

# The formation of postcolonial theory

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this article is to outline certain options and struggles, which gave rise to postcolonial theory. The author deals with various experiences of anti-slavery and anti-colonial movements in Western and tricontinental countries, comprising the development of postcolonial theory. It is argued that postcolonial theory provides a means of defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged. The article consists of a section in which terminology is clarified, secondly a discussion of the elements that functioned as justification of the formation of postcolonial theory, namely a humanitarian, economic, political, and religious justification. The role of feminism and anti-colonialism is discussed in the third instance, followed by a reflection on the concept “hybrid identities”.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the past two decades, both the term and the field of postcolonialism have been subjected to thorough and extensive criticism from the perspectives of literary, political and religious studies. Theorists take different views about this field of study. From an optimistic point of view, postcolonial theory is a means of defiance by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged. By contrast, the pessimistic view regards postcolonial theory as ambiguous, ironic and superstitious. These views create an interest which has to be dealt with before researchers can apply the theory in their fields. In this article, particularly some of the notorious

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publications of Robert J C Young,<sup>2</sup> are used as references in developing the argument for the formation of postcolonial theory which can be of used in biblical hermeneutics.

With regard to the pessimistic view, Slemon (1995:100) uses Russell Jacoby's argument to demonstrate how postcolonial theory is problematic for researchers because of its "lack of consensus and clarity". Young (2001:67) poses the simple question: "Why does the language of postcolonial criticism often seem so impenetrable?" But for others, according to Slemon (1995:100), this lack of clarity in postcolonial theory together with its fluidity and ambivalence, is "what is genuinely enabling about the field". The term not only lacks clarity, but also keeps changing through "new forms of social collectivity" as they emerge in time and space in a postcolonial world. These "new forms require new ways describing them". Therefore, it is difficult to keep pace with the rapidly changing world while at the same time keeping the definition (if any) of postcolonial theory intact. For this reason, it is equally difficult to formulate a single theory to deal with all forms of the winds of change: social, political, academic, military and economic – those that have created new histories in societies across the globe (Slemon 1995:100-105). Consequently, postcolonial theory becomes a constant and continuing struggle in the company of humanity (cf Bhabha 2001:39).

The critical part of a definition of "postcolonial" concerns the prefix "post", which signifies two different meanings in one compound word. Theorists such as Ashcroft et al (1989:1-4), Slemon (1995:45-52), Young (1996:67-68; 2001:1-10) and Moore (2001:182-188) have tried to address this issue. Slemon (1995:100) admits that one of the most "vexed areas of debate within the field of postcolonial theory has to do with the term 'postcolonial' itself." According to Moore (2001:182), such a conception of "post(-)colonial" can be viewed as "naïve, inadequate, or utopian". By contrast, Slemon (1995:101) argues that colonialism comes into existence within the concept of imperialism, "a concept that is itself predicated within large theories of global politics and which changes radically according to the specifics of those larger theories."

Imperialism, according to Young (2001:26-27), operates as a policy of State, driven by the ostentatious projects of power within and beyond national boundaries. On the one hand, imperialism is susceptible to analysis as a concept grounded in exploitation, partnership and assimilation (Nkrumah 1973:1). On the other hand, colonialism is analysed primarily as a practice by

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<sup>2</sup> Robert J C Young (1995), *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race*; (1996), *Torn halves: Political conflict in literary and cultural theory*; (2001), *Postcolonialism: An historical introduction*; (2003), *Postcolonialism: A very short introduction*.

which colonial rule binds her colonies to herself, with a “primary object of promoting her economic advantages” (Nkrumah 1973:2). It is characterised by mechanisms involving power through direct conquest or through political and economic influence that effectively create a form of domination by one nation over another. According to Moore (2001:182), many critics prefer the term “postcolonial” without a hyphen because it is less “suggestive of (imagined) chronological or ideological supersession”. What is evident here is that, despite the past of colonialism in the exchange for “flag independence” (Slemon 1995:102) that brought no economic independence, nor reparation for that past, imperialism as a concept and colonialism as a practice are still active in a new form. This new form is neo-colonialism.

Neo-colonialism is another form of imperialism where industrialised powers interfere politically and economically in the affairs of post-independent nations. For Cabral (in McCulloch 1983:120-121), neo-colonialism is “an outgrowth of classical colonialism” Young (2001:44-52) refers to neo-colonialism as “the last stage of imperialism” in which a postcolonial country is unable to deal with the economic domination that continues after the country gained independence. Altbach (1995:452-46) regards neo-colonialism as “partly planned policy” and a “continuation of the old practices”.

Ashcroft et al (1989:11-13) argue that postcolonial theory emerges “from the inability of European theory” to deal effectively with the challenges and the varied cultural provenance of postcolonial writing. Christian (1995:457-460) contends that the language employed mystifies instead of clarifies the condition of the marginalised, “making it possible for a few people who know that particular language to control the critical scene – that language surfaced, interestingly enough, just when the literature of the people of color, of black women, of Latin Americans, of Africans began to move to the ‘centre’”. Words such as centre and periphery are themselves instructive.” Christian implicitly draws closer to the issue of neo-colonialism in the area of academics. Her deception lies in the fact that literature, the voice of people who are not in power, is ever “in danger of extinction or of cooptation”, not because the weak cannot theorise, but because they are “constantly limited by societal structures” which are the product of imperialism and colonialism.

