THE DECOLONISATION TOOLKIT

DECOLONIZING GLOBAL HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

FOREWORD

THIS TOOLKIT IS ENCOURAGING YOU TO THINK AND ENGAGE WITH DECOLONISATION THROUGH DIFFERENT THEMES. WE HAVE CREATED THIS TOOLKIT FOR, WHAT WE REFER TO AS, 'GLOBAL PROFESSIONALS', PEOPLE WHO, THROUGH THEIR EDUCATION OR WORK, ENGAGE WITH SOCIETAL ISSUES IN AN GLOBAL CONTEXT.

WE ARE A GROUP OF STUDENTS, WHO ARE IN THE MIDST OF LEARNING ABOUT DECOLONISATION. WE HAVE AGREED THAT THIS TOOLKIT WILL BE A CONTINUOUS WORK IN PROGRESS, AND THIS VERSION YOU ARE READING NOW IS JUST ONE OF THE FIRST DRAFTS. THEREFORE, IF YOU HAVE ANY RESOURCES OR SUGGESTIONS OR OTHER VALUABLE INPUTS, WE INVITE YOU TO CONNECT WITH US.

WHY DID WE WRITE THIS TOOLKIT (AND WHY IN THIS WAY)?

AS THE STUDENT INITIATIVE *DECOLONISING GLOBAL HEALTH* AT UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN, WE HAVE BEEN BRAINSTORMING A LOT ABOUT HOW TO APPROACH AND HOW TO INTERACT WITH DECOLONISATION, PARTICULARLY IN OUR FIELD. THE WORD DECOLONISATION WOULD OCCASIONALLY BE DROPPED IN THE CLASSROOM, BUT PREVIOUS EFFORTS HAVE SHOWN THAT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO BEFORE IT WOULD BE INCLUDED INTO THE CURRICULUM. WHEN BROWSING THE INTERNET, WE FOUND MANY ELABORATE ACADEMIC ARTICLES AND ESSAYS ON DECOLONISATION THAT PRESENTED DENSE AND THOROUGH EXPLANATIONS ON DECOLONISATION. HOWEVER, AS STUDENTS WE MISSED SOMETHING THAT COULD SUPPORT OURSELVES, AND OTHERS, IN GRASPING DECOLONISATION IN A MORE CONCRETE, REAL-LIFE CONTEXT.

IN A WORLD THAT IS SO OVERLY COMPLEX AND DECORATED WITH MULTIPLE SYSTEMIC ISSUES (WHICH ARE MOSTLY INTERCONNECTED), WHILE THERE ARE CONSTANT STREAMS OF DISTRACTIONS AND IMPULSES, CONNECTING SOMETHING AS REAL AS DECOLONISATION TO THE REAL-WORLD CONTEXT TURNED OUT TO NOT BE SO EASY.

WE QUICKLY REALISED WE WERE MISSING SOMETHING TANGIBLE AND SOMETHING PLAYFUL THAT WAS PRESENTING DECOLONISATION IN A NEW WAY. THEREFORE, WE CREATED THIS TOOLKIT, A SHORT DOCUMENT THAT PRESENTS EASY WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH DECOLONISATION THROUGH DIFFERENT ROUTES. WE WANT TO MAKE YOU THINK AND REFLECT, AND CHALLENGE YOU TO QUESTION YOUR OWN WORLDVIEWS.
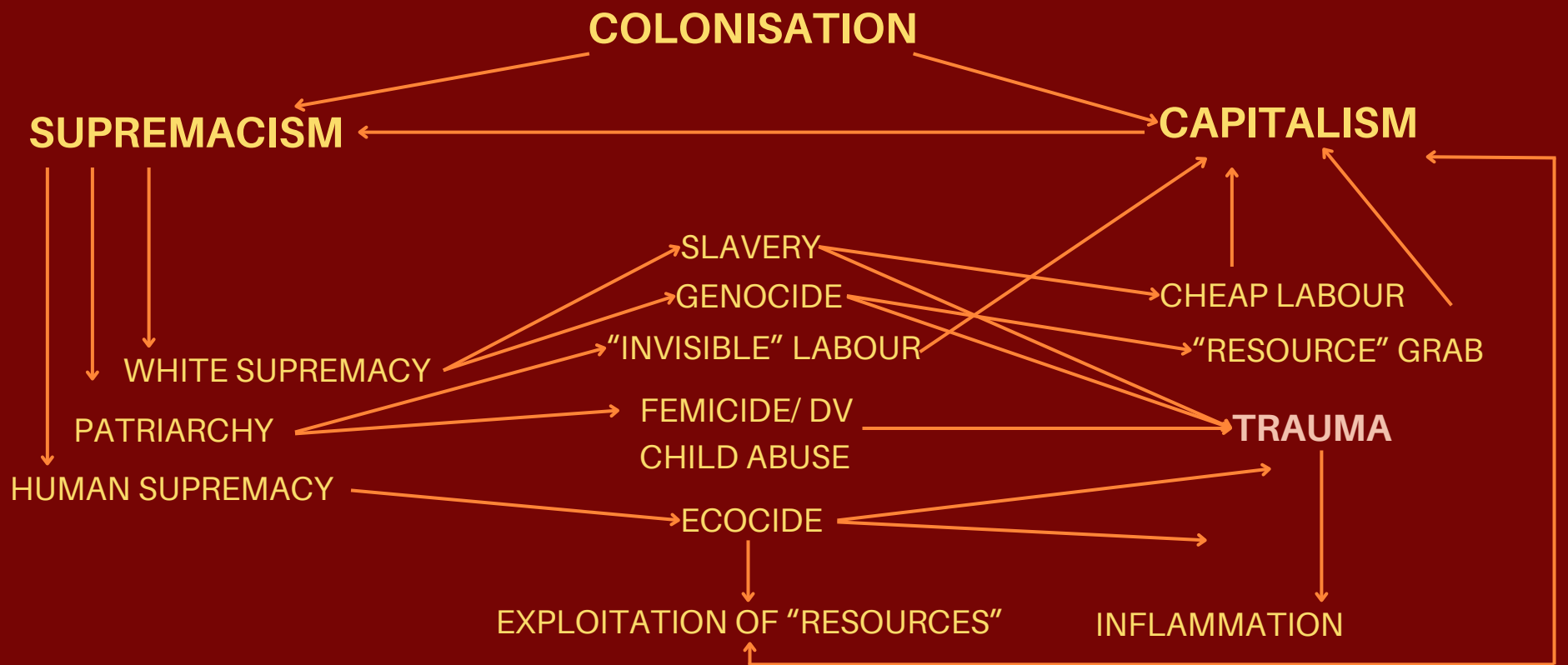
DECOLONISATION

