

### **Editorial Comment**

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A clue to the inspiration for this special edition of the African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies can be found in its title, 'Indigenous Perspectives and Counter Colonial Criminologies'. In the late 2000s one of the guest editors' for this edition was advised to read 'Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason' by Nigerian scholar Biko Agozino: a book that a friend and colleague described as "ground-breaking". Biko's papyrus, published in 2003, is considered by many Indigenous and critical justice commentators as a landmark critique of Western criminology (Oriola, 2006; Tauri, 2012a). He aptly describes the discipline as a 'control freak' (Agozino, 2010) whose intellectual origins are grounded in the intersection of Enlightenment scholarship and Western Europe's colonial endeavours of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Agozino, 2003).

The decade prior to the publication of Biko's book had seen the rise of what can only be described as an 'international Indigenous School' of critical social science which wrought a significant growth in Indigenous-centred research, journals and other publications. The writings of Indigenous scholars who reside in settler-colonial jurisdictions, such as Moana Jackson, Takiake Alfred, Jeff Corntassel, Andrea Smith, Patricia Monture-Angus and Aileen Moreton-Robinson, and African scholars Bernard Magubane, Maulana Karenga and Biko, to name but a few, brought a much needed Indigenous perspective to Western academic lexicons; particularly for the social sciences but also for justice and legal studies. Having said that, and acknowledging also the support and contribution of critical non-Indigenous scholars such as Chris Cunneen, Harry Blagg and Ted Palys, a major difficulty we face in growing a counter-colonial criminology/justice studies, one that serves the needs of Indigenous peoples, is that the majority of commentary on Indigenous/Aboriginal/Black 'issues' in justice studies and criminology is produced by non-Indigenous, 'mainstream' scholars, and published in mainstream journals (Deckert, 2014).

While Biko's book provided the inspiration for identifying opportunities through which to increase the publication of critical (Indigenous) commentary on justice and crime control, and to enhance the level of scholarship, the development of this edition gathered considerable momentum with the publication of a special edition on 'Indigenous Violence' by a prominent Australasian journal in 2010. The focus and content of that particular edition demonstrated clearly that there is need for the

## **Editorial Comment by Guest Editors: Tauri and Deckert**

work of Indigenous-centred/supportive scholars to be published in supportive journals, if only to ensure the experiences of crime control and related justice issues of *our communities* are 'heard' alongside the cacophony of noise on the 'Indigenous problem' generated by mainstream commentators. The Australasian special edition contained eight research papers and an editorial comment, so 'structurally it can be said to be similar to this one; but that is where the comparisons end. The papers included in this edition are written by Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous critical allies and colleagues who directly engage with Indigenous peoples about their experiences, or utilise critical Indigenous perspectives on criminal justice as it is currently practised in neo/settler-colonial contexts (see Tauri, 2012b; Tauri & Webb, 2012 for critical analysis of the contents of the 2010 special edition). In other words, the work represented here privileges the Indigenous experience and explanation of justice and crime-related issues.

The issues identified in the 2010 special edition demonstrate the value and veracity of Antje Deckert's article in this edition, titled 'Neo-Colonial Criminology: Quantifying the Silence'. One of the key issues facing Indigenous scholars and our non-Indigenous critical colleagues working to advance the development of a counter-colonial criminology is the poor record of supposed 'A' level criminal justice studies journals in publishing materials that a) are based on emancipatory or engaging methodologies that ensure commentary is based on Indigenous experiences, and/or b) utilise critical, Indigenous theory and conceptual frameworks to analyse crime control 'issues' identified as important *by* Indigenous commentators and communities (Tauri, 2009).

The collection of papers presented here problematizes the notion that Indigenous knowledge, whether developed by Indigenous scholars or our non-Indigenous critical collaborators, offers little of value to the discipline of criminology specifically our understanding of Indigenous experiences of crime and victimisation more broadly (see Weatherburn, 2010; 2014 for articulation of this perspective). In contrast, Tamari Kittosa's detailed critique of a Canadian journal's special edition on racial profiling, 'Authoritarian Criminology and the Racial Profiling Debate in Canada: Scientism as Epistemic Violence', demonstrates that mainstream criminological 'research' and commentary is sometimes far from the scientific, empirical endeavour its exponents claim. As Tamari's analysis exposes, it can, and frequently is, a fundamentally ideological, political exercise that hides behind *scientism* to shore up its' mutually beneficially relationship with 'the State', while attempting to silence 'Other' competing voices and perspectives by labelling them with the tag 'unscientific'. Tamari's empirical dissection of the ideological foundations of 'scientific' mainstream academic criminology is supported by the contributions of Biko Agozino, 'Indigenous European Justice and Other Indigenous Justices', and Juan Tauri, 'Indigenous European Justice and Other Indigenous Justices'. Both authors identify and critique many of the rhetorical devices and 'colonial projects' through which the mainstream academy affords itself the privilege of speaking for the Other, and which erroneously elevate Western knowledge above that produced through the experiences and theorizing of Indigenous peoples.

The benefits to the development of 'effective' policies and programmes of letting Indigenous peoples speak for ourselves, is highlighted in the contributions by Harry Blagg and Thalia Anthony, 'If Those Old Women Catch You, You're Going To Cop It': Night Patrols, Indigenous Women, and Place Based Sovereignty in Outback Australia', and Andrea Smith's 'Indigenous Feminists Are Too Sexy for Your Heteropatriarchal Settler Colonialism'. Harry's and Thalia's material provides us with two important insights with regards the development of crime control in the Australian context: firstly, the disconnect between what some Indigenous communities and commentators deem to be an appropriate and successful justice initiative, and the State's crime control functionaries; and second, that contrary to a lot of the noise generated by media and members of the political class, Aboriginal peoples (especially women) are highly capable of developing and implementing initiatives that protect the most vulnerable in their communities in ethical and meaningful ways. Similarly, Andrea Smith reveals the contribution of colonial policies to the ongoing and significantly damaging issues of sexual and physical violence within Indigenous communities. Furthermore, Andrea demonstrates the importance of Indigenous peoples identifying their own solutions to gendered violence, including privileging Indigenous-centred responses over State-focused interventions, and reclaiming Indigenous sexualities that reject the 'necessity' for gendered violence as a (pre)condition of contemporary gender relations within Indigenous communities.

As stated earlier, Biko's work, especially *Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason* was a key inspiration for the development of this special edition. It was for this reason that Joey Lywark's paper 'Biko Agozino: And Justice for All' was placed at the end of the edition. Joey's commentary provides a succinct summary of the importance of Biko's critical scholarship to the international Indigenous academic community, but more especially to the wider Indigenous community and young Indigenous (and we suspect non-Indigenous) scholars.

On behalf of ourselves, the guest editors and the contributors, we would like to thank the editors of the *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies* for offering such a comfortable home for the special edition. We thank you for your support and guidance, without which the edition would not have been possible. We offer the special edition as part-gift, part-celebration: it is our humble gift to the Indigenous academy and Indigenous communities everywhere, in the hope that in some small way it contributes to the development of critical Indigenous scholarship and more impactful policies that benefit Indigenous peoples. And it is our contribution to a celebration of the scholarship of Professor Biko Agozino in acknowledgement of his profound contribution to the development of a critical, Counter-Colonial Criminology.

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## **Editorial Comment by Guest Editors: Tauri and Deckert**

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