The second challenge of a definition of postcolonial theory is its contextual framework, as it is linked to race, culture and gender, settler and native. The pertinent questions theorists need to ask are: When does a settler become coloniser, colonised and postcolonial? When does a race cease to be an oppressive agent and become a wealth of cultural diversities of a postcolonial setting? Or in the human history of migrations, when does the settler become native, indigenous, a primary citizen? And lastly, when does

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the native become truly postcolonial? The answers to these questions make postcolonial theory problematic.

Based on such questions, the road from colonial to postcolonial never ends merely with “post” in a postcolonial concept. Instead it becomes a new form of influence through local agents. This vicious circle does not allow the world to be postcolonial – to be entirely free from colonialism.

A critical approach with an optimistic view of postcolonial theory is therefore more preferable than a pessimistic view. According to Bhabha (1994:171), postcolonial criticism “bears witness to the unequal and universal forces of cultural representation” that are involved in a constant competition for political and economic control in the contemporary world. Moreover, Bhabha (1994:171) sees postcolonial critique emerging from colonial experiences. He argues:

Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of “minorities” within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic “normality” to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, race, communities, peoples.

Postcolonial theory formulates its critique around the social histories, cultural differences and political discrimination that are practised and normalised by colonial and imperial machineries. According to Young (2001:1-11, 57-69), postcolonial critique is concerned with the history of colonialism “only to the extent that history has determined the configurations and power structures of the present.” Postcolonial critique also recognises anti-colonial movements as the source and inspiration of its politics. Postcolonial critique can be defined as a dialectical discourse which broadly marks the historical facts of decolonisation. It allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their sovereignty; it gives them a negotiating space for equity. A number of theorists share this view, including Kenyatta (1968:36); Bhabha (1994); Spivak (1988:197-221); Ashcroft et al (1989;1995); Sugirtharajah (1996:1-5); Dube (1996); Segovia (2000:11-34) and Punt (2001, 2003).

However, anti-colonial movements are not uniform. Many of them are contextually confined, although drawn together, and their heterogeneous principles form a postcolonial theory. Moreover, disciplines do overlap and contradictions are inescapable. This is particularly true when postcolonial theory draws more of its material from other disciplines and activities in a

given context (cf Segovia 1999:111-113; Sugirtharajah 1999:3-5). The language of postcolonial theory is uncompromising, because it “threatens privileges and power” (Young 2003:7) by rejecting and challenging the superiority of some cultures over others. Its priority is to administer equality and justice to people.

According to Young (2001:383-426), postcolonial theory as a “political discourse” emerged mainly from experiences of oppression and struggles for freedom after the “tricontinental”<sup>3</sup> awakening in Africa, Asia and Latin America: the continents associated with poverty and conflict. Postcolonial criticism focuses on the oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world (Young 2001:11). The philosophy underlying this theory is not one of declaring war on the past, but declaring war against the present realities which, implicitly or explicitly, are the consequences of that past. Therefore the attention of the struggle is concentrated on neo-colonialism and its agents (international and local) that are still enforced through political, economic and social exploitation in post-independent nations.

## **2. A FORMATION OF POSTCOLONIAL THEORY**

### **2.1 Humanitarian justification**

Postcolonial theory has a long history<sup>4</sup> but most theorists in this field take it for granted as if the origin of the theory were well known to all readers. One of the postcolonial theorists, Young (2001, 2003), managed to trace the origin of postcolonial theory through history. He introduces a historical beginning by showing how postcolonial theory is a product of what the West saw as anti-slavery activists and anti-colonialists. Young (2001:74-112) draws three perspectives in which postcolonial theory emerges, namely humanitarian (moral), liberal (political) and economic. Whereas humanitarians and economists staged anti-colonial campaigns, politicians (liberals) supported colonisation as a means of civilising the heathens by any and all means, including force.

Young (2001:75-82) notes that the first example of an anti-colonial campaign is attributed to Bishop Bartolomé Las Casas (1484-1566) of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain in 1542. Driven by pastoral obligation, the

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<sup>3</sup> See Young (2003:16-29; cf 2001:57-58) for the definition and origin of the tricontinental concept.

<sup>4</sup> This is a vast and complex field, which cannot be exhausted in this brief section. The intention of this section is only to give an overview of how postcolonial theory came into being.

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Bishop drafted his contribution, *A short account of the destruction of the Indies*, in which he informed the world about “the genocide that had been practised” under the blessing of the Spanish king and that through him, the Pope had initially permitted missionaries from Spain and Portugal to undertake expeditions to America. Las Casas questioned the moral and legal grounds of the Spanish occupation of America. This was 50 years after the expedition of Christopher Columbus in 1492 to the “new world”. The anti-colonialism campaign of Bishop Las Casas was taken up by Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) at the beginning of the nineteenth century in South America. Young (2001:75) argues that “Las Casas’s affirmation of the full humanity of the Indians and his denunciation of the ‘social sins’ of the conquistador rule, led Gustavo Guitierrez (1993) to identify him as the originator of twentieth-century Latin American liberation theology.”

