

## **BOOK REVIEWS.**

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

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Counter-Colonial Criminology – A Critique of Imperialist Reason challenges Criminologists and readers alike to re-examine traditional criminology or what we have been indoctrinated as orthodox criminology. This book re-educates the reader about criminology by revealing the discipline's bifurcation and complexity on matters affecting humanity especially during colonial era. . To put it succinctly, criminology as a science was the bedrock of crimes of imperialism. Colonial Criminology was a science used to justify legal enslavement and economic exploitation of the colonized among other atrocities. For example as noted by the author, in 1791 the enslavement of Africans in Haiti was permitted by French law but they revolted against their European masters. According to the author, "as a profit-driven system of abject terror and capitalist economic exploitation, the institution of slavery systematically punished the innocent. But unlike the large number of individual criminal offenses targeted for punitive deterrence by France's Revolutionary Penal Code, Slavery's punishment of the innocent was not declared a crime", an example of a bifurcated colonial criminology (pg xi).

The author expressed the unrealistic nature of a scholarly discipline dedicated to the study of crime, the criminal and the criminal law that focuses almost exclusively upon the actions of lawbreaking individuals, while turning a blind eye to the mass terrorism imposed upon innocent people by slavery, colonialism, and their continuing legacies. A very important aspect of this book is to challenge contemporary criminology to "get real" about this disturbing matter. We can not sweep it under the rug anymore, we must talk about it. This book decolonizes our knowledge of criminology by providing a genealogy of how the cancer of imperialistic logic has impacted the conceptual agenda, methods, and practical political implications of criminology as a modality of knowledge and power (pg xii). Biko Agozino's text undoubtedly decolonized our understanding of crime that goes beyond existing critical thought within criminology and other western intellectual traditions. It is a book that has unraveled the social history of criminology as a discipline which buttressed the colonial master's thirst to subjugate most regions of the world. It goes beyond an examination of western crime control models to look at criminology itself as an imperialist science for the control of others.

Counter-Colonial Criminology – A Critique of Imperialist Reason is made up of 13 chapters. The beginning chapter (chapter One) summarized the European theories of the judicial process and most importantly, how these theories of social control were used experimentally on the colonized before actually it was used on the Europeans. The second chapter (chapter two) explains the social construction of deviance as a technique of control through the process of labeling human behavior. Accordingly, the labeling perspective contends that deviance is socially constructed and recognized that social conflict and the inequality of power as being operative in the social construction of

deviance. The emphasis was on the people who have the power to label others deviant. The remaining chapters of the book highlight the importance of race-class-gender articulation in the analysis of social control anywhere in the world.

Chapter 3 explains the emergence of radical criminology and its fragmentation into competing sub-paradigms. The contributions of these sub-areas to criminological theory were analyzed. Chapter 4 is a discussion of feminist perspective in criminological discourse. By their contribution, feminist scholars have broadened the scope of criminological subject matter and agenda. Chapter 5 is a further elaboration on feminist perspectives on poststructuralism. It is a critique of criminological Eurocentric ethnocentric focus which robbed it the opportunity to revolutionize theory by learning from the struggle for decolonization in the Third World. By applying the metaphor of rape, this chapter questions the appropriateness of the metaphor within the masculinity discourse of international conflicts. Using rape as a metaphorical spade this chapter excavates international violence. It also demonstrates how the gender critique of criminology could be enriched by being sensitive to anti-colonial struggles. Chapter 6 explains poststructuralism and its relevance to criminology. Poststructuralism emerged in the postwar era as the main perspective that extended the Enlightenment tradition of skepticism to all claims to truth and other universal issues. The poststructuralist approach attempts to demystify the ways that theorists try to exercise power through their use of language, through their observation, through their classification and through their programs for the control of the bodies and the minds of individuals. It is a chapter of critique of poststructuralism in criminology and the silence of criminologists on human rights crimes.

Chapter 7 is an extended discourse of the previous chapter. It highlights poststructuralist criminological skepticism and the Durkheimian positivism of verifiable facts. The chapter not only defended the social factual basis of criminological claims but demonstrate the role of fiction within the construction of criminological knowledge. Chapter 8 is a discussion on executive lawlessness and the struggle for democracy in Africa. This chapter not only looks at state crimes in Africa but state crimes and the struggle for democracy around the world. The chapter explores whether events in Africa and elsewhere could lead to a theory of punishment for what are now widely known as crimes of the state all over the world. It is a chapter that attempts to reconceptualize "crime" to include the criminal state --- the criminality of state officials and the need to try suspects and possibly punish them. It also criticized the slow pace of criminological theory in developing penology for state crimes. Chapter 9, by examining the work of Africa creative writers, looked at African contributions to criminological theory. This chapter demonstrates that criminologists can rely on creative writers for analogy and theory construction. The work of creative writers could enhance theoretical and methodological criminology.

Chapter 10 explains the importance of objectivity and commitment as a necessary tool for good criminological research irrespective of race-class-gender differences and chapter 11 is a methodological critique of social science research on the death penalty. A case in point was *McCleskey V. Kemp* (481 U.S. 279, 1987). This case demonstrates a racial bias in the application of the death penalty statutes. The key question is how scientific are criminal justice sciences, particularly as it pertains to the death penalty. Chapter 12 demonstrates a discourse on institutionalized racism, particularly police

professional conduct. The race-class-gender articulation as demonstrated by the killing of Stephen Lawrence serves as a reminder of the police insensitivity to black people. The chapter explains that racism, sexism and class prejudice are not devoid of police exercise of professional duties. Chapter 13 is a summation of the book with an emphasis on the conditions of the African Diaspora under the domination of imperialist reason. Using the killing of Peter Tosh, this chapter explains the oppressive and repressive policing of subversive popular culture. Peter Tosh was popularly known for his "equal rights and justice" musical lyric ---- a clear demonstration that institutional arrangement that focuses on law and order but not necessarily on what Peter Tosh demands in his song(s). It explains policing of a popular culture that dare challenges the dominant culture characteristic of oppressive policing.

Counter-colonial criminology is a book for every criminologist to read. It challenges the orthodox criminology to re-examine its tenets of knowledge. The decolonization of imperial criminology is crucial to understanding the true nature of deviance and social control. This book epitomizes colonial criminology by demystifying the contours of science of subjugation meted on the colonized and its continuing legacy. It revealed the primitive bifurcation of criminology as a science that buttressed Eurocentric superiority while ostensibly justifying the enslavement of the colonized. At this juncture, the decolonization of criminology is imperative for the redemption of imperialistic thinking and sustenance of the discipline.