Decolonisation is the process of undoing the colonialism that has dominated governments, economies, and ideologies for the past centuries. Today, **colonialism is deeply tied to capitalist practices** that irresponsibly extract natural resources, exploit labor, and hoard the wealth that is produced in the Global North, the historical hub of colonial power. Further, **colonialism relies on false narratives of racial supremacy and the dominance of the Global North**. These narratives persist and have played key roles in shaping global economic systems, power structures, and our ways of understanding the world. Here in the Global North, we have the responsibility of decolonizing our ideologies. We must recognize that colonial dominance, white supremacy, and capitalism shaped the societies in which we were raised and educated, and we each have a part to play in undoing these harmful ideologies.

Decolonisation means different things to different people and varies across contexts, but we as Global Health students are interested in decolonisation because the fields of medicine and health have been largely influenced by colonial mindsets and practices. We are invested in decolonisation because **we do not want to perpetuate colonial power structures** when we do global health work. We are committed to becoming a generation of global professionals that promotes health for all and dismantles systems of oppression and inequality that restrict people's access to prosperity and wellbeing. Learning about and engaging with decolonisation can help us better understand the settings in which we work, and when we do the work of **decolonising our own ways of thinking,** we are more likely to make contributions that do not reinforce colonial power structures, but rather benefit and uplift all people.

THE WEB OF DECOLONISATION

COLONISATION

SUPREMACISM

CAPITALISM

SLAVERY

GENOCIDE

"INVISIBLE" LABOUR

CHEAP LABOUR

"RESOURCE" GRAB

WHITE SUPREMACY

PATRIARCHY

FEMICIDE/ DV
CHILD ABUSE

TRAUMA

HUMAN SUPREMACY

ECOCIDE

EXPLOITATION OF "RESOURCES"

INFLAMMATION

ADAPTED FROM: Rupa Marya, MD

THIS DIAGRAM BREAKS DOWN COLONIALISM INTO ITS TWO KEY PILLARS- SUPREMACY AND CAPITALISM, AND THEN DELINEATES THE BROAD AND NEFARIOUS CONSEQUENCES THAT THEY PRODUCE. IT SERVES AS A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF HOW COLONIALISM TOUCHES SO MANY AREAS THAT MAY HAVE PREVIOUSLY SEEMED UNCONNECTED. THIS HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN OUR APPROACH TO DECOLONISATION. ALL OF THESE SUBSETS OF COLONIALISM EXIST IN RELATION TO ONE ANOTHER, AND OUR APPROACHES TO DECOLONISATION MUST BE EQUALLY HARMONISED AND WIDE-REACHING.

Many people who start engaging with **decolonialisation**, experience a moment of realisation towards their own role and contribution in processes of colonisation. Subconsciously adapting lifestyle choices or mindsets that perpetuate colonisation can be found anywhere: personal relationships, consumption of literature, or choice of news outlets. It can feel quite overwhelming when you start realising how Intertwined colonial views are with every aspect of our daily lives.