Bishop Las Casas’s campaign was eventually joined by other European anti-colonialism activists and by the eighteenth century, his sermon had been “developed into a fully-fledged political discourse of theories” of equal rights that formed the basis for anti-colonial and anti-slavery movements in Europe.

### **2.2 Economic justification**

Young (2001:82-87) indicates how economic objection to colonialism has developed. Karl Marx argues that the motive behind colonisation is economic. Adam Smith (1723-1790) (cf Smith 1952), a church minister, was among the first to challenge British imperialism on the ground of economic interest and became sympathetic to colonies. Smith’s argument in his book, *The wealth of nations* (1776), is that colonies are not a product of good planning “wisdom and policy” of European colonialists, “but rather as effects of their [greed] ‘disorder and injustice’” (see Young 2001:82). Smith opposed slavery, not necessarily on moral grounds, but particularly because slaves were becoming expensive to maintain and therefore were less efficient. Even if the primary motive of economic objections was to safeguard the economic interests of the industrialised nations, the anti-colonialism campaign was nevertheless boosted. Karl Marx also contributed greatly to the economic objection, although he was not anti-colonialist *per se*, only when colonialism touched or interfered with economics.

Marx’s anti-imperialist theory was developed around capitalism. As Young (2001:101-112) notes, Marx discussed colonial expansion in relation to the economic effects of capitalism, but with no “emancipatory programme” for colonial revolution. Marx’s preoccupation with the anti-colonial struggle was seen not as much from the plight of the colonised, but from the economic consequences at home that interfered with the feudal system.

### **2.3 Political justification**

The liberal anti-slavery campaign developed alongside moral and economic objections. By the end of eighteenth century, the anti-colonialism campaign had focused its expression in legal matters challenging imperial rules at home. Edmund Burke (1729-1797) is one of the famous campaigners of equal rights in colonies and was viewed not as “a defender but a reformist of liberty”. He also addressed his critiques at the “abuses of power and intolerance towards the norms, social practices and institutions of other cultures” in British colonies. This received support from the French Revolution when the “principles of liberty, equality and fraternity were theoretically extended by its proponents to all races” (Young 2001:79-80).

In 1793, Bentham (see Harrison 1983) challenged European countries to liberate their colonies. Young (2001:85-87) comments that Bentham supported Smith’s argument that “profits from colonies were at best illusory, given the expense of protecting them and the cost of the international conflict that they provoked”. Bentham combined the economic and political arguments to challenge colonialism. His courage and determination to challenge the interests of his own country for the sake of the colonised were highly valued. His commitment was later converted into a “credo for colonial liberation” by the Americans and the French, who adopted it as a “discourse of universal rights”. Equality, liberty, the rights of man and national self-determination eventually enhanced “the justification and very foundation” of the anti-colonialism struggle. It was later endorsed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, shortly after World War II.

Throughout the struggles of independence, the applicability of this declaration of human equality still faced a psychological barrier based on racial superiority and capability, which is still a challenge in the world today. It is also believed that no matter how good theories are, the will to change must prevail if any concrete and positive action is to be taken. Despite declarations of equal rights, oppression and economic exploitation still prevail in practice in today’s world.

### **2.4 Religious justification**

Throughout the history of slavery, colonialism and even conventional wars, religious institutions and individuals have been accused of complicity, especially the accusation that religion went hand in hand with colonisation. Nevertheless, religious institutions and individuals often made untold sacrifices for the sake of justice and righteousness as part of campaigns against slavery and colonialism (cf Oliver & Fage 1972:137). In this section, the focus is on a few examples of tricontinental religious figures whose

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contributions can be regarded as stepping stones in the formation of postcolonial theory.

Las Casas's legacy inspired many Latin American church leaders and theologians to revolutionise the state of affairs of their time. The emergence of liberation theology in Latin America, Asia and Africa made enormous contributions to the struggle against all forms of oppression, from slavery and colonialism to postcolonial dictatorial regimes. Along with Las Casas, the name of Antonio de Valdivieso, Bishop of Nicaragua, should be mentioned. In the 1540s he refused to keep silent about the brutality of the Spanish colonialists against the Amerindians (cf Ferm 1987:4). However, De Valdivieso became the victim of his efforts to oppose colonial acts that dehumanised the natives.

Ferm (1987:4) notes that in the 1550s, Juan del Valle, Bishop of Popayan in Colombia, dedicated himself to preaching equality and challenged the oppressive regime forced upon the people of Latin America. The bishops mentioned above are some of the many examples of those who fought injustice. Las Casas's preaching of "evangelism without arms" was later emphasised by liberation theology as the struggle for humanism in favour of the oppressed, the poor, the victims of gender and racial discrimination, the displaced and the homeless (see Comblin 1981:51).

After 500 years of suffering, Latin America gave birth to many sons and daughters who pursued the task of preaching equality and justice. According to Boff (1989:9-10), Latin America witnessed a colonial Christendom from 1492 to 1808, followed by a time of new Christendom from 1808 to 1960. The period between 1960 and the 1980s represents "the new Christendom in crisis and the emergence of a church of the people." The church underwent a revolution on behalf of the poor. Leonard Boff states that during the first two periods, the church "had concern *for* the people, but it never produced activity *with* the people *as* the people would desire." Church planting was one of the objectives of religious colonial enterprise which propagated "the faith and the Empire".

