

BOOK REVIEWS.

Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason
by **Biko Agozino**. London: Pluto Press, 2003.

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The counterpoint of *Counter-Colonial Criminology* is the unmasking of Eurocentric criminology for what it is. In exchange, Agozino proffered sound academic reasoning grounded on reality. He suggests decolonization of criminology based on label-free discourse. By his approach, Agozino has, like Lombroso of scientific approach, and Durkheim and Sutherland of mainstream criminology, charted a new theoretical path in the way we do criminology. Henceforth, criminology will no longer concentrate in the study of crime and criminals, but will also include the study of justice.

In conceptualizing *Counter-Colonial Criminology* Agozino has again proven himself worthy of joining the ranks of Walter Rodney (1972), Frantz Fanon (1963, 1965, 1967, 1991), Achebe (1959), and Wa Thiongo (1977) in demystifying colonial mystic. Avowed apologists of colonial criminology may disagree (and they have every reason to do so), but in time, *Counter-Colonial Criminology* will revolutionize criminology by interjecting Africentric perspective unto the discussion table. He did not mince words in identifying the aims and purposes of the book as a “transdisciplinary theoretic-methodological intervention aimed at decolonizing theories and methods of imperialist reason in criminology.” He backs this up by arguing that criminology as it currently is represents nothing but imperialist science designed to control others.

This book highlights the shortsightedness of criminologists who acquiesced and turned blind eyes in the face of the brutish tortures, dehumanization, and degradation of other humans in the name of ‘colonizing mission’, while non criminologist writers like Kwame Nkrumah, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Fanon and Rodney were able to speak out against the attendant evils of colonialism and related policies. Related atrocious examples include the genocidal trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the genocidal massacre of Native Americans and Aboriginal Australians. Eurocentric criminology further compromises itself by accepting that the punishment of the innocent is normal just as class, race, and gender-related punishment of offenders under colonialism is a civilizing “pitfall along the penal paths of progress.”

Counter-Colonial Criminology assumes critical criminologists’ stance that crime and punishment is a function of power relations, and explains that it is relative power rather than relative deprivation that explains crime. On this note it faults Merton, Cloward and Ohlin, as well as Edwin Sutherland for focusing so much on individual’s crimes while ignoring the wider and higher impact imperialist crimes. It also faults the radical perspectives of Becker for ignoring colonialism in its social discourse. Even in the 21st century, he contends, mainstream criminology has not caught up with practical analysis of colonial white collar crime elaborated as early as in 1965 by no less than Kwame

Nkrumah with specific reference to the 'Belgium' Congo situation. Additionally, 'Western' criminologists have yet to muster courage to discuss the imperialist crimes committed against humanity in Biafra, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, the Middle East, Rwanda, and South Africa.

The book further analyzes diverse radical theoretical perspectives and concludes that they have not been able to distinguish themselves from dominant theoretical perspective or conventional criminology. It advises that even the left realists have missed the boat in failing to realize the impact of crimes of imperialism, and blurred their focus by ignoring the punishment of the innocent, or victimization as mere punishment. Although feminist perspective needs improvement, Agozino suggests that criminologists have a lot to learn from it.

On a more graphic note, the metaphor of lesbian rape is used to elucidate on the looting of colonized nations by the colonizing countries. By employing most violent phrases like gang rape, statutory rape, international rape, ecological rape, etc, and scary words like to seize, possess, take, violate, force, subjugate, conquer, humiliate (all associated with rape), Agozino conveys the helplessness of colonized countries (sic. being raped) to satiate the economic needs of colonialism which is exploitation. Like heterosexual or lesbian rape, the colonial scar never heals, and Eurocentric criminology still lacks courage to delve into it.

Counter-Colonial Criminology cites the contribution of African writers in the development of criminology, especially in areas of crime causation and control. Ahire for example, has shown that policing and law and order in Africa (Nigeria) is geared toward maintenance of political, economic and ideologist imperialist hegemony (neocolonialism) rather than crime control. Ngugi Wa Thiongo has, according to the book, expressed similar view in Kenya, thereby indicating that African writers and journalists are filling the void in the development of criminology in Africa where criminologists have shied away.

Agozino is a student of critical criminology who believes that crime is a function of social structure, power relation, and executive lawlessness (neocolonialism) rather than Lombroso's atavism. In his words – "they've got the power." Criminology therefore ought to include decolonization of victimization, denunciation of global perpetuation and extension of socio-economic exploitation and domination which constitutes the real crime.

In conclusion Agozino's classic is clear in calling for objectivity in race-class-gender research. He is also for global social justice which ought to be extended to the colonized and the Diaspora, including people like Mumia Abu-Jamal. It embodies a call for development of theory of the punishment (justice) of the innocent – again, "How long shall they kill our prophets while we stand aside and look." It is time, he suggests, for the establishment of schools of theoretical criminology in the Third World to teach the West about "difference, deviance, defiance, and social control." It is time to begin "rewriting the history of (entrenched) ideas."