This theme focuses on how to decolonise ones own mindset. In the next few pages, we provide a list of concrete action points that could help to simplify the way to decolonising oneself.

Remember, it's a learning process. You will make mistakes, but becoming conscious and willing to adapt Is already a great first step In building a more just and equal world

ACTION GUIDE

It is already a great first step you have decided to read this toolkit. Some steps might feel familiar or easy, while others are part of a longer or more elaborate process. Be aware, it is not expected of you to follow these steps at all times. Some steps are just suggestions, or help to gain more awareness on how to engage with decolonisation in your daily life.

1 Educate yourself

Question the dominant narratives and paradigms in global health and similar fields, and challenge the underlying assumptions that perpetuate colonialist perspectives. Seek out alternative frameworks and approaches that prioritize equity, justice, and local agency.

Read up on the history of colonialism
- In general & In your own context (e.g. does your country have a colonial past, or the institution you study/work at have neocolonial ties)
- Engage with contemporary literature∗ from outside popular culture and your own context.
  - E.g. review literature, ideas, interventions from indigenous communities or former colonies

∗See later pages for suggested literature

Reflect on your own biases 2

Some helpful questions, that can be investigated through journalling, personal discussions or other ways of exploring:
- Which biases and stereotypes do you tend to hold? Are these fair?
- How do they impact your interpersonal relationships?
- Consider how colonial narratives may have influenced your understanding of history, culture, and identity.

3 Listen to ALL voices

Whether we are speaking of doing research, creating Interventions, or sharing knowledge and experiences, it is important to acknowledge, value and consider ALL voices, particularly the ones that remain often unheard or ignored.

- Actively seek out and listen to the voices of alternative communities, especially those who have been historically oppressed or marginalised by colonialism.
- Whether this is engaging in your own communities, or in different communities, p ay attention to their perspectives and experiences, and amplify their voices whenever possible.

Challenge power dynamics around you 4

- Question power dynamics around you, and your own role in enforcing some of these dynamics.
- Work to create spaces where everyone's voices are heard and valued, regardless of their background or position of power.
- Challenge yourself in changing power dynamics, e.g. who you would ask for help/advice, who you would appoint as leader, what expectations you set for different people.

5 Decolonisation your consumption

- Products you buy:
  - Products we use, from food to cosmetics, are often produced by big corporations that hold values that promote unjust work circumstances and resource exploitation (e.g. Nestle, Mars). Products you buy from these companies promote modern slavery and neocolonisation.
  - Therefore, try choosing local produce or fair trade alternatives (with certifications).
- Media you consume
  - Most media we come across promotes Western ideas, leading to homogenisation of cultural perceptions. Media narratives have the power to collectively colonise our personal and social spheres.
    - For suggested media outlets see later pages.

Meaningful allyship 6

As a reader, especially If you are from a country with a coloniser's past, you might be wondering what your position in decolonisation is. It is very important to understand that as an individual, you can do a lot be being a meaningful ally. Most action points above translate into ways on being an ally for oppressed individuals, whether its about uplifting their voices or including them in decision-making processes. Being aware, and researching the role of allyship can strengthen your individual decolonisation trajectory.

7 Engage.. and engage again

Decolonising power structures and global narratives is a process. The process of decolonising oneself does not end with reading this guide, or learning what decolonising Is. Decolonising oneself is choosing to engage and engage again.. with literature, and different communities, and decision-making processes. **Be consistent, be active, and be loud.**

THEME 2
DECOLONISING LANGUAGE

As language is the way in which we express our thoughts into active communication, it is an important first step for decolonisation to be aware of what language you choose to communicate and enhance your views and constructs about the world.

GLOSSARY FOR ACCURATE AND INCLUSIVE PHRASING

From '*How we talk about public health and why it matters*' from <u>Verga (2020)</u>

To avoid	Why?	Use instead:
Developing country	Indicates a state of incompletion	Geographical context
Beneficiary	Patronising to receiving end It also indicates some sort of 'deserving of additional benefit' as if health Is not a human right.	Refer directly to Individuals,communities, countries, partners or end users.
Empower	Though (health) inequities are symptoms of power imbalances, however, empower Is often overused and misused. It often refers to still utilising the power structures that create marginalisation In the first place.	Equip, Inform, train
Vulnerable/ at risk	Okay to use In a public helath context, but not as a euphemism for specific communities This Is a way of overgeneralising an entire group.	Only use In complete context, when you can name what people are at risk of/vulnerable to..

WHY THE LANGUAGE WE USE MATTERS

Classification of countries
The power of dichotomies

Why should anyone expect that people from supposedly 'low income, low-skill, low-resource' countries—most of which are currently recovering from colonisation/exploitation—be happy to see their countries described using such terms?