Ferm (1987:12) is convinced that liberation theology emerged from the lives of the poor and oppressed, in particular from "the lives of Christian communities of the dispossessed"; those minorities who sought to relate their Christian faith to the plight of their daily lives. José Miguez Bonino (2004:16-43) exposes important moments of their struggle from colonisation to post-independence in Latin American history. The strategy of working with the peasants, the poor, was also to some extent motivated by the politics of Che Guevara. Church leaders and theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Camilo Torres, Dom Helder Câmara, Oscar Romero, Juan Luis Segundo, Leonard

Boff, José Miguez Bonino, Elsa Tamez, to name but a few, can be regarded as the militants of a theology that liberates. Hence, liberation means deliverance from economic, political and social oppression; it also means the self-determination enabling people to take control of and participate in their own destiny; it is deliverance from sin and finding new life in Christ Jesus.

In Africa, even before the emergence of liberation theology and black theology, the prophet Simon Kimbangu (1889-1952) led the way against Belgian colonialism in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A former local Baptist Church evangelist had a revelation in which God was going to liberate the Congo and black people from colonialism. Kimbangu was accused of preaching heresy and inciting people against the colonial power. He was arrested in November 1921 and sentenced to death. His followers compared his trial before colonial judges to that of Jesus before Pilate (Mt 27:11-26). The Kimbanguist movement believed that the world was coming to an end and that the present order and oppression of Belgian colonialism would be destroyed and replaced by God's Kingdom. The Belgians charged Kimbangu with treason, because of his different forms of resistance through songs and preaching.

African independent churches and other religious movements in southern Africa also played a great role in fighting against colonialism (see Banana 1996:69-76). Liberation theology and Black theology (see Maimela 1998:111-119) were characterised by the struggle against class domination, oppression and apartheid. The experiences of Latin Americans and African-Americans in their campaigns against social injustice and racism, in which Martin Luther King and Malcolm X stood on the side of poor (cf Cone 1993:1-11), encouraged African Christians across the African continent to engage with and challenge apartheid and dictatorial regimes (cf Stinton 2004:105-136). Steve Biko's "Black Consciousness" (Hopkins 1991:194-200) developed within biblical perspectives, noted that the Christian gospel would find the God of the Blacks through Jesus Christ's siding with the racially oppressed.

### **3. FEMINISM AND ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS**

Women's involvement in anti-colonial movements, in the West and particularly in the three-continent context, tends to be overlooked. It has often been said that feminism has never been anti-imperialist, because through it, feminism is able to fight its own battle against masculinity at home (cf Young 2001:360-382). In the case of Western feminism, anti-slavery was supported by women in as much as they identified slavery with domestic affairs where they also fought for equal treatment from patriarchal societies (Young 2001:77).

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Although women in Third World countries played a significant role in anti-colonial campaigns (Jayawardena 1986), their contribution has never been regarded as equal to that of men. They always remained on the periphery as “helpers” and not as full participants. Once victory has been achieved, victory and leadership become patriarchal. However, Jayawardena (1986) presents a comprehensive account of Asian women’s involvement in freedom struggles. Using the example of Vietnam, Jayawardena (1986:196-212) demonstrates the long tradition of women leading local and national revolutionary movements against foreign occupations. For instance, during the French occupation in the 1880s, many women took part in resistance movements against the French.

In Africa for example, Kenyan women were involved in the Mau-Mau guerrilla war against the British (see Furedi 1989:103-125). Women were involved in spying and in distributing food, medicine and ammunition supplies to the fronts (Maina 1987:123). But, as Nkrumah (1957:89-90) confessed, women never reached the level of revolutionary leadership despite being involved in freedom struggles, but acted as local activists. The weapons they used ranged from strikes, street demonstrations and singing to petitions, all of which functioned as empowering statements of solidarity with the cause of freedom. South African women have played a major role in the anti-apartheid campaign since 1913 (see Mandela 1994:257-260).

As Young (2001:369-370) points out, feminism is among the most international of political discourses, but as a political movement, feminism is not “intrinsically anti-imperialist”. Whereas communism was initially conceived as a political ideology, feminism’s objective was mainly focused on achieving gender equality, no matter what kind of political system prevailed. The colonial and patriarchal systems were both oppressive to feminists.

## **4. A TRICONTINENTAL APPROACH**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The term “Third World” (Young 2001:57-58)<sup>5</sup> has been widely used to distinguish between the developed and the undeveloped or underdeveloped continents. As the term is itself colonial to some anti-colonial and post-colonial

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<sup>5</sup> The term “Third World” was coined in France for the “model of the Third Estate of French Revolution”, dividing the world into two political and economic systems: capitalism and socialism. At the Bandung Conference in 1955, the non-aligned countries (mainly the newly independent nations) of Asia and Africa found themselves in an independent power bloc, which might eventually form a new world system, a “Third World”. Unfortunately, this third system, or rather grouping, was “slow to define and to develop itself” into a competitive system with political and economic priorities. Instead, the term created a gap between the developed and less-developed countries. Despite the creation of economic and political inequalities, however, tricontinental cultural power and knowledge have greatly influenced the world.

theorists, and therefore inappropriate for use, they prefer using the term tricontinental instead.

