooted in diverse African intellectual and activist inquiries, providing a multifaceted theoretical framework. Relevant to humanitarian scholarship, the BRT challenges omissions of colonisation, capitalism, and enslavement histories in forced migration and aid, shedding light on their roles in perpetuating 'white saviours'. The paper, adopting my roles as a scholar and aid practitioner, critically examines the EiE sector through three BRT lenses: racial capitalism, critical race theory, and fugitivity. It employs case studies, aligning with the BRT's interconnected focus, revealing the pervasive influence of educational aid, racial injustice, and structural inequalities. These lenses collectively illuminate the potential of Black radical thought to transform the EiE landscape. By tracing EiE's genealogies through Black radical historiography, the article advocates for sector-wide introspection, emphasising power redistribution, centring marginalised voices, and challenging prevailing hierarchies in humanitarian contexts.

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Introduction

In October 2020, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), a renowned member network that has established itself as an authoritative body in the field of Education in Emergencies (EiE) over the past two decades, issued a groundbreaking Anti-Racism and Racial Equity Statement. This statement constituted an acknowledgement of complicity in upholding the organisation's deeply racialised and hierarchical system. Within this statement, it was explicitly acknowledged that the INEE secretariat had played a role in perpetuating what was described as 'white supremacy culture' and 'institutional racism' through organisational structures and actions (INEE 2020). This revelation was particularly significant given the limited scholarly attention paid to the influence of racial constructs and racism on individuals' educational experiences within the EiE sector, where discussions surrounding racism are scarcely evident in advocacy, policy formulation, research endeavours, or programme development (Oddy 2020; Sriprakash, Tikly, and Walker 2019). Consequently, the INEE statement signals a momentous call for transformative change within the field.

To paraphrase critical race scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998), it may be surprising for white supremacy[1] 'to crop up in a nice field' like EiE. However, acknowledging such deeply entrenched

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systemic disparities within humanitarian aid echoes the observations of scholars who argue that the aid system itself is inherently colonial (Baughan 2020; Rutazibwa 2018; 2020). Pallister-Wilkins draws on the insights of W. E. B. Du Bois to highlight how humanitarianism has historically played a role in creating, regulating, and perpetuating 'whiteness' while allowing 'white supremacy culture to go unchallenged and thrive' (Pallister-Wilkins 2021, 98). Similarly, Bian (2022) emphasises the intricate connection between the humanitarian sector's emergence and histories of empire and colonialism, which persist and influence contemporary constructions of 'race.' Their assertion that 'expertise is covertly racialised' within the humanitarian aid sector (Bian 2022, 2) underscores INEE's omission of perpetuating a particular worldview and systemic exclusion.

For EiE scholars specifically, the INEE statement is a call to action to critically reflect on and address the reproduction of racial injustice in the sector and to substantively engage with the production and effects of marginalisation and othering across its research and policy. Decades of scholarly engagement by critical education scholars with theories and movements stemming from resistance to racial injustice that examine structural injustice and their implications in educational settings, EiE, constrained by its 'white gaze' (Pailey 2020), has shown limited involvement with the wider literature on educational inequities (Shuayb and Crul 2020). Until recently, the field's examination of structural injustices within the ecosystem (Alameldeen and Fatima 2021; Menashy, Zakharia, and Shuayb 2021) and practitioners' complicity in perpetuating these structures (Greer 2023; Novelli and Kutan 2023; Shah et al. 2023) has been even more scarce. To dismantle institutional racism and white supremacy culture, new intellectual tools are required, enabling us to 'define and seek a world where all can flourish' by embracing diversity as a source of strength (Lorde 2018, 19).

In this paper, I assert that the Black Radical Tradition (BRT), through its attention to historical and structural inquiry, provides the necessary tools, vital epistemic challenge and a radical reinterpretation of EiE as a field. This assertion stems from the need to recognise the contextual significance of the INEE's Anti-Racism statement. It was released in response to global protests against racial injustice triggered by George Floyd's tragic murder amid a pandemic that laid bare the deeply entrenched, historically interconnected, and multifaceted nature of structural inequities, marking a culmination of years of societal reckoning with systemic discrimination (Strong et al. 2022); attributed to the Black radical tradition (Toliver 2021).