Khan, Abimbola, Kyobutungi, Pai (2022)

DICHOTOMIES CREATE A DIVISION, A SPLIT INTO TWO, AN US VERSUS THEM. WE ARE VERY USED TO SPLITTING DIFFERENT GROUPS OF COUNTRIES INTO (TWO) CATEGORIES, WHETHER IT IS HIGH AND LOW-TO-MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES, GLOBAL NORTH VERSUS GLOBAL SOUTH. OFTEN THESE CATEGORIES INDICATE THE WILL TO SEPARATE BETWEEN 'POOR' AND 'RICH', 'DEVELOPED' OR 'UNDEVELOPED', ALL CLASSIFICATIONS THAT COME FROM WESTERN COUNTRIES THAT VIEW THEMSELVES AS WHOLE, AND OTHERS AS UNFINISHED.

We have stepped away from referring to countries as 'first world' or 'third world'. This ranking implies a hierarchy, which is created by racist and colonial constructs. At the same time, classifying (groups of) countries through income or resource-capacity completely ignores where these differences in income (high-income/low-income) or resources (resource-rich/resource-limited) come from. How come some countries make it to the classification of 'higher income' or 'higher resourced'? When zooming in, higher income countries have usually reached these positions through processes of (neo)colonisation, which include extraction of resources and exploitation of human capital. Stopping these classifications is difficult, because it is also the language we use to point out which countries/regions have suffered from inequities and health injustices.

However, some (imperfect) tips , based on Khan, Abimbola, Kyobutungi, Pai (2022)

- Refer to geographical regions, this removes implicit colonial or racial categorization
- Refer to the West as the 'walled world', the world's biggest gated community
- Redefine 'resource' or 'income', e.g. specify type of limitation of resources, to have a more nuanced approach/perspective or use Rosling's propositions on a more granular perspective on income level
- Refer to preferred categorisation indicated by country/context/group you work with
- Refer to them as formerly colonised countries (Stephanie Kimou), If contextually and historically appropriate (Verga, 2020)

Don't: first world/third world, developing/developed
Do, but consciously: Global North/Global South, high income/low-to-middle income
Do, encouraged: geographical regions/contexts, or refer to local communities/contexts

or.. should we even always refer to a country as a whole...

Within the International community, we often create a distinction between countries. However, often within countries we see a lot of social, cultural, historical, political distinction. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that often speaking of societal Issues at country-level sketches a wrong image. As a global professional, you are continuously challenged to shift between global- and local perspectives, but your super power is to develop a vocabulary in which you can 'speak both'. The recurring phrase 'Global challenges, local solutions' shows the importance of multi-level thinking, staying critical and conscious at all levels.
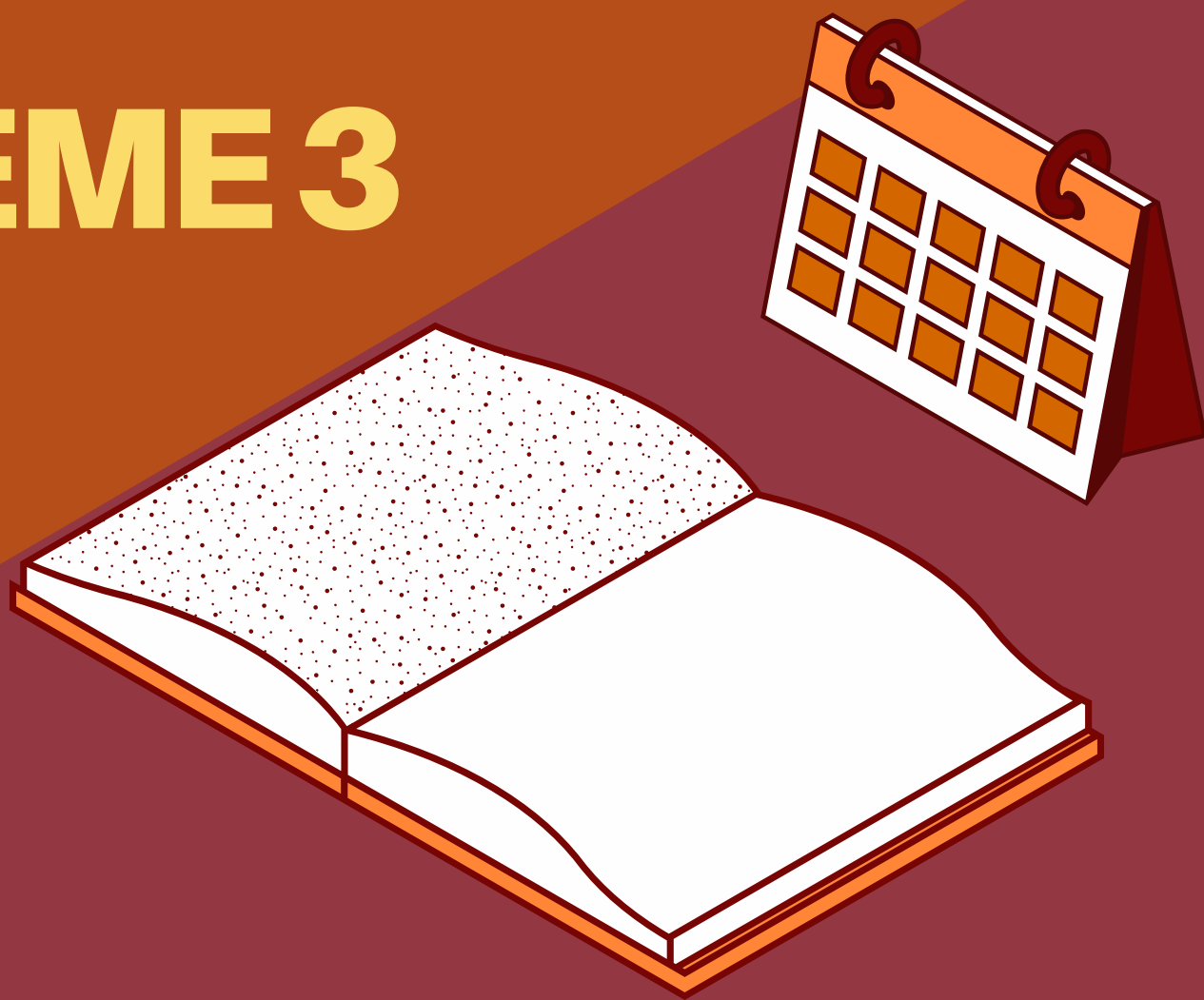
EDUCATION