The Havana Conference of 1966 used the momentum of a growing consciousness against colonialism and imperialism. At this conference, Latin America joined forces with Africa and Asia to form a tricontinental bloc. The Havana Conference established a journal called *Tricontinental* and brought together the anti-colonial and postcolonial writings of people such as Frantz Fanon, Amircal Cabral and Ernesto Che Guevara (Young 2003:17). The Afro-Asia Latin American People's Solidarity Organisation (OSPAAAL) made a substantial contribution, putting together the thoughts, strategies and writings that formed a political and cultural unity, and that subsequently provided "the theoretical and political foundations of postcolonialism" (Young 2001:213).

#### **4.2 A Latin American perspective**

Despite the anti-colonial campaign of Las Casas, Latin America remained one of the places where foreign politics and religion effectively collaborated to oppress natives for about 500 years. Wickham-Crowley (1992) and Young (2001:193-203) give an overview of how Latin America achieved its independence. However, political independence did not change the lives of indigenous people and for the past 200 years, peasant revolutions have become a constant feature of Latin American history. The success of the Cuban revolution relied heavily on peasantry-organised support (Wickham-Crowley 1992:215, 313-314).

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara followed the strategy of Mariategui for developing Marxism in conjunction with the particular conditions of different cultures, learned from Lenin, Mao Tse-tung of China, and the Italian Marxist group of Gramsci and Palmiro. An innovative form of Marxist theory, it focused primarily on the involvement of peasantry in revolutionary struggles. Young (2001:197) describes Mariategui as one of the most nuanced and revolutionary "Marxist political and cultural theorists of his time". He addressed the issue of cultural and economic dependency in Latin America. The determination grew from self-consciousness to actions which revolutionised the continent and beyond. Moreover, Guevara (1994:17) repeatedly taught that the socialist revolution in Latin America must expand through workers' participation. Guevara's (1995:20) revolutionary motto was that "the world must not only be interpreted, it must be transformed".

#### **4.3 An Asian perspective**

The Indian legacy<sup>6</sup> in liberation struggles is well known through the icon India gave the world in the person of Mahatma Gandhi. Political writers and

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<sup>6</sup> For the purpose of this study, the Asian perspective will only take into consideration Indian experience as a case for the anti-colonialism movement.

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historians have argued that the Indian liberation was unique (Young 2001:308-309; cf Guha 1997). Although liberation movements were individually constituted, the cause of freedom “remained unique in its operation as well as in the ideological range of its participants”. The founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 after the uprising of 1857 provided firm ground for India's non-violent campaign against colonialism.

Young (2001:308) singles out two factors which distinguish the Indian liberation campaign from others. (i) The properly structured Congress Party provided organisational structures, political skills and the ability to control its members which “deprived the Communist Party of an advantage, which elsewhere it used to maximum effect”; (ii) the profound leadership provided by Gandhi and the role he played in and outside the Congress Party could not be easily challenged by new emerging parties. In terms of the philosophy of a non-violent movement, the National Congress Party was not completely opposed to British rule, until it was challenged by its radical members who combined religion with militant activism. This radical approach sought “to turn the Congress into a genuinely anti-imperialist instrument”. Subsequently, in 1907, the Congress adopted the “self-government” rule (*swaraj*) within the British Empire.

Alongside the adoption of national self-rule and cultural consciousness, Gandhi developed the idea of “self-reliance”, known as *swadeshi*, for the Indian economy. Young (2001:320-321) asserts that Gandhi did not invent these concepts, but found them operational in the politics of the freedom struggles. Gandhi’s difficult task, however, was to maintain unity in India with its multiplicity of religious and political factions. In order to be more inclusive, his argument almost diverged from nationalism and he argued that “India was not so much a nation as a civilisation, and to that degree, he was able to incorporate diversity and multiplicity.”

#### **4.4 An African perspective**

The African struggle against slavery and colonialism would require a whole body of research but this section concerns an overview of how Africans went along with these struggles. Thompson (1987:107-130) gives an account of African resistance against slavery in western Africa in the 1560s, during the “second slave-trading voyage” of John Hawkins in Sierra Leone.

Young (2001:253, 274) distinguishes between the roles that Anglophone and Francophone anti-colonial activists played in African regions. The Anglophone anti-colonial activists focused their activities mainly on “the objective realm, the realm of history, economic history, sociality and materiality”, and the Francophone activists were devoted to the subjective

realm, to aspects of the “history of oppression and exploitation with a concern for human attitudes towards them”. The aim of this second approach was to articulate “the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism as they were experienced by them” (Du Bois 1989:1).

African anti-colonial movements were both local involving Africans in Africa, and diasporic involving Africans in the Caribbean Islands and in North America. The establishment of the Pan-African Association in the 1920s provided a platform for the development of African nationalism, theories and strategies for their struggles. Three main factors contributed to African anti-colonialism struggles, namely African solidarity across the world, African socialism and an African consciousness about the pain inflicted on them by colonialism.