The BRT, as expounded by Robinson in his seminal work *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* encompasses a tradition rooted in diverse intellectual and activist inquiries originating from African cultures, languages, and belief systems. Robinson meticulously traces five centuries of resistance against oppression (which he saw as deeply connected to capitalism), underscoring historical inquiry's significance in countering the epistemic and systemic erasure of countless individual, spiritual, and collective endeavours that contested enslavement and other oppressive systems. As shall be explored, the BRT is not a singular, concrete, or stand-alone theory;[2] within it, a rich tapestry of concepts and perspectives exists (Johnson and Lubin 2017; Robinson 2021; Thomas 2019). The multifaceted nature of the BRT is particularly relevant to humanitarian scholarship precisely as it challenges the omission of colonisation, capitalism, and enslavement histories within the realms of forced migration and aid (Carpi and Owusu 2022; Sikka 2020; De Brankamp 2021; Genova 2018). This elision has allowed the field to become a conduit for 'white saviours' transitioning into aid providers (Carpi and Owusu 2022, 22). By anchoring its focus on historical context, narrative challenge, and the exposure of structural injustices, the BRT offers a distinctive opportunity to address historical omissions and profoundly reshape the paradigm of EiE, necessitating a fundamental overhaul of our theoretical framework.

In this article, I begin by establishing my dual role as a scholar and aid practitioner, positioning this work as a constructive critique of the EiE sector aimed at enhancing its practices. Next, this paper employs three critical lenses derived from the BRT to examine the entanglements of colonialism and racism within educational aid: Racial capitalism, Critical Race Theory, and the notion of Fugitivity. I argue that these three lenses form a cohesive and mutually reinforcing framework for analysing power dynamics, histories of oppression, and resistance. They enable a simultaneous examination of macro-level factors, such as policies and systemic inequities, and micro-level factors, including individual experiences. This multi-scalar approach provides a comprehensive analytical lens to unearth the EiE field's complex dynamics, encompassing historical and contemporary struggles against structural inequities underlying the educational disparities observed in crisis contexts. In what follows, I take these three concepts in turn, using each to frame different empirical examples from the field of EiE. I engage with multiple case studies as an epistemological stance aligned with the BRT's emphasis on interconnectedness and to illustrate that the interplay of educational aid, racial injustice, and structural inequalities transcend regions or contexts.

Collectively, Racial capitalism, Critical Race Theory, and Fugitivity illuminate the potential contributions of Black radical thought to reimagining the history and horizon of EiE. As scholar Michelle Fine aptly notes, critical research holds the promise of narrating alternative stories, particularly 'when lives are situated in historical and structural analysis' (Fine 2018, 11). This paper unfolds a radical reimagining of the field by retracing EiE's genealogies through Black radical historiography. It advocates for deeper introspection within the sector, encouraging more profound reflection on its potential transformation, emphasising the need to redistribute power, centre marginalised individuals and their educational aspirations, and challenge prevailing hierarchies in humanitarian contexts.

My positionality within the EiE ecosystem

The Black Lives Matter moment in 2020 called for critical self-reflection on our work's ethical implications and social responsibility. Danewid (2017, 118) argues that the humanitarian 're-constitutes itself as 'ethical' and 'good', innocent of its imperialist histories and present complicities.' Similarly, Negrón-Gonzales posits that aid practitioners seldom concede 'how they are part of the systems and processes that produce and reproduce poverty'—that poverty is actively constructed rather than inevitable (2016, 3). I offer this personal vignette because it lends credence to the importance of critical scholarship on lived experience and the tensions, nuances and possibilities of power that arise from self-reflexivity.

As a Black, dual-heritage woman from a working-class background, my identity intersects with my awareness of power dynamics. My experiences with race, racialisation, and othering have profoundly shaped my educational and professional journey. However, this self-awareness also requires me to confront my complicity within the exclusionary EiE ecosystem. While migration and racism have influenced my educational and career paths, I must acknowledge that I have not experienced forced displacement, limiting my understanding of the complexities faced by those pursuing education in displacement contexts. My background as a long-time practitioner in the humanitarian EiE sector, combined with other privileges like cisgender identity, able-bodied, UK education, UK citizenship, and fluency in English, places me in proximity to whiteness within a system that often marginalises those closest to displacement. These identity factors have also influenced how others perceive me. For instance, I remember a moment during a teacher training session in Uganda when two participants joined me during the lunch break, jokingly remarking, 'Let us sit with the one who sits closest to power.' Their comments were a stark reminder of the complex ways colonial legacies persist and adapt, even extending invitations to those on the margins.

'Coloniality', as Mignolo (2021) describes, touches me in multiple ways. As a scholar and practitioner in this field, I hope to be constructively complicit (Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly 2021, 210). This idea builds on Walter Rodney's concept of the scholar activist or guerrilla intellectual, which calls on Black academics to ground their work and transcend epistemological challenges to the racist and colonial foundations of mainstream scholarship by anchoring intellectual inquiry in struggles and pedagogical frameworks that reject Eurocentrism (2019, 67). To embody 'constructive complicity,' I have engaged in teaching within open learning initiatives for forcibly displaced people (Hall, Lounasmaa, and Squire 2019; Oddy et al. 2022), committed to critical participatory action research praxis, and collaborated with collectives striving to disrupt and challenge aid-related inequities. Within this paper, I have sought to expand conceptual framings and referencing practices by citing intellectuals who contribute to the BRT's continuation and scholars from forcibly displaced backgrounds.[3] This positioning challenges EiE research, which often focuses on 'what works' within programmatic implementation (Burde et al. 2016) rather than embracing scholar-activism.

