

A Marxist Critique of Sean Walton's Defence of the CRT Concept of 'White Supremacy' as Explaining All Forms of racism and Some Comments on CRT, Black Radical and Socialist Futures

Abstract

In the context of the ongoing debate between Critical Race Theorists and (neo-) Marxists over the CRT concept of 'white supremacy', this paper extends the analysis to Black Radicalism in an attempt to further develop the neo-Marxist critique of 'white supremacy' deployed as a general descriptor of racism in western societies. Specifically, the case is made that the neo-Marxist concepts of institutional racism and racialization are better placed to understand forms of racism such as those beyond the Black/White binary, namely racism that impacts on non-Black people of colour, non-colour-coded racism and hybridist racism. Finally, futures as articulated by Critical Race Theory, Black Radicalism and neo-Marxism are addressed.

Keywords

White supremacy, Critical Race Theory, (neo-) Marxism, Black Radicalism, institutional racism beyond the Black/White binary, racialization, futures

Introduction

This paper is written partly in response to Sean Walton's 'Why the Critical Race Theory Concept of "White Supremacy" should not be dismissed by Neo-Marxists: Lessons from Contemporary Black Radicalism' (this issue of this journal). His aim is to bring together 'CRT theorists, Marxists, and Black radical thinkers', 'committed to opposing racism' in an open dialogue 'aimed at enriching and expanding each theory with concepts from theoretical frameworks outside their own'. Walton begins by pointing out correctly that replies from Critical Race Theorists to criticisms from neo-Marxists, 'have tended to focus on more general matters of the interpretation of CRT and its mischaracterisation [I would say 'claimed mischaracterisation'] by scholars from outside the CRT paradigm (p?). Moreover, he goes on, they do not deal directly 'with issues of the veracity of the concepts that are central to CRT' that are critiqued by (neo-) Marxists (p?). I very much welcome Walton's intention in his paper 'to directly address these issues' (p.). My paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I address Walton's central theme, namely that (neo-) Marxists should not dismiss the CRT concept of 'white supremacy': used to refer to white dominance *in general* rather than just to the views of white supremacist hate groups. He gives three reasons for this, to each of which I respond: 'whiteness' is a shifting signifier; 'white-identified people' never

really suffer racism in the way that Black people do; and ‘white supremacy’ needs to be there to account for explaining European racism directed at people of African origin, but we need neo-Marxism to understand broader forms of racism.

In the second part of the paper, I turn my attention to visions of the future as articulated in Critical Race Theory, Black radicalism and Marxism respectively. Walton acknowledges that a neo-Marxist analysis sees CRT as ‘ineffective in bringing about emancipatory change for oppressed groups’ (p?). However, visions of the future do not figure prominently in Walton’s paper. It is important, therefore, particularly in the context of world-wide escalating racism and fascism, to supplement Walton’s laudable aim to bring together various antiracist thinkers to advance theory by also addressing what the three theories under consideration have to say about possible futures. I begin with a consideration of the future as envisaged by CRT theorists, before outlining the vision projected by Black radical scholar, Kehinde Andrews. From a Marxist perspective, capitalism must, of course, be replaced by socialism. I conclude the paper, therefore, with a brief discussion on socialism for the twenty-first century.

I need to stress that Walton has engaged in a comradely critical appraisal of my work on Critical Race Theory, and I hope this paper will be taken in the same spirit of progressive engagement¹.

PART 1

The CRT concept of ‘white supremacy’

Drawing on CRT, Black radicalism and (neo-) Marxism, Walton’s main brief is to make the case the (neo-) Marxists should not dismiss the CRT concept of ‘white supremacy.’ He (p. ?) cites leading UK Critical Race Theorist, David Gillborn’s (2008) assertion that among Critical Race Theorists, white supremacy is a concept that is indispensable to their doctrine: ‘Some critical race scholars argue that White Supremacy... is as central to CRT as the notion of capitalism is to Marxist theory and patriarchy to Feminism’ (Gillborn, 2008, p. 36). The term is deployed by Critical Race Theorists to refer not just to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups but to relations of white dominance daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings (Ansley, 1997, p. 592).