The first conference of the Pan-African Congress, held in London in 1900, laid its claims to equal rights for Africans inside and also outside Africa. The Conference of Versailles in 1919 demanded the right to education, equal treatment and political participation in the affairs of State. By 1945, the Pan-African Congress had grown and been influenced by many anti-colonialism activists. As a result, the Pan-African Congress held in 1945 clearly formulated a demand for independence and self-determination for Africa (Nkrumah 1957:44). As Young (2001:217-219; cf Nkrumah 1957:47-49; 1968:i) observes, African nationalism and consciousness were distinguished by their international outlook. Those living outside Africa, “whether diasporic or in exile” managed to remain in touch with black political organisations in Africa. So African liberation took the form of an international movement and never operated in isolation. The creation of African solidarity was tested and found amazingly effective during the invasion of Ethiopia by the Italians in 1935 (cf Mazrui & Tidy 1984:9). After World War II, the liberation of Africa and the activities of anti-colonial movements increasingly became key issues in African-American politics. The freedom struggle of “Negroes” in North America no longer remained isolated and became an integral part of anti-colonialism.

Political consciousness combined with the African culture and the pain of oppression responded to the revolutionary call as the only alternative to rescue Africa from the bondage of colonialism. Nkrumah (1970:77-78) once said: “Our philosophy must find its weapon in the environment and living conditions of the African people.” He was joined by people such as Léopold Sedar Senghor (1961), Julius Nyerere (1968), Jomo Kenyatta (1968), Kenneth Kaunda (1967) and Patrice Lumumba (1961), who all emphasised the contextualisation of socialism and political representation in Africa. Figures in Francophone and Lusophone Africa (cf Young 2001:253-292) who have dominated anti-colonialism movements and who are honoured for their

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remarkable contribution include Léopold S Senghor of Senegal, Tovalou Houénou of Benin and Tiemoho Kouyaté from Mali, Amirca Cabral from Guinea-Bissau and Frantz Fanon from Martinique (Mazrui 1993:60).

Léopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire articulated through literature and poetry the principle of humanity to the oppressed and oppressors. By contrast, Frantz Fanon chose psychology as his means of investigating the impact of colonialism on colonised people. Influenced by the experience of the Algerian revolution and his studies in psychology in an industrialised country (France), Fanon, unlike many anti-colonial non-violent campaigners from Gandhi to Mandela, developed the idea of active intervention (violence) as a response to colonialism. Presbey (1996:283-283) comments that Gandhi and Fanon both agreed on one thing, namely the liberation of the colonised. But they differed in their approach which to a large extent was the result of their different contexts. However, Mandela took the middle way between the two approaches, “stressing the importance of nonviolence while eventually turning to limited use of violence”. Fanon (1965:9, 13) states that “decolonisation itself is always a violent phenomenon” and the origin of violence is colonisation itself.

After the creation of the *Ligue Universelle de Défense de la Race Noire*<sup>7</sup> in early 1924, the *Négritude* movement in the 1930s and the *Présence Africaine* (African Presence) in the 1940s, the cultural consciousness of Senghor and his company became a concrete manifestation which later developed into anti-colonial tools. *Négritude* did not develop merely as a cultural movement, but was conceived in the political context of Black people around the world. Acknowledging the origin of Negritude, Senghor (1988:136-140), gives credit to Alain Locke’s and William Edward Burghard du Bois’s innovative efforts of the “New-Negro”.<sup>8</sup> Senghor, like Fanon, was influenced by Sartre’s Marxist and Hegelian thoughts (Kruks 1996:123) which emphasised the alienation of being. In Hegelian philosophy, becoming fully human and attaining full consciousness of the self can only be achieved by recognising the other.

From Lusophone<sup>9</sup> Africa, Amirca Cabral (1969; Chilcote 1972, 1991) was one of the most outstanding contributors to the anti-colonial movement. Cabral, together with Maria de Andrade and Antonio Neto of Angola, formed the *Conferência das Organizações Nacionais das Colonias Portuguesas*

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<sup>7</sup> Universal League for the Defense of the Black Race.

<sup>8</sup> Senghor refers to it as *Négro Renaissance*.

<sup>9</sup> Portuguese-speaking people.

(CONCP)<sup>10</sup> in 1961. The objective of this organisation was to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to strategies for activities in their liberation struggle. Cabral's theoretical formulation was based on cultural self-confidence. At the same time, he maintained that the struggle must be of the people, by the people and for the people (Cabral 1980:75). For Cabral, psychological and cultural reconstruction was part of the national liberation struggle, which enabled the marginalised human beings who were the product of colonialism to recover their personalities as Africans (Chilcote 1972:375). He reformulated his understanding of socialism to a national liberation dialect. National liberation was made possible by "the endurance of culture" which is "the fruit of people's history and a determinant of history". Consequently, it is "the survival, and the reaffirmation of culture" that germinated the liberation struggle (Cabral 1969:41-43). Having come to this conclusion, Cabral's (1973:55) definition of liberation is about ending imperial domination and building a cultural renaissance, a "new fabric" through which people will regain their identity and dignity.

## **5. A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH AND LIBERATION STRUGGLE**

### **5.1 Self-consciousness**

Fanon (1986:84) asserts that the problem of colonialism "includes not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions but also the human attitudes towards these conditions." According to Nandy (1983:63), colonialism is first of all "a matter of consciousness", therefore it needs to be defined in people's minds. The war against colonialism and any other forms of oppression must not only be material, it must also equally engage the mental. For Fanon, the use of psychology in the anti-colonial struggle has a twofold purpose: it investigates the inner effects of colonialism on the colonised, and it provides the tools of resistance, "turning the inculcation of inferiority into self-empowerment" (Young 2001:275). Consequently, the process of decolonisation begins with a positive change of mind, a self-consciousness.