Racial capitalism and EiE

In this section, I provide an overview of the concept of racial capitalism, which I then use to analyse several empirical examples from the field of EiE. In Cedric Robinson's seminal work, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition,* he argues that the BRT opposes racial capitalism.[4]Racial capitalism underscores the inseparable connection between capitalism's reliance on racial hierarchies to maximise profit, resulting in racial disparities in wealth, employment, and resource access, ultimately perpetuating systemic economic injustice (Johnson and Lubin 2017, 11).

As an analytical framework, racial capitalism aligns with critical forced migration studies, as Robinson notes the connection between the emergence of millions of Black refugees and the conditions created by racial capitalism (2021, 318). Over the decades, scholars have expanded on the concept, emphasising the iterative and mutually constitutive historical structures of capitalism and race, as well as how institutions actively produce, sustain, and reproduce racial power relations within the systemic logic of historical capitalism (Bhattacharyya 2018; Gilmore 2007; Lentin 2021). Recent scholarship has extensively explored the intersections between racial capitalism and migration. Harsha Walia (2021) and Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018) argue that practices like hostile bordering structurally perpetuate violence and precarity experienced by displaced and migrating populations (Walia 2021, 12).

This underscores the critical relevance of these discussions for EiE, given its predominant operation within contexts involving forcibly displaced people. Within these contexts, the enduring presence of racial capitalism, as emphasised by Walia (2021, 35), consistently devalues the lives and well-being of displaced individuals within broader societal structures. This devaluation hinders their access to education and perpetuates disparities and injustices in providing educational aid and opportunities (Dryden-Peterson and Reddick 2017). Consequently, it is imperative to critically scrutinise and challenge these intersecting systems of oppression within EiE. Moreover, it is crucial to recognise the pivotal role of education in the global production and perpetuation of racial inequalities, as Gerrard, Sriprakash, and Rudolph (2022) assert. Education, they argue, is intricately intertwined with reinforcing racial capitalism, effectively 'building its house' on these systemic inequities (Gerrard, Sriprakash, and Rudolph 2022, 437).

Equally crucial in analysing systemic inequities and their influence on educational trajectories is recognising the significance of 'threads of resistance' in challenging and reshaping racial capitalism (Fine 2018, 96). As Bhattacharyya emphasises, while racial capitalism encompasses the 'historical legacies of racialised dispossession in shaping economic life, it is not reducible to those histories' (2018, *x*). The forthcoming sections of this paper will provide a more in-depth exploration of this theme of resistance.

Historical manifestations of racial capitalism and Education

Education has historically been wielded as a tool of empire, exemplified by Cecil Rhodes' belief in its pivotal role in extending British rule globally (Flint 1974, 252). The evolution of the United Kingdom's (UK) education system was intricately tied to its colonial endeavours, a relationship meticulously detailed by Rebecca Swartz (2019). Starting in 1833, the UK's education system began to stratify along class lines, with distinct provisions for poor and criminal children, alongside workhouses industrial and reform schools (Swartz 2019, 39). This highly stratified emerging educational system mirrored the hierarchical structures that evolved in colonial contexts. Swartz suggests that 'stories of colonial education are central to understanding attitudes about difference, whether of class, race, gender or age' (2019, 2). Colonisers' perspectives informed the content of colonised people's education on the 'educability' of their subjects, a term understood as a preconceived idea of ability (McLeod and Paisley 2016; Swartz 2018). Educational spaces serve as crucial sites for 'producing and understanding newly colonised subjects,' with schools becoming instrumental in measuring the aptitudes, including both physical and intellectual capacities of individuals, by various colonial actors such as missionaries, researchers, and colonial officials (Swartz 2019, 10). Notably, charity and faith-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) frequently administered education in colonial contexts, laying the groundwork for the early foundations of Education and International Development with imperial objectives that aimed to establish hierarchies of intellect through metrics and measurements (Swartz and Kallaway 2018; Takayama, Sriprakash, and Connell 2017). In subsequent sections of this paper, I will further explore the implications of educability, and its connections to contemporary education aid by re-examining classroom experiences through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens.