Walton’s defence of ‘white supremacy’ as explaining all forms of racism

Walton has devoted large parts of his paper to my critique of this CRT use of the concept of ‘white supremacy’, so I will not repeat the various elements of it here. However, I would like to add one caveat to my previous discussions of ‘white supremacy’. I should have stressed more its ongoing existence *in the traditional sense*, not just in white supremacist hate groups and fascist organisations, but in certain societal institutions, notably the US Criminal Justice System. Here, though, I will concentrate on what I perceive to be one of CRT’s key theoretical problems, one reiterated by Walton: ‘If we accept the reality of White supremacy, how do we account for non-colour coded racism, or hybridist racism, or racism between non-White groups?’ (p?). He provides three answers. First, that “‘Whiteness” as a shifting signifier ...does not necessarily entail white skin’ (p?). In other words, whiteness can be sacrificed, and re-gained ‘within narratives that are beneficial at any given time for the White, economic elite.’² (p.?).

Second, according to Walton, a Black radical-based response is that there should be ‘somewhat severe restrictions on what might be properly characterised as racism and limits the concept of racism to cases that involve a Black/White binary’ (p?). Kehinde Andrews (2018), Walton (p?) notes, ‘denies that White-identified people ever really suffer *racial* discrimination in the way that Black people do’.

Third, Walton argues that ‘white supremacy’ needs to be incorporated into a broader neo-Marxist framework ‘for conceptualising racism in all its manifestations’ (p?). White supremacy, he maintains, needs to be there ‘for its power in accounting for what, for many, is the fundamental from of racism- racism based on the Black/White or European/African distinction’ (p. ?).

Response to Walton’s defence of ‘white supremacy’

The fluidity of ‘whiteness’

If one accepts the CRT proposition that ‘whiteness’ is fluid then it can presumably shift dramatically in any given historical time or geographical location. If this is the case, ‘white supremacy’ can be directed at such diverse groups as Jewish people; Eastern Europeans; asylum-seekers and refugees; at Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; at Muslims; and at Irish people – each constituency of which can have varying skin colours ranging from ‘white’ to black and all hues in between. If we go along with this CRT premise, ‘whiteness’ can also be regained by these multifarious groups and ‘white supremacy’ no longer directed at them.

If these qualifications apply, then, while I obviously totally support drawing on neo-Marxist theory to conceptualise forms of racism outside the Black/White binary (Walton's justification 3), it is not clear why, given the arguments for fluidity, why neo-Marxism is needed. More fundamentally, the question needs to be posed, *what is the point* of using the term 'white supremacy' in the way that Critical Race Theorists use it? I fully understand why they quite rightly want to stress how extreme and all-pervasive racism is, how it is not aberrant, how it saturates society. I agree with Critical Race Theorists' determination to demonstrate that institutions that claim, and appear to be, non-racist and equitable, such as education, actually reproduce racism (e.g. Chadderton and Edmonds 2015, p. 140). But why, it also needs asking, not replace 'white supremacy' with a less ambiguous term like, for example, 'institutional racism'?

The Marxist concepts of institutional racism and racialization

Institutional racism was sanctioned by the British state in the aftermath of the murder of Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence. The definition of 'institutional racism,' officially acknowledged in the House of Commons by the then Home Secretary Jack Straw was as follows:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (Macpherson 1999, 6.37, para 11.3)³

From a Marxist viewpoint, the nebulous and ahistorical definition of institutional racism provided by Macpherson needs to have historical, economic and political foci. The definition would also benefit enhancement by the neo-Marxist concept of racialization. Racialization refers to the categorisation of people (falsely) into distinct 'races'. Its neo-Marxist variant is distinct from other interpretations of racialisation in that it purports that, in order to understand and combat racism, we must relate racism and racialisation to historical, economic, and political factors. Neo-Marxist sociologist, Robert Miles (1987, p. 75) argues that racialization is not limited to skin colour. The characteristics signified vary historically and, although they have usually been visible somatic features, other non-visible (alleged and real) biological features have also been signified. He stresses that racialization is a process and recognition that 'opens the door to history' which subsequently 'opens the door to understanding the complexities of who gets racialized when and for what purpose, and how

that changes through time’ (in Ashe and McGeever, 2011, 2,019). Miles warns against avoiding the ‘fundamental mistake’ of drawing clear lines between what happens to white immigrants and black immigrants, adding that the ‘black–white’ dichotomy leads you into a ‘huge cul-de-sac’ (in Ashe and McGeever, 2011, 2,019).