Tolbert (1995: 347-361) grapples with the issue of "Christianity, imperialism and decentering of privilege". Her attempt raises important points concerning the mind of both coloniser and colonised in the process of decolonisation. She highlights three discrete ways in which appropriate reciprocal participation can be achieved, namely listening, reflecting/analysing and acting. Listening in postcolonial theory has to work at the conscience level

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<sup>10</sup> Conference of Nationalist Organisations of the Portuguese Colonies.

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of those engaged in and affected by imperialism and bring them to the level of responsibility and accountability.

Self-consciousness can refer to a cultural revolution which refuses to remain in a state of subjugation. Consciousness informs about “desire”, a spirit of longing, a spirit of want or satisfaction (Isasi-Diaz 2004:340-354). Cabral’s (1969:41-43; cf Bhabha 1994:171-197) term “the survival of culture” refers to self-consciousness that is engaged in resistance to gain freedom. Self-consciousness as a means of cultural and personal rebirth is not ashamed of the past, but defies the oppressor’s consciousness to see sameness and equality in the other, which henceforth acquires dignity. According to Fanon (1995:154), in the sphere of “psycho-effective equilibrium”, self-consciousness brings about change in “the native” and in the oppressor alike. Nandy (1983:63; cf Young 2001:340) emphasises the psychological effects of colonialism in colonial powers as well as colonised cultures. Self-consciousness is a reciprocal revolution that goes from colonised to coloniser and vice versa (Nandy 1980:99-111).

### **5.2 Self-determination: Violent and non-violent approaches**

From Du Bois to Steve Biko the emphasis on self-determination and consciousness is important. Cabral (1969:89) and Guevara (1996:172) both stress the importance of self-sacrifice in liberation struggles. In a psychoanalytical approach, two dimensions can be discerned based upon the way in which they have been used by theorists and political practitioners. These two approaches, non-violent (passive resistance) and violent (active resistance) are usually regarded as opposites that rarely occur concomitantly. Nevertheless, over the years, they have been interchangeably used in conflicting situations, that is when one approach does not work, the other is switched on, a dilemma that Horsley (1993) deals with. Mariategui (1996:49) states that “the renunciation of violence is more romantic than violence itself ... Unfortunately, a revolution is not made by fasting.”

The anti-colonial struggle is about violence and it is hard to find any other dialectical discourse to define it. Derrida (1978:30) argues that colonial violence was carried out in the name of pacification, whereas postcolonial violence is carried out in the name of degradation. This infinite passage through violence is what is called history. Fanon argues that colonial violence is a reciprocal dialect that works at the level of history and the individual.

In 1961, the manifesto of the African National Congress (Mandela 1994:325-328) enacted the use of force as an alternative in the freedom struggle. In this instance *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (the Spear of the Nation) was to carry on the armed struggle. Nkrumah (1957:92) who followed in Gandhi’s

footsteps regarding a non-violent approach, eventually had to lament that freedom had never been “handed over to any colonial country on a silver platter”. Self-determination is defined by the language best understood by those involved in the conflict, and revolution prepares the ground of freedom for those who cannot get it by other means. Although the option of active violence is supported by Fanon and other freedom fighters, Jesus’ philosophy for the church is non-violent.

There are many forms of non-violent resistance against colonialism and other forms of oppression. Vail and White (1991:41) analyse various forms of local resistance and their *modus operandi* before the advent of independence movements. In Africa, songs and poetry were important weapons, not only by stimulating the consciousness of the oppressed but also by sending out a clear message of resistance to the oppressor. Connor (1996:107-128) gives a good example of African-American songs that were used in a Christianised manner in the struggle against slavery and racism.

Whereas Fanon moved from an analysis of the disabling effects of the “psychological violence” of colonialism to an advocacy of military intervention against colonial regimes, Gandhi combined non-violence and non-cooperation with a more widespread “psychological resistance” (Young 2001:323). Taking Gandhi’s example further, hybridisation and alliance begin at home where various cultural and religious beliefs are moulded through psychoanalysis and spiritual energy to form a resistance theory.

## 6. HYBRID IDENTITIES

Postcolonial theory is developed from anti-colonial philosophy, which in itself is a hybrid<sup>11</sup> construct (Bhabha 1994:112-116; Young 2001:69; 2003:69-90). The mixture of concepts from the past<sup>12</sup> and the present has given rise to a new foundation for socio-political identities. As a result, postcolonial theory unfortunately does not reproduce the old native culture, nor does it bring a totally new culture, but it produces a dislocated culture, a mixture of worlds – a “fragmented and hybrid theoretical language” within a “conflictual cultural interaction” (Young 2001:69; cf Loomba 1998:15). Postcolonial culture is an “inevitably a hybridised” phenomenon (Ashcroft et al 1989:195) that involves a dialectal relationship of the “grafted” Western cultural systems and a native ontology, which (re)creates a new local identity. The construction of a new

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<sup>11</sup> Homi K Bhabha (1994:112) defines hybridity as “the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)”. It is “the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects”.