The economic exploitation of colonies

Racial capitalism sheds light on another under-acknowledged facet of education's role in empire-building. As Bhambra (2022a) asserts, the development of institutions like the welfare state in the UK and universal primary education in the 19th and 20th centuries was financially underpinned by the wealth extracted from its colonies. This funding was derived from resource extraction, exploitative labour practices, and the collection of taxes imposed on colonial subjects. Such wealth fuelled Britain's domestic development, including institutionalising the welfare state and universal primary education while leaving colonised territories economically disadvantaged.

Using archival data, Bhambra relates how war and debt-ravaged European countries like the UK used the money that colonies had been obliged to deposit in their banks as part of its colonial fiscal and monetary policy to service Britain's debts (Bhambra 2022a). In return, colonised territories were either lent or given a paltry £40 million; at the same time, their deposits in UK banks were over £250 million, which the British government repurposed to fund its welfare state-building instead of enabling the colonies to use that money for their own needs (Bhambra 2022b, 13). The Colonial Development Act, enacted in 1948, laid the groundwork for the emerging framework of contemporary humanitarian aid, effectively concealing the extensive wealth accumulated by colonisers in the metropolis (Bhambra 2022b). This underscores the pivotal role played by the economic exploitation of colonies in shaping the current aid structure, a system with which educational aid is intricately entwined.

Aid, trade and self-interest

In the mid-twentieth century, the UK, as mentioned above, and the United States (US), through its 'Four Programme' (Francis 2022), initiated humanitarian aid programmes, further intertwining education with imperial interests. While ostensibly aimed at supporting emerging economies, these programmes were laden with conditions favouring the interests of donor nations, including trade tariffs that benefited the Global North (Bhambra 2022b). These links between aid, trade, and self-interest are remarkably underexplored in EiE scholarship. A striking omission from educational aid discourse more broadly is any reference to the dissolution of colonial empires in the mid-twentieth century, the forced removal of post-independence socialist-leaning leaders, the reinstatement of authoritarian rulers, and the introduction of stabilisation and structural adjustment policies (SAPs) designed to manage mounting debt in many of the contexts where educational aid is now provided. These policies have shaped what is now described as 'a global extractive system of debt peonage,' which forms the foundation of the global education architecture today (Tikly

2019, 71). Nations subjected to SAPs have conformed to global education policies and international action frameworks (Novelli et al. 2014, 4).

Contemporary EiE is inextricably woven into the intricate tapestry of Western humanitarianism. Its governance primarily hinges on the political interests and financial backing of governments situated in the Global North. Paradoxically, these governments exhibit a pronounced hostility towards welcoming refugees within their borders, often demonstrating a preference for confining aid recipients to the Global South (Shuayb and Crul 2020). The capricious disposition of 'benevolent' imperial powers comes to the fore when funding commitments are abruptly rescinded. A pertinent example is the United Kingdom, which 2019 positioned itself as a champion of education in regions beset by crises by pledging a substantial £25 million for EiE research. However, the landscape shifted within just a few years when the newly established Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) initiated substantial cuts to humanitarian aid funding. These actions had direct, adverse consequences on thousands of recipients of educational assistance, as exemplified by the situation in South Sudan, whereby funding already earmarked for primary and secondary education projects was abruptly cut (Sparks 2021). The actions of the FCDO illuminate the paradoxical nature of foreign aid, underscoring that donor decisions are seldom rooted in meaningful participation or genuine consideration of the needs and aspirations of aid recipients. Simultaneously, there is a discernible tendency among donor countries to align EiE funding with their national security interests (Department for International Development 2015). Furthermore, stakeholders engaged in EiE initiatives have found themselves entangled in bordering regimes. These dynamics further complicate the landscape, raising questions about aligning humanitarian aid objectives with political interests and border control agendas.

The legacy of colonial control and educational aid

As Ruth Gilmore Wilson highlights, the 'shadow state' concept emphasises the intricate ways states and governments exert control over non-profit organisations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (2017, 41). Historical records reveal how early educational aid programmes were instrumental in controlling, surveilling, and furthering the goals of colonialism. For instance, during the Kenyan Mau Mau War of Independence (1952–1962), missionary schools were seen as potential centres of dissent and, consequently, banned by British colonial authorities. The Kenya Teachers College even had its campus converted into a prison camp for opponents of colonial rule 'where proponents of resistance to colonialism were hanged' (Thiong'o 2011, 166). British colonial authorities established internment camps across Kenya, detaining male children and youth to forestall 'radicalisation' or resistance to colonial rule (Baughan 2020). Collaborations between international NGOs like *Save the Children*, who colluded with colonial administrations to secure funding and manage education programmes within the internment camps (Baughan 2020), further underscored the controversial roles of organisations in the early educational aid landscape.