I would want to make an amendment to Miles’ definition. The common dictionary definition of “somatic” is “*pertaining to the body*”, and, given the fact that people can be racialized on grounds of symbols (e.g. the hijab), I would also argue that this needs to be recognized in any discussion of social collectivities and the construction of racialization.

Crucially, racialization thus formulated connects racism to capitalist modes of production and makes links to patterns of migration that are themselves determined by political and economic dynamics. (Cole 2016, p.14; see Walton, pp? for an elaboration of my definition of racialization).

Last but not least, I would also want to add intentional as well as unintentional or unwitting racism. Institutional racism can thus be reformulated as follows:

Collective acts and/or procedures in an institution or institutions (locally, nation-wide, continent-wide or globally) that intentionally or unintentionally have the effect of racializing certain populations or groups of people. This racialization process that is not limited to skin colour and can be colour-coded, non-colour-coded or hybridist cannot be adequately understood without reference to economic and political factors related to developments and changes, historically and contemporaneously, in national, continent-wide and global capitalism.

Such a formulation, I would argue, provides a better means of understanding multifarious forms of racism in UK and US institutions today than ‘white supremacy’. It also needs stressing, of course, that racism also takes place on an individual and/or personal basis, either face-to-face or mediated by phone, text or social media. It is not surprising that people who are socialized in institutionally racist societies are racist in their everyday interactions with other people.

Using the Marxist concept of endemic systemic all-pervasive institutional racism and stressing that the racialization of groups through history and geopolitically is not dependent on skin colour, is less ambiguous and more straightforward than reducing racism to ‘whiteness’ and stressing that who is perceived as ‘white’ can change. Racialization, unlike

‘white supremacy’, makes this point articulately, and crucially also provides inherent links with capitalist economic systems.

The Black/White binary

I do not want to underestimate *in any way* how racism is perceived by and the extent to which it *affects* Black people. Indeed, I have consistently stressed anti-Black racism in my work (e.g. Cole, 2016, pp. 29-42, 97-108, 135-152; Cole, 2018a, pp. 55-64). However, like Miles, I cannot concur with the ‘Black/White binary’ because of the widespread existence of racism that impacts on non-Black people. This binary is also rejected by most Critical Race Theorists, as reflected in the existence of *LatCrit*; *Asian American Jurisprudence*; and *Native Jurisprudence* (Cole, 2017a, pp. 19-26). In the US, racism has impacted historically and contemporaneously not just on Black people but on Native Americans; Alaska Natives; Latinax Americans; Asian Americans (Cole, 2016, pp. 87-124); and Jewish Americans (Cole, 2019a, pp. 50-77). In the UK, colour-coded racism dating back to Britain’s colonial past remains a dominant form of racism, and, indeed was accelerating for Black Britons as a result of the Windrush scandal, itself a direct result of Prime Minister Theresa May’s ‘really hostile environment’ (e.g. Cole, 2019b, pp?). However, other forms of racism, dating back to the colonial era and still existing today include colour-coded anti-Chinese racism (e.g. Cole, 2016, pp. 57-64); and non-colour-coded anti-Irish racism (e.g. Cole, 2018a, pp. 65-68) and antisemitism (e.g. Cole, 2018a, pp. 68-70). Yet other forms of racism abound. These include that older non-colour-coded form of racism: anti-Gypsy Roma and Traveller racism and newer non-colour-coded racism: xeno-racism (that directed at Eastern European migrant workers and their families (e.g. Cole, 2018a, pp. 73-78). Both forms of racism are not skin colour-related.

As I write this (April, 2019) a House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee Report reveals that the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime, that little is being done to tackle longstanding inequalities, and that the communities have been ‘comprehensively failed’ by the government (cited in Mohdin, 2019). With respect to education, the Report, in the wake of a two-year inquiry, noted that students from Gypsy, Roma or Traveller backgrounds had the lowest attainment of all ethnic groups throughout their school years (Mohdin, 2019). Debby Kennett, of London Gypsies and Travellers, commented:

There have been many reports produced over the last few decades giving evidence of the huge inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the UK but little action has been taken by governments to address this situation. This latest report gives yet more evidence to show the persistent failure by government to tackle these inequalities, or to recognise and challenge the shocking level of racism and discrimination that the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community face in their everyday lives (cited in Mohdin, 2019)

Another form of racism is what I refer to as newer hybridist racism (racism that can be either colour-coded or non-colour-coded or a combination of both) (e.g. Cole, 2016) such as Islamophobia (e.g. Cole, 2018a, pp. 78-81) and anti-asylum-seeker racism (e.g. Cole, 2018a, pp. 81-87). Islamophobia is rife, and on the increase in both the US (e.g. Woolf, 2019) and the UK (e.g. Aziz, 2019), as is antisemitism (Crary, 2018; Sherwood, 2019).