<sup>12</sup> The emerging voices of historical struggles against colonialism and imperialism.

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identity is based on this bitter reality of interaction between the colonial hegemonic system and the colonised's perverted peripheries.

Young (1996:8; see 1995:1-28) defines hybridity as a mere product of "disruptions and dislocations" of any system. The term hybridity or *métissage* in Francophone African literature is invoked alongside the *Négritude* philosophy (Senghor 1964:45-83; Sartre 1976:11). The tools used to construct Negritude were provided by the industrialised cultures. In this way, Negritude became a derivative discourse, which Sartre (1976:59) calls a "dialectic" to enable both Negroes and Whites to read equality and sameness in races. In the minds of Senghor and his colleagues, as Young (2001:266) analyses their thinking, Negritude was to forge a third option, a new way, a new society where "the antithetical values of racism and anti-racism [would] produce a society without racism and a new humanism". Through this context, humanity would at last be universally defined. Hybridity emerges in the context of compositions of a fluid mixture that undergoes its own initiation of reciprocal translation (Van Aarde 2004:11-12).

This mixture of two original (yet different) materials becomes a new material in itself, failing however to identify fully with either of the two. Following Young's (2003:139-146) discussion colonialism, like translation, invades other territories, other cultures and imposes its meaning to dominate new landscape, thereby "changing things into things which they are not". The indigenous person and his/her whole environment are forced into a subordinated culture of colonial rule. This is why the original culture has to be reconstructed.

Subaltern is another area which should be considered in this section. The study of subaltern (Guha 1982; Spivak 1988:197-221; Loomba 1998:231-245; Young 2001:352-359) is another way of raising the consciousness of the marginalised, to bring them to the attention of the centre. In terms of this definition, subaltern presents the overall position of peasantry, the underclass of people, people whose voice has been silenced.

The history of natives, tribes, nomads and women's activism in anti-colonial movements constitutes the legacy of freedom and equality. From Lenski's (1966:243-282) social stratification study, the subaltern can be considered in the same way as the peasants, the unclean and degraded and the expendables of the first century, who found themselves in a marginalised state. The other form of hybridity is the development of colonial discourse (Young 2001:383-426).<sup>13</sup> In the concluding remarks to his introduction to

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<sup>13</sup> Castle (2001:502) states that colonial discourse refers to "aggregates of texts, documents, art works, and other means of expression that relate directly and indirectly to colonial territories, colonial rule, or colonized peoples". It includes all colonial materials such as legal documents, memoranda, newspapers, novels, telegraphs and poetry.

postcolonial theory, Young discusses the works of Said, Derrida and Foucault. This illustrates that colonialism not only operated as a form of military and economic domination, but also “simultaneously as a discourse of domination”. This is the contribution that Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) made to the literary world (Young 2001:383-384). Said (1978:3) asserts that it is not possible to understand how European culture was able to manage and produce the Orient in all spheres of life during colonial period without examining Orientalism as a “discourse”. The Orient’s emphasis is placed on “evidence” which is invisible for such representation as *representation*. Bhabha (1994:66) points out that political discourse is dependent on the concept of “fixity” in the ideological construction of otherness that is found in the “representation” of cultural, historical and racial difference.

The final hybrid identity to be mentioned is the notion of nationalism.<sup>14</sup> Young (2001:172) observes that nationalism is “a kind of language”, a form and a strategy. The ideology often connected to this strategy, especially during anti-colonial struggles, is for example the issue of land rights, which directly involves not only political activists but also peasants and workers. If nationalism could incorporate a diversity and multiplicity of cultures and tribes for a cause, then it could build a sense of nationhood after independence. However, two major problems are associated with nationalism (Furedi 1994:21-22).

The first problem is that the geographic boundaries of nations and their legal and political structures are the product of colonialism. These boundaries are continually contested, either by political institutions, indigenous groups or by what Young (2001:59) calls “Fourth-World groups”.<sup>15</sup> Secondly, nationalism lacks charismatic leadership in many post-independent nations. Most of those who fought for independence did not live long enough to see the fruits of their labour. As a result, political powers are often transferred to the native bourgeois elite produced by neocolonialism. Many a time they mistake tribalism for nationalism; private enterprise for national heritage.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Postcolonial theory is built from the colonial experiences of people who engaged in liberation struggles around the world and particularly in the tricontinental countries in Africa, south and south east Asia and Latin America.

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<sup>14</sup> Furedi (1994:21) defines nationalism as “an independent variable, but rather a form through which a variety of responses, aspirations and interests are expressed. Its force is not internal but depends on the intensity of sentiment of various social groups”.

<sup>15</sup> These are people who are still colonized in decolonized countries, such as the Ainu in Japan, or the gypsies in Spain.

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It bears witness to constant cultural forces for representation. It allows people emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their negotiating space for equity. In a dislocated culture, postcolonial theory does not declare war on the past, but challenges the consequences of the past that are exploitative.

In so doing, postcolonial theory engages the psychology of both the colonised and the coloniser in the process of decolonisation. Those engaged in and those affected by colonisation and imperialism are consciously brought to a level of responsibility, because the cultural revolution refuses to endure a state of subjugation. Postcolonial theory raises self-consciousness which revolutionises the minds of the colonised and the coloniser to build a new society where liberty and equity prevail.

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