However, as racial capitalism implores us to recognise, coloniality endures. Today, supporting education in crises enables narratives of 'benevolent imperialism' to prevail, shrouding the violence of colonial rule and expansionism in humanitarianism's language whilst simultaneously positioning military acts as rescuing or liberating others (Shirazi 2020, 60). Notably, INGOs have been implicated in practices such as migrant detention, raising questions about the tensions of providing humanitarian education aid whilst producing and protecting bordering logics. The example of *Save the Children Australia's* involvement in child protection and EiE services on Nauru in 2012–2015, an island used by the Australian government to detain asylum seekers, exemplifies the ethically dubious decisions and complicit actions by these organisations (Bessant and Watts 2018, 51). Only when whistle-blowers 'forced' the organisation's hand did *Save the Children Australia* make 'public disclosures about the conditions in which the inmates lived' (Bessant and Watts 2018, 51). As Harsha Walia notes, 'border imperialism and state practices of migrant detention create huge corporate profits' (Walia 2013, 57). A child rights organisation's willingness to sign non-disclosure agreements as part of government service contracts for financial gain underscores the dubious line between humanitarian imperatives and profit-driven decisions (Bessant and Watts 2018, 51). Furthermore, it demonstrates how prevailing colonial practices interact with educational aid and illustrates how EiE interventions can operate as part of the 'shadow state' (Gilmore Wilson 2017, 41) apparatus.

To summarise, examining EiE through a racial capitalist lens necessitates a critical re-evaluation of the field, urging us to delve into its historical origins and contemporary involvements within the broader framework of racial capitalism. It demands attention to the interconnected, broader, and systemic contours of EiE, firmly positioning the field as an outcome of global forces, historical and present, and their local effects that can also perpetuate educational disparities during emergencies.

Critical race theory (CRT) and EiE

In the prior section, our exploration delved into racial capitalism, emphasising economic aspects and structural inequalities evident in the EiE field. In this section, I pivot our focus towards CRT to delve deeper into both the individual and systemic forms of racism that continue to perpetuate inequalities (Tate and William 1997). Formed within the legal scholarship movement in the United States in the 1980s, CRT offered a paradigmatic shift in mainstream discourse that positioned racism as an individual act, bias, or prejudice rather than deeply embedded within legal systems, frameworks, and policies. In the 1990s, scholars such as William Tate and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) applied CRT to educational research and practice, examining how structures of racism mutate to reproduce educational inequity both in and out of educational spaces, 'relying on racial characterisations and stereotypes' that legitimise stratification (Tate and William 1997, 199). Over the past several decades, critical approaches to pedagogy have developed within education studies in response to the multiple issues rendered visible through CRT (Yosso 2005). Pragmatically, this includes embedding a curriculum that acknowledges and challenges structural inequities, often advocating for asset-based, linguistic and cultural pluralism, unsettling knowledge inequities and valuing distinct traditions (Paris and Samy Alim 2017). Thus, CRT offers a valuable lens through which to analyse EiE, shedding light on the pervasive influence of racial dynamics in educational settings.

Educability and curriculum

Education was pivotal to early nineteenth-century humanitarian movements within Britain and its colonies (Swartz 2019). The colonial education policies sought to dislocate populations from their communities and lands, reinforce capitalist individualism, and dismantle social solidarity (Rodney 1972, xvii). Missionaries viewed it as a means to convert enslaved and Indigenous subjects to Christianity. It was also not in the colonial power's interest to educate the colonised population extensively, as this could challenge their subjugation (Swartz 2019). Within this context, colonial curricula played a crucial role in upholding the racial capitalist system, reinforcing racial, gendered, and sexual hierarchies (Fúnez 2022). Colonisers, missionaries and early educational aid providers rigidly defined what education should entail and which knowledge was valued, failing to recognise when education was already taking place (Swartz 2019). Practical knowledge, including numeracy and literacy, was favoured, with state educationists and missionaries drawing on pseudo-scientific discourse that reinforced stereotypes of colonised populations' limited capabilities and educability (McLeod and Paisley 2016; Swartz 2019). Consequently, education spaces became central to the global production and reproduction of racial inequalities, intimately tied to the perpetuation of racial capitalism (Gerrard, Sriprakash, and Rudolph 2022).

Scholars like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2011) and Leon Tikly (2004) have emphasised the persistent legacies of imperialism within the realm of education. These legacies necessitate critical scrutiny of elitism, eurocentric curricula, and the sidelining of Indigenous knowledge within education and international development (Tikly 2019, 2). Moreover, INEE's recognition of a culture steeped in white supremacy (2020), especially in its role in setting standards and shaping knowledge production, underscores that EiE interventions often draw from an Anglo-European epistemology inherited from the colonial era. It can be argued that the sector's preoccupation with standard-setting and toolkit production (dominated by actors in the Global North), is not entirely detached but rather can be traced back to colonial interests in defining educational content, assessments and standardisation.