In my view, it is more informative and instructive to view racism as fluid rather than 'whiteness'. Given the obvious fluidity of racism (who would have predicted in the 1980s that white Poles would be subject to similar racist abuse in the UK to post-World War II migrants from Britain's [former] colonies?). Additionally, prioritising one form of racism over another is also suspect ('never again' was confidently proclaimed in public pedagogy in the decades following the holocaust, but now we are faced with the imperative of actively working against a global rise in antisemitism).

Racism between non-white groups

It is extremely difficult to see how the CRT concept of 'white supremacy' can explain racism between non-White groups. The Young Researcher's Working Papers Archive (2012-) maps ongoing world-wide racism. They include the racialisation of non-White peoples by non-White peoples in a large number of countries, including, in alphabetical order: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, Iraq, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand and Uganda.

White supremacy and the rise of the far-right and fascism

I would like to make one final brief observation about the CRT use of 'white supremacy', one that is also briefly noted by Walton (p?) when referring to my own work, namely that with the rise of the far-right and fascism, 'white supremacy' *in its traditional sense* is on the rise in many parts of the world, including the US ({add another reference} Cole, 2019a) and the UK

(e.g. Parmenter, 2019)⁴, key features of which are not just a hatred of anyone whose skin is not ‘white’, but neo-nazism and accompanying virulent antisemitism. Using ‘white supremacy’ in the CRT sense can serve to desensitize us to this frightening development. If micro-aggressions and other forms of everyday racism are lumped together with demands for the creation of white ethno-state (e.g. Anglin, 2016; see Cole, 2019a, pp?? for a discussion of the alt-right conception of the white ethno-state), we are in danger of not being fully aware of the extreme dangers posed by this ominous rise.

PART 11

CRT, Black Radical and (neo-) Marxist visions of the future

CRT and emancipatory change

Referring to my work, Walton (p. ?) accurately asserts that I have on a number of occasions argued that CRT is ineffective in bringing about emancipatory change for oppressed groups. My most recent attempt to demonstrate this is in Cole, 2020, where I argue that since its origins, CRT has been a progressive force for social justice but with no programme. CRT, I maintain, is in general inhibited by a lack of a concrete program and vision of a future society. While Critical Race Theorists by definition are active in formulating progressive critical analyses of racism, and, of course, are fully committed to challenging racism and their (bespoke) interpretation of ‘white supremacy’, their pronouncements about a *less* racist future (for Critical Race Theorists, racism is permanent) are vague, non-specific and embody neither political nor economic specificities. According to CRT pioneers, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Garry Peller and Kendall Thomas (1995, p. xiii) Critical Race Theorists share ‘an ethical commitment to human liberation’ but ‘often disagree among [themselves], over its specific direction’ (ibid.). Introducing their edited collection, *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God’s Children Got a Song* (Dixson and Rousseau eds, 2006), Central CRT figures Adrienne Dixson and Celia Rousseau (2006) talk about ‘the struggle’ (pp. 2–3); ‘a vision of hope for the future’ (p. 3); ‘social action toward liberation and the end of oppression’ (p. 3); ‘the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression’ (p. 4); and ‘the ultimate goal of CRT—social transformation’ (p. 7). Dixson and Rousseau (2006, pp. 2–3) also argue that ‘CRT scholars acknowledge the permanence of racism’ but that this should lead to ‘greater resolve in the struggle.’ They also refer to a CRT focus on ‘praxis,’ which

incorporates ‘a commitment not only to scholarship but also to social action toward liberation and the end of oppression’ (ibid., p. 3). They talk of ‘eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression’ (ibid., p. 4), and state that the ‘ultimate goal of CRT [is] social transformation’ (p. 7). However, no indication is given of what they are struggling towards, what liberation means to them, or what is envisioned by social transformation and the end of all forms of oppression.

