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Nov 2nd, 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Keynote 1 – The Unfinished Black/African Struggles for Liberation

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The Unfinished Black/African Struggles for Liberation¹

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni

Chair in Epistemologies of the Global South
University of Bayreuth
Germany

Full Description

The ongoing Black Lives Matter, Rhodes Must Fall, Indigenous people, and Black women/feminist movements among many other subaltern formations are clear signifiers of the unfinished struggles for liberation, reverberating within Global Africa. The unfinished struggles include the abolitionist, anti/decolonial, Black womanist/feminist, Indigenous people, civil rights movements and initiatives aimed at delivering development for dispossessed and destituted peoples. At the centre of the unfinished struggles has been overlapping historical (a people denied of history, dismemberment & Black condition), existential (coloniality of being & antiblackness), material (dispossession & destitution), epistemic (cognitive empire & coloniality of knowledge), and identity (self-definition & self-determination) concerns and questions. These are constituent elements of initiatives aimed at reworlding the world from the vantage point of Global Africa. This keynote address revisits the fundamental unresolved concerns and issues of the Black/African struggles for liberation and reflects on the trajectories of liberation struggles as it simultaneously critiques notions of human rights, discourses of development, and limits of decolonization of the 20th century as they continue to fail to deliver Black lives which matter.

Organizationally, the keynote is organised into five sections. (1) It starts off with a mapping of the current state of the Black/African struggles within an antiblack world; (2) it highlights the key concerns haunting the unfinished Black/African struggles for liberation; (3) it provides a critique of decolonization of the 20th century as it was entrapped within the global systemic shift from empire to modern nation-states, which meant that the very objective of decolonization itself was skyjacked into a search for national-state-status where state sovereignty tramped over people's sovereignty. This section will also reflect on neo-colonialism and global coloniality. (4) critique of the discourse of development as it is part of what Paul Tiyambe Zeleza depicted as the "Athens-to-Washington" imperialist narrative of human progress, and (5) the keynote will conclude with a reflection on the resurgent and insurgent decolonization of the 21st century as it critiques neoliberal discourses of human rights and democracy as that which is radical in defence of the status quo of ontological hierarchies where Black lives do not matter.

¹ Abstract of Keynote Address delivered at the ***Biennial Conference: The Social Practice of Human Rights: Decolonization and Development for Africa and People of African Descent***, University of Dayton, Ohio, United States of America, 2-4 November 2023.