Transnational insights and counter-hegemonic examples

CRT's framework further urges us to examine educational policies and decision-making beyond national borders and their relevance to the EiE field. For instance, critical race scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings' examination of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in the United States during the 1950s illustrates the transnational nature of social movements and the political power they wielded (1998). Ladson-Billings' analysis goes beyond portraying the desegregation of schools as a benevolent act; she contends that it was a strategic move by the United States aimed at bolstering its international image among newly emerging independent nations, validating its political and economic ideologies and curbing the spread of communism (Ladson-Billings 1998, 17).

I argue that the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case is relevant to EiE for several reasons. Firstly, it challenges the conventional narrative of knowledge flowing unidirectionally from the Global North to the Global South. It serves as a compelling counter-narrative, demonstrating how dissent and resistance can drive meaningful educational reform, even from within the heart of an empire. The tendency to suppress multi-directional learning is evident within the context of EiE, where the 'Global North' predominantly assumes the role of primary knowledge producer. This limited perspective fails to acknowledge how the political ideologies of formerly colonised nations can influence educational policies, even within the centres of colonial power. Secondly, this landmark case raises critical questions about the educational disenfranchisement of marginalised populations within the 'Global North'—an issue often overlooked as a crisis (Shirazi 2020; Shuayb and Crul 2020). Across EiE scholarship and practice, sites of deprivation, acts of land removal, hostile bordering practices, and state violence that impact marginalised communities across the 'Global North' are unseen or hegemonically understood, consolidating the 'limitations of the humanitarian imagination' (Shirazi 2020, 76)

In sum, CRT provides a powerful analytical framework for understanding the structural continuity of educational injustice by considering historical context, policy analysis, counter-narratives, and the concept of structural racism within educational aid.

Fugitivity

In the previous sections, the lenses of racial capitalism and CRT shed light on how educational aid perpetuates systemic inequities. However, as the BRT emphasises, the enduring forces of resistance against oppression are ever-present. The BLM movement, instrumental in catalysing INEE's statement on racial inequity, embodies the 'accretion of collective intelligence gathered from struggle' (Robinson 2021, I). This section delves deeper into narratives of resistance within the context of EiE.

For enslaved individuals, one of the most prevalent forms of resistance was their pursuit of freedom through physical and psychic means of flight. Cedric Robinson deliberately employed the concept of fugitivity to describe those who had escaped slavery. This choice of terminology aimed to counteract infantilising language and underscore the agency of enslaved populations (Robinson and Robinson 2017, 3). Robinson's conceptualisation of resistance encompassed a spectrum of actions, ranging from open revolts to more discreet forms of rebellion. These acts included practices like obeah, voodoo, Islam, and Black Christianity, demonstrating how enslaved populations preserved their identity and autonomy in the face of imperialism (2021, 310). These perspectives invite scholars to acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of resistance throughout history, emphasising that confronting oppression systems can lead to new possibilities for justice.

Scholars like Sikka (2020) have urged those studying forced migration to consider the concept of fugitivity, as it challenges conventional definitions of 'refugee' or 'migrant' that can oversimplify identities, negate agency, and reinforce ahistorical perspectives on displacement. In addition, the exploration of fugitivity as a conceptual framework in critical education scholarship has revealed educational histories that have endured historical and contemporary forms of oppression (Givens 2021). Some argue that it provides a fertile ground for educational theorising, curriculum development, and pedagogical practices (Kazembe 2018; McNeill et al. 2021; Stovall 2020). As a paradigm, fugitive pedagogy calls for exposing the physical and symbolic violence inherent in existing knowledge structures and social arrangements, demanding a radical departure from the status quo (Givens 2021, 272). It underscores recognising individuals as products of historical forces and radical social movements (Johnson and Lubin 2017, 25).

Fugitivity and EiE

Present-day fugitive classrooms can be discovered in conflict zones worldwide. They persist in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan, where cultural and academic education continues within caves despite the ever-present threat of aerial bombardment (Oddy 2023; Warren 2020). Similarly, undercover schools for girls in Afghanistan subvert the nationwide ban on post-primary education for girls (Graham-Harrison 2022). These poignant examples vividly illustrate that, despite life-threatening consequences, communities persist in creating 'fugitive spaces' for learning (Harney and Moten 2013; Patel 2019; Stovall 2020). Nevertheless, narratives that depict such agency and resistance to educational aid, such as teacher and student strikes, often remain conspicuously absent from research. Okello et al. (2021)provide a poignant example from the inception of education in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, where they remark, '*UNHCR did not start the schools in the camp. Professor Abdul Aziz did, under a tree. He taught for a decade, although you will find his name in no book.*'

The case of Professor Abdul Aziz, an EiE pioneer in Dadaab, highlights the concealed yet pivotal roles that crisis-affected individuals play in initiating and implementing educational initiatives. Although communities are typically the first to extend aid during crises, these instances of 'mutual aid' (Spade 2020) often remain marginalised in EiE literature. The hidden histories of people's agency, often excluded from official narratives and archives, echo Walter Rodney's assertion that 'historical knowledge' is 'a weapon of struggle' (2019, 52). The omission of these individuals, their actions, and their movements from official camp narratives (Monaghan 2019) necessitates a deeper reflection on why EiE scholarship and the field, in general, have been reluctant to acknowledge and celebrate those who initiated education in crisis contexts without donor backing or NGO support.