Viewing global challenges through a lens that reinforces students' own positions of power perpetuates white saviorism, colonial mindsets, and unsustainability. But that's exactly how decolonisation is being approached at present — specifically in social science courses like Global Development and Global Health where students are trained to validate their privilege rather than promote justice.

Representation is a prominent way in which colonialism shows up in education and academia. Starting from the research subjects to researchers and research institutions, there is a geographic bias that favors HICs (Skopec, M., Issa, H., Reed, J. et al, 2020). Also, the majority of research and educational institutions and programs are based in HICs, with HIC nationals dominating leadership positions. This power imbalance maintains a white supremacist status quo, as there ends up being a disproportionate control in who chooses what students get to learn.

Adding fuel to the fire, curricula often depict LMICs as problems needing HICs' intervention — Global North, the benevolent and Global South, the beneficiary. Biased narratives like these undermine local knowledge systems and perpetuate colonial attitudes.

THEME 3

HOW TO DECOLONISE EDUCATION

Considering history as it happened:

Curricula that recognizes the impact of racism, colonisation, and missionary work help students understand how historical events shape current systems. Institutions must incorporate historical accounts of colonialism and its impacts to guide students into critical inquiry and can teach students how not to repeat mistakes.

Decolonization - a process:

Decolonization requires dismantling colonial structures and must be seen as an ongoing, politically engaged process. Teachers need to move beyond using "decolonizing" as a buzzword by implementing approaches that dismantle colonial legacies, making it an active, continuous effort within the curriculum.

Advocating for sustainability:

Short-term missions and voluntourism often cause harm rather than help. Emphasising sustainability ensures long-term, positive impact. Students need to be encouraged and trained to align their work with the goals of local partners and communities, focusing on sustained impact. Promote social accountability and collaborative values in fieldwork planning and execution.

Encouraging the shifting of power:

Power asymmetry is a fundamental issue in global education. Educating students to share and relinquish power fosters equity. Students need to be taught the importance of recognizing and addressing power imbalances in research, practice, and governance. Tools that catalyse power shifts are important for them to step back when necessary to allow for more qualified individuals with lived experiences to lead.

Highlighting the expertise of people in LMICs and Indigenous populations in HICs:

It's essential to value and include the knowledge and experiences of people from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and marginalised communities in high-income countries (HICs). Institutions ought to hire experts from LMICs to develop curricula and lead programs, include resources from LMICs, and invite and compensate speakers from these regions. This is especially important in global health where we need success stories from LMIC communities to change the global narrative.

Interdisciplinarity is key:

Educational programmes need to address the socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts that influence the world. Existing modules need to include interdisciplinary discussions on geopolitics, capitalism, and policy infrastructure, to ensure these are part of core courses rather than electives.