The same degree of nebulousness is apparent in most of the more recent developments in CRT theorizing. A few examples from Gillborn’s flagship journal, *Race, Ethnicity and Education* suffice. Thus Aurora Chang (2016) writes about ‘the challenge to dominant ideologies and a steadfast commitment to social justice’ while Sara Tolbert and Serina Eichelberger (2016) describe themselves as ‘critical educators for social justice’; and Nichole Garcia, Nancy López and Verónica Vélez (2018) state that ‘CRT is motivated by social justice and characterized by a passionate activism to eliminate racism as part of a broader effort to end subordination on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin lines’. Nancy López, Christopher Erwin, Melissa Binder and Mario Javier Chavez (2018) are unusual in that they show awareness of ‘class/capitalism’. However, they conclude not with a call for its abolition but with an elusive request of readers to:

consider how you can use your own networks to cultivate a community of practice around Critical Race Theory and more specifically ‘QuantCrit’ and intersectional knowledge projects that are anchored in community-based participatory methods and praxis (listening, action, and reflection) for social justice transformations

Writing about school reforms, Yolanda Anyon, Chalane Lechuga, Debora Ortega, Barbara Downing, Eldridge Greer and John Simmons (2018) state that such reforms ‘will likely need to address macro dynamics related to power, privilege and oppression that are often acknowledged or alluded to in the school discipline literature but left unaddressed in recommendations for policy change’, and that ‘relationship-building strategies [between adults in schools and students of color] may have limited impact unless paired with reforms that alter the larger social and institutional contexts that maintain racial hierarchies in schools’.

Finally, in an engaging and informative analysis of the effects of colonialism on Kānaka Maoli (native Hawaiians). Nicole Alia Sallis Reyes (2018, p. 747), herself Kānaka Maoli’ draws on CRT (specifically AsianCrit and TribalCrit, as well as intersectionality to offer a number of ‘KanakanCrit’ (2018, p. 750) tenets towards a ‘critical decolonizing framework.’

These include ending occupation and colonialism; adopting an 'Ecological Model of Native Hawaiian Well-being' (p. 750); highlighting stories and counterstories in breaking hegemonic narratives (p. 751); and using Indigenous peoples' knowledge to bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage Kānaka Maoli awareness (p. 752). Sallis Reyes' overall aim is nationhood and sovereignty in the context of social justice (p. 752). While she (2018, p. 747) shows awareness of the importance of 'the economic' when she describes the purpose of colonialization as allowing for 'the global expansion of European economy through the subjugation of Indigenous peoples', and while as we shall see shortly see, socialists would support this aim, as well as the centrality of ecology and fully respecting Indigenous cultures, Sallis Reyes does not move us forward in the socio-economic and/or political foundations of the nature of the future society she envisages.

Black radical futures

In his book, *Back to Black: Retelling Black Radicalism for the 21st Century* (Andrews, 2018), Kehinde Andrews (p. 98) argues that racism 'is a global system and therefore any politics that offers a *national* solution can never be radical, because it will never overturn the existing system' (emphasis added). Central to Andrews (2018, p. 70) exposition of Black radicalism is the concept of a 'global Black nation'. By this he means that:

Black radicalism ... necessitates an analysis of racism that transcends nation state boundaries [given that] ... African Diasporas separated by thousands of miles are more similar than those experienced by their allies 'of colour' in the adjacent neighbourhood (Andrews, 2018, p. 81).

Andrews (p. 81) gives the example of the similarities between the African Caribbeans and African Americans, where Britain is conceived of as an Empire, not a nations state (and still is: witness Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland [p. 74]. The Caribbean, he argues, 'was Britain's version of the American South' (p. 81), with the 'migration from the slave-holding South to the free North, and from the Caribbean to enlightened Britain ... [being] remarkably similar'. However, whereas slavery in the US is common knowledge, 'Britain is only ever actively conceived of being engaged in the ending of, and not participation in, enslavement, because the plantations were outside of its borders' (p. 82).