Hidden histories

Fugitivity is also a useful concept when exploring histories at the macro level. For example, while the INEE played a pivotal role in advancing EiE research by establishing the *Journal of Education in Emergencies*, the limitations of historical research are apparent in an EiE timeline launched by INEE in 2019. This interactive timeline aimed to chart the history of EiE by including the 'key interventions, conventions, actors, events, and publications that have shaped the EiE field over the past sixty years' (INEE n.d.). UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) were positioned as 'key actors' in this timeline and credited with groundbreaking interventions and policies that advanced refugee education during these sixty years. However, notable absences within this timeline are evident. Firstly, over the seventy years covered by the INEE timeline, no references are made to pivotal moments, such as the monumental independence movements that swept the world during the post-World War Two period. The timeline fails to recognise the significance of education in the post-independence nation-building processes (Tikly 2019). Furthermore, there is an elision of important cross-regional and multilateral alliances organised by leaders of formerly colonised states, such as the 1955 Bandung Conference, which brought together 29 African and Asian countries to propose strategies for promoting economic, political, technological, and cultural spheres (Timossi 2015).

Reinserting people, events, and places into the historical narrative represents an essential act of contestation against narratives of white saviorism, epistemic superiority, and benevolence, which have been central to black radical scholarship.[5] Long before UNHCR's landmark 1985 document on refugee education, another significant omission from the official EiE timeline is the role of countries like Libya and Cuba in supporting anti-colonial and liberation movements by providing educational aid. Cuba, for instance, has granted thousands of students from crisis-affected populations primary, secondary, and higher education scholarships (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015). This scholarship support extended to Sudanese 'lost boys,' Namibians, Palestinians, Sahrawi refugees, and marginalised communities in the USA and beyond (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015). Over six million people globally acquire basic literacy skills through Cuba's '*Yo Si Puedo*' literacy drive (Boughton and Durnan 2014, 325). Governments, non-state entities like Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, and various political and social actors in the Global South, including civil society groups, have sought educational support from Cuba (Boughton and Durnan 2014).

These collaborations are not characterised as conventional 'aid' but as solidarity-based humanitarianism, emphasising mutual benefit, solidarity, reciprocity, and non-interference in the national sovereignty of participating states (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 18). It is important to note that although I am not idealising Cuba's political ideologies, Cuba's educational interventions actively challenge the notion that education aid and 'capacity building' are exclusively the domain of the 'Global North.' This raises questions about why the extensive histories of educational provision by countries like Cuba and others have been marginalised, left unacknowledged, and erased from mainstream narratives related to refugee education (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2015, 3). Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's (2015) exploration of South-South humanitarian education aid prompts broader reflections on who receives recognition in history and who is omitted. It challenges and scrutinises established ideas and conceptual frameworks within EiE. The erasure of multiple historical moments from INEE's linear historical chronology of the sector exemplifies how hegemonic power shapes and centres the West as the sole and legitimate provider of educational opportunities in displacement scenarios.

In summary, these macro-level examples, alongside Okello et al.'s (2021) illustration of Professor Abdul Aziz's erasure from official narratives, underscore the risk of EiE research becoming analytically irrelevant in comprehending educational experiences, disadvantages, and injustices. These omissions and silences underscore how it constructs a specific version of history, underpinning contemporary discourse and practice. Recognising the historical connections and power dynamics that have shaped and informed EiE is imperative. Consequently, transformative agendas within the field may only emerge with critical reflection on the divergent discourses that have shaped the origins of educational aid.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we cannot ignore the stark reality that EiE, much like humanitarian aid in its broader context, is intricately entwined with the workings of racial capitalism. Nevertheless, despite the critical examination presented in this paper, it is essential to recognise that countless individuals aspire to access educational systems and the prevailing EiE ecosystem. While fraught with exploitation, EiE offers crucial financial support and educational opportunities for millions of forcibly displaced children and youth, although marked by significant disparities (Luchs and Miller 2016). These inherent contradictions do not negate the urgency of cultivating more radical visions for education. History has proven that even within the confines of colonial educational structures, acts of epistemic resistance and solidarity networks were possible, with early African, Asian, and Arab independence leaders studying and collaborating across colonial metropoles (Olorunshola 2021). Inspired by contemporary global movements, such as the South African #RhodesMustFall campaign, we are reminded that systems of dispossession and inequity transcend borders and that educational institutions serve as crucial arenas for pushing the boundaries of the status quo (Bhambra, Gebrial, and Nişancıoğlu 2018). To speak of EiE, thus, is to speak of colonisation and capitalism, bordering and othering, and institutions that reproduce inequities by excluding, devaluing, and silencing forcibly displaced populations. However, in the same vein that Black radicalism, as a conceptual lens, highlighted how residuals of colonial administrative practices permeate EiE, it also enabled generative political possibilities, as resistance to the humanitarian aid sector's will to dominate forcibly displaced people's lives is ever-present As critical EiE scholars, we must heed Rutazibwa's cautionary reflection on the haste of dismantling aid: is there a risk of discarding the potential for positive change along with the existing flawed systems? (Rutazibwa 2018).