Represent to decolonise:

One of the most important issues in decolonizing global education that encompasses the above mentioned aspects is representation. Institutions, in order to decolonise their curricula, need to focus on utilising resources that represent the currently, once, and twice colonised. This representation should expand from having literature from LMICs to having teachers and students from the Global South.

Glocality:

Education should address local inequities and challenges — not just those in LMICs — to avoid othering and ensure comprehensive education. Local challenges can be integrated into global education by having local experts on board, especially those from marginalised and indigenous populations from both HICs and LMICs.

THEME 4   WEALTH

A cornerstone of colonial power has always been the systematic transfer- or theft- of resources, land, and labor away from the colonised territories and to the colonisers. Today's financial systems facilitate a similar transfer of wealth from the poor and middle class to the wealthy, thereby allowing wealthy individuals, corporations, and governments to maintain financial dominance (World Inequality Report, 2022). This often happens through industries and methods that exploit labor, contribute to environmental destruction, and perpetuate violence.

Many of us who work in global-facing fields like global health will work for or encounter nonprofits, NGOs, and government-sponsored projects providing health and development aid. These aid initiatives often do necessary work, but we should ask some critical questions about the larger system of aid donation and of the individual, corporations, and governments who donate (often small) portions of their wealth to these initiatives.

DECOLONISATION & WEALTH

Critical considerations inspired by the Decolonizing Wealth Project & Edgar Villanueva

Who gets to decide what causes are "worthy" of assistance, and on the flip side "unworthy" of assistance?

There are prejudices and commercial and political interests that inform these decisions. In this way, the flow of aid is inherently undemocratic, relying not upon indicators of greatest need but rather on the decision of an individual, corporation, or government to give money to a certain cause.

How did the donors gain their wealth? Was it through exploitative labor practices? Are they invested in oil, mining, or weapons, or another lucrative industry that has massive human and environmental consequences?

Wealthy people and organizations are not inherently immoral, but we should keep in mind what people, practices, and systems have contributed most to the biggest challenges we face today, from war to inequality to climate change.

Do we believe that the same individuals, corporations, and governments that have been the source of our greatest woes and deepest injustices, should also be the ones in control of the solutions?

Are those who are already wealthy and powerful willing to envisioning a future that dismantles the systems of violence, oppression, and exploitation that continue to create suffering in our world?

REPARATIONS

Reparations, or compensation for damages and theft, are a possible avenue to financial justice. There is growing discussion surrounding reparations and the myriad of ways that colonizing entities could compensate those they have stolen from, enslaved, and hurt. There is a growing body of research and thought that is dedicated to quantifying — to the extent that it is possible — the time, labor, and resources that have been stolen through colonialism. For example, scholars in the United States estimated that the value of the labor stolen through slavery and Jim Crow is between $6-15 trillion dollars (Craemer, 2015). Can that wealth be redistributed to the descendants of enslaved people, or reintegrated into communities most impacted by racism and oppression? Can all colonizing nations assess the wealth that they have unfairly gained through violent means, and use it to bring about some form of justice? Not all aspects of decolonization can be quantified, and it is often difficult to envision what justice would look like in response to something as long-standing and embedded as colonialism, but **reparations is a good place to start.**

THOUGHT PROMPTS:

DO YOU THINK YOUR HOME COUNTRY SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO OR RECEIVE SOME FORM OF REPARATIONS? WHAT COULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

WHAT ASPECTS OF COLONIALISM AND DECOLONISATION CAN BE QUANTIFIED (EXPRESSED IN NUMBERS), AND WHAT ASPECTS CANNOT BE QUANTIFIED?