Since 'Black people in both American and the Caribbean found themselves in a post-enslavement society where they remained firmly at the bottom' (p. 82), and that 'in terms of discrimination the experience of African Caribbeans and African Americans ... are mirror images' (p. 82), and further, when both peoples 'are viewed as a colonised minority it

necessitates a transformation, rather than reform of the societies in which ... [Black people] reside' (p. 83). The solution, Andrews (2018, p. 84) concludes, is the overthrow of the Western empire'. Black political leader Marcus Garvey, he points out, 'born a subject of the British crown on the island of Jamaica long before the pretence of independence was bestowed' (p. 85), saw the solution as the physical return of Black people to Africa (p. 85).

What then, is Andrews' solution? First, there is a need to create a movement that is led by the masses (p. 92). Second, this mass movement must be 'rooted in the revolutionary concept of the global Black nation' (p. 94). He approvingly endorses Malcom X's moving away from 'Black capitalist ideas of advancement to considering the global battle against imperialism' (p. 95). 'This meant', Andrews (2018, pp. 95) explains, 'engaging with, though not wholeheartedly embracing, Marxism'. He then quotes Malcolm at the Militant Labor Forum in 1965:

it is impossible for this system; this economic system; this political system; this social system; this system, period. It is impossible for it as it stands to produce freedom right now [for Afro-Americans] ... in the same way it is impossible for a chicken to produce a duck egg (cited in Andrews, 2018, p. 96).

Andrews (2018, p. 99) concludes chapter 3 of his book with a condemnation of nationalism, and a further insistence on internationalism:

A key ingredient of Black radicalism is the redefinition of national sovereignty. Radical politics must always reject and dismantle the central pillars of the status quo and there is none more pivotal to Western imperialism than the idea of the nation state. There can be no room in Black radicalism for the narrow nationalisms, in any of their varied forms, which have defined so many Black political movements

Andrews (2018, p. 277) believes that the Black revolution will take place in Africa, since this 'is the only means of securing Black freedom and building an independent political and economic system'. 'Those in the Diaspora', he maintains, 'have the responsibility to build up the resources and organisations to support the eventual revolution on the continent' [thus] 'combining local concerns with a global politics of revolution' (p. 277). This entails political movements embedding themselves in the communities they serve addressing 'very real and present suffering' (p. 276), since 'Black radicalism cannot just operate on a theoretical or impractical level', and Black people need to organise 'in every street, neighbourhood, city and nation': 'there can be no revolution without survival' (p. 276).

'Black independence', Andrews (2018, p. 260) insists, 'is the basis of the politics of Black radicalism' and this is why 'Africa is so important for the Black revolution' since 'Black independence in the West is impossible' (p. 260). Andrews (2018, p. 297) concludes the book

by insisting that Black people must never lose hope that revolutionary change is possible and that it is fifty years since the cusp of the Black revolution in the 1960s. ‘In the next fifty years’, he goes on, ‘the world can be a completely different place if we choose to build it’ (p. 297):

The West was built on our backs because they have been able, through various means, to control us. But we have always had the power to bring the system crashing down, which is why they invested so much effort in shackling us ... There can be no shortcut to our liberation, no freedom without sacrifice. We cannot theorise or perform our way to revolution ... The only vehicle to liberation is building an organisation that can empower the global Black nation. (p. 297).

While, for Andrews, it is Black people who must create the revolution against Western imperialism without which they will never be free, he ends on a note of optimism for all those who are subjugated: ‘we must bring it crashing down in order to truly liberate not only the Black nation, but all oppressed peoples’ (p. 298)

Marxism and socialism

When asked by Afua Hirsch (broadcaster, journalist and author of the book, *Brit(ish)* [Hirsch, 2018], and friend of Andrews) in an interview at the promotion of his book about his views on socialism, Andrews states that we don’t need to rely on ‘experiments’ in the progression towards radical overhaul, and that his work is about formulating the blueprint not for any specific revolutionary occurrence but for the reclaiming of an ideology that would lead to developed discussions about what happens next. (cited in Esplen, 2018).

Thus, whereas Critical Race Theorists have no identifiable strategy to achieve social change, nor any concrete proposals for a more just future, Kehinde Andrews, from a Black radical perspective, clearly identifies Western Imperialism as the edifice that needs to be overthrown. In so doing, he aims, with a considerable degree of success, to provide a most credible basis – a scorched earth – upon which deliberations about the future might proceed.