Through the lens of the Black Radical Tradition, our exploration of EiE has revealed that the limited opportunities offered to crisis-affected populations are merely points on a long historical continuum marked by restrictions on the type of education available. It has exposed the intricate relationships between organisations and states and has demonstrated that EiE, since its inception, has been deeply intertwined with the legacies of colonialism. By revisiting history through this critical lens, the BRT has exposed how dominant narratives within the EiE field have crafted a single narrative that disconnects its origins from colonial forms of assimilation and containment. In doing so, it has obscured the myriad afterlives of historical and ongoing coloniality in numerous spaces, practices, and social relationships. Consequently, multiple erasures at various junctures have shaped the EiE field.

Finally, as this paper has argued, EiE represents a significant convergence of coloniality, revealing that history is not a series of isolated events but an ongoing influence on contemporary institutional practices and educational experiences. Acknowledging the pervasive structural racism in the EiE sector is not enough to eliminate its presence. Practitioners must recognise that even with good intentions, intentionality alone cannot rectify the entrenched inequitable dynamics. Informed by the insights of the BRT, the challenge for EiE scholarship is to transcend the confines of prevailing bordering logic and reimagine the possibilities. Shirazi's (2020) call to challenge the limits of the humanitarian imagination implores us to explore what kinds of spaces, relationships, ways of knowing, and institutions a Black Radical Tradition-informed EiE field could usher into existence. As we engage with these challenges, it is crucial to acknowledge the situated position of EiE intellectual inquiry, especially as calls for a critical examination of the epistemological foundations of education gain prominence. This calls for vigilance and recognition that systems of exclusion are deeply entrenched. Critical practitioners and scholars must embrace constructive complicity (Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly 2021; Rodney 2019). The Black Radical Tradition underscores the enduring struggle, cautioning us to acknowledge the extended duration of this endeavour. It also signifies that solutions to the systemic and entrenched inequities within the EiE ecosystem may not emerge solely from those in privileged positions but from those historically excluded from meaningful engagement with systems, structures, and institutions. Changing EiE will not happen overnight, but as this study demonstrates, change is coming.

Notes

1. For Okun and Jones (2000), white supremacy is defined as a 'historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and people of colour by white peoples and nations … to maintain and defend a system of wealth, power, and privilege.'

2. More theorectical concepts that the three explored in this paper can trace their genealogies to the Black radical tradition. Contemporary trans- and inter-disciplinary work in the BRT builds upon insights from abolitionists, feminists, anti-colonial scholars, and Marxist thinkers (Michael J. Viola et al., 2019, 6), foregrounding the macro-level phenomena of structural racism alongside its micro-level and intersectional formations.
3. My citational practice intentionally seeks to redress prevailing citation exclusion detrimental to the recognition, credibility and visibility of those relegated to the margins of academia. This has included referencing early career scholars, thesis, and online academic contributions (e.g. Twitter, blogs and podcasts) alongside academic journals and books.
4. Although the term racial capitalism was populised by Cedric Robinson, Racial capitalism, prominent in South Africa during the 1970s and championed by Neville Alexander (No Sizwe), was integrated into the National Forum's manifesto (Strong et al. 2022).This coalition, comprising Black consciousness and radical anti-apartheid groups, recognised apartheid's deep-rooted connection to racial capitalism. Their struggle aimed not only to end apartheid but also to dismantle the system of racial capitalism, which perpetuates disparities in wealth, employment, and resource access, challenging the notion of capitalism without racial oppression (Strong et.al., 2023)
5. In recent years, Sadiyaa Hartman have used critical fabulation 'to (re)write history to fill narrative gaps in archives, honouring ancestors, communities, and people's rightful places in history' (Hartman, cited in (Kermit 2021).

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