DECOLONISATION LIBRARY

KEY LITERARY WORKS WHICH EXPLORE THE MULTIFACETED TOPIC OF DECOLONISATION

ORIENTALISM EDWARD SAID

"EDWARD SAID'S BOOK IS AN EXPLORATION OF THE WEST'S ATTITUDE TO ISLAM AND THE EAST, AN IDEOLOGY THAT GOES BY THE NAME OF ORIENTALISM — A MIXTURE OF PREJUDICES, RACIST ASSUMPTIONS, INTERWINED AND UNDERPINNED WITH SCHOLARSHIP AND ARCHEOLOGY"
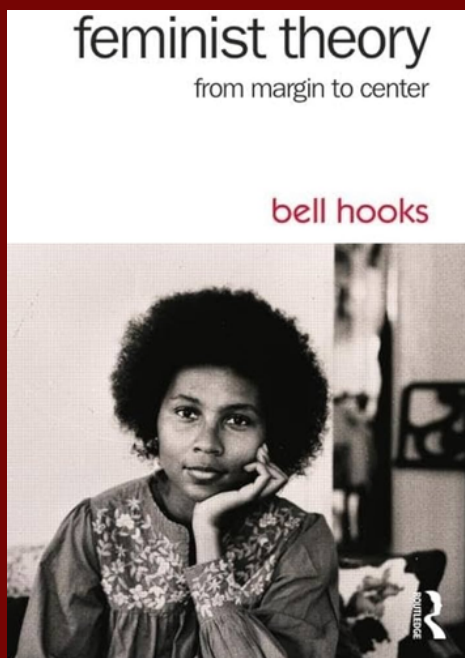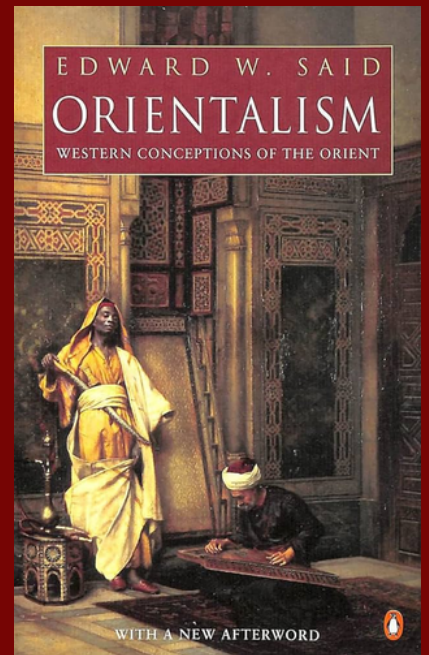
BELL HOOKS FEMINIST THEORY

"HOOKS GIVES HOPE THAT FEMINISTS AROUND THE WORLD CAN CREATE A MASS FEMINIST MOVEMENT. SHE ADDRESSES THE ISSUES AFFECTING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT: ITS GOALS, MEN'S ROLE IN IT, PACIFISM, SOLIDARITY, AND THE NATURE OF THE REVOLUTION."

THE INTERSECTIONAL ENVIRONMENTALIST LEAH THOMAS

"THE INTERSECTIONAL ENVIRONMENTALIST EXAMINES THE INEXTRICABLE LINK BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTALISM, RACISM, AND PRIVILEGE, AND PROMOTES AWARENESS OF THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH THAT WE CANNOT SAVE THE PLANET WITHOUT UPLIFTING THE VOICES OF ITS PEOPLE — ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST OFTEN UNHEARD"
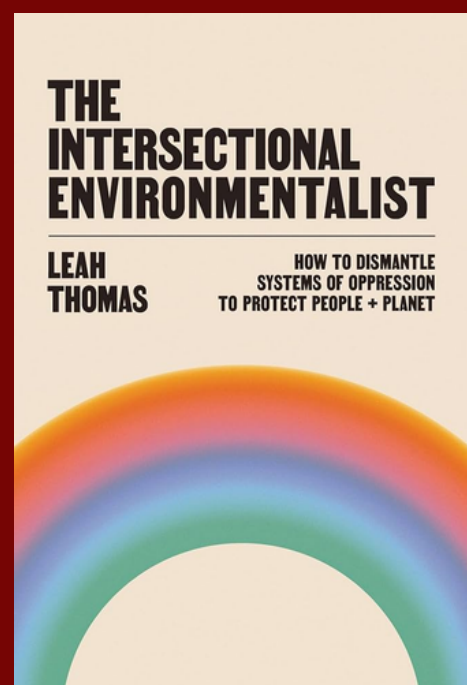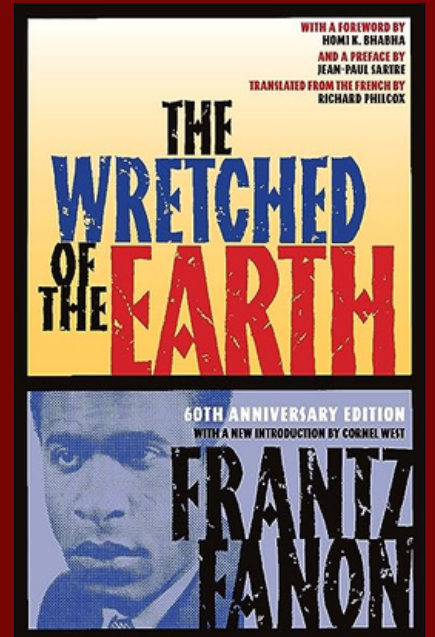
DECOLONISATION LIBRARY

KEY LITERARY WORKS WHICH EXPLORE THE MULTIFACETED TOPIC OF DECOLONISATION

THE WRETCHED OF THE EARTH
FRANTZ FANON

"AN ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE COLONIZED AND THEIR PATH TO LIBERATION. BEARING SINGULAR INSIGHT INTO THE RAGE AND FRUSTRATION OF COLONIZED PEOPLES, AND THE ROLE OF VIOLENCE IN EFFECTING HISTORICAL CHANGE"