I now turn to Marxism as my preferred explanatory framework and socialism as my favoured solution. Here is not the place for a detailed exegesis of my own interpretations of Marxism and socialism (but see Cole, 2008, 2018b). Marx (1939) [1973], p. 488) argued that, rather than being the accumulation of material possessions, real wealth is ‘the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc’. As Michael Lebowitz (2016) explains, the activity through which people develop their capacities is not limited to the

sphere of production: we produce ourselves in homes, communities, neighbourhoods and society as a whole. This cannot happen if we relate to others as a means to satisfy our individual material self-interest. Crucially, therefore, twenty-first-century socialism, he goes on, as a system of reproduction, ‘contains not only social production organized by workers but also social ownership of the means of production for the purposes of satisfying communal needs and purposes’ (Lebowitz, 2016). Referring to Hugo Chávez’s notion of ‘the elementary triangle of socialism’ – social property, social production and satisfaction of social needs – Lebowitz (2016) states that ‘[w]ithout production of social needs, no real social property; without social property, no worker decision making oriented toward society’s needs; without worker decision making, no transformation of people and their needs’.

My geopolitical focus on racism, capitalism and socialism has been primarily in the context of the US and the UK. In the former we currently have the blanket fascistic noxiousness of Trump and his fascist base (Cole, 2019a); in the latter, the ongoing Tory ideological decision to unleash austerity on the working class, accompanied by the rampant and escalating racism of Theresa May’s ‘really hostile environment’ (Cole, 2019b). In these climates of hate, threat and fear, addressing alternative possible economic, political and social scenarios is even more pressing.

Under Trump, the overthrow of ‘white supremacy/authoritarian domination’ is inconceivable, as is progress toward social democracy. In the UK, given her obsession with decreasing net migration, the end of the ‘hostile environment’ while Theresa May and the Tories remain in power is inconceivable.

However, with the ascendancy of Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in the US and Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, social democracy has recently hit the mainstream agenda, and brought with it, a renewed interest in socialism. In the US, in the summer of 2018, for the first time in Gallup’s measurement over the past decade, Democrats or Democratic-leaning voters had a more positive image of socialism (57%) than they did of capitalism (47%). At the same time, fewer than half of young Americans as a whole (aged 18 to 19) viewed capitalism positively (45%), with 51% being positive about socialism (Newport, 2018). Another poll, conducted in February 2019, revealed that 61 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 (born after 1995) viewed socialism in a positive light. Furthermore, 73.1 percent of Millennials (those born between 1980 and 1994), and Generation Z (those

born after 1995) believed the government should provide universal health care, while 67.1 percent thought college should be tuition-free (Austin, 2019).

The top three voting issues for Gen Z, according to the Harris poll, were mass shootings, racial equality, and immigration policy and treatment of immigrants. Millennials' top issues were access to health care, global warming/climate change and mass shootings (Austin, 2019).

In the UK, the grassroots socialist group that supports the Labour Party under Corbyn, Momentum has 40.000+ members (Momentum, 2019). As Heather Stewart (2019) points out, turning Labour into a mass 'social movement', that involved in community activism year-round as well as knocking on doors during election campaigns, is a central element in Corbyn's project to transform his party. Membership of the party itself, as of 2019, is over half a million, having peaked at 575,000 in the Summer of 2017, after a strong performance in the General Election. While membership dropped slightly between December 2018 and February 2019 because of Labour's ambivalent stance on Brexit, and possibly perceptions that it has adequately tackled cases of antisemitism in the Party⁵, it is by far the biggest political party in Britain, approximately four times the size of May's Conservative Party (Stewart, 2019)

These indicative developments do not, of course, herald the imminent demise of capitalism. However, as *Guardian* columnist Gary Younge (2018) argued in an article advocating open borders, 'It's not naïve to hope that what does not seem possible in the foreseeable future is nonetheless necessary and worth fighting for':

we should all be able to roam the planet and live, love and create where we wish ... [in] a world with open borders [that] would demand a radical transformation of much of what we have now. It would demand a rethinking not only of immigration, but our policies on trade and war, the environment, health and welfare, which would in turn necessitate a re-evaluation of our history, of our understanding of ourselves as a species (Younge, 2018).

Such a radical re-evaluation of our history and our understanding of our 'species being' (Marx, 1844) might naturally gravitate towards socialism. Alongside open borders for people and equal rights for immigrants, here are some pre-requisites for a socialist future:

- the