DECOLONIZING METHODOLOGIES
LINDA TUHIWAI SMITH

"EXPLORES INTERSECTIONS OF IMPERIALISM AND RESEARCH - SPECIFICALLY, THE WAYS IN WHICH IMPERIALISM IS EMBEDDED IN DISCIPLINES OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRADITION AS 'REGIMES OF TRUTH.' CONCEPTS SUCH AS 'DISCOVERY' AND 'CLAIMING' ARE DISCUSSED AND AN ARGUMENT PRESENTED THAT THE DECOLONIZATION OF RESEARCH METHODS WILL HELP TO RECLAIM CONTROL OVER INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING AND BEING"
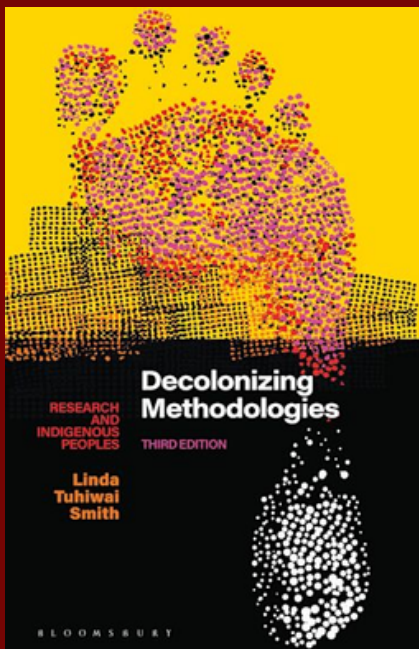
DECOLONISING THE MIND
NGŨGĨ WA THIONG'O

"A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS ABOUT LANGUAGE AND ITS CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN NATIONAL CULTURE, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY, THAT ADVOCATES FOR LINGUISTIC DECOLONIZATION"
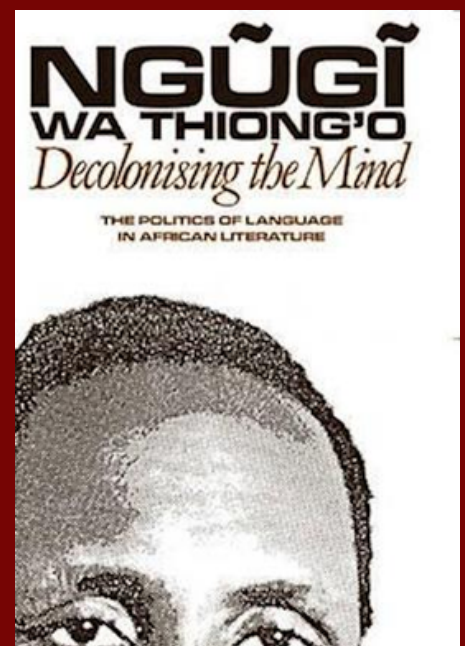
RESOURCES
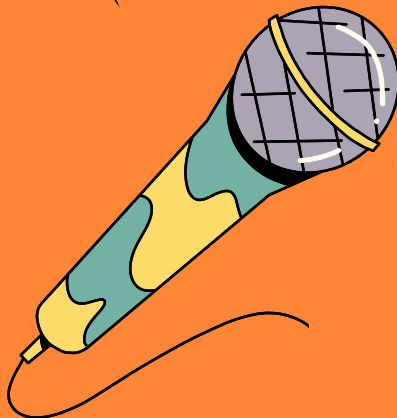
INSTA

PODCASTS

MOVIES & TV

ON INSTAGRAM:

@BROWNHISTORY
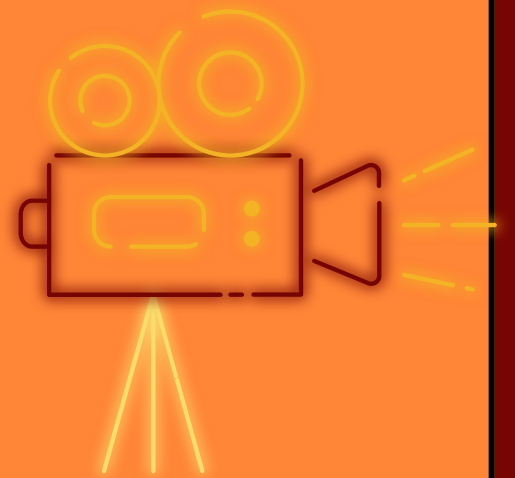
@INTERSECTIONALITY MATTERS

@DISORIENTALIZING

@DECOLONIZEMYSELF

ON SPOTIFY:

- Decolonized Buffalo
- Decolonization in Action

ON NETFLIX

- Dear white people
- twice colonised
- Survivors (2018)

Any input or feedback?
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Eye on Global Health

Eye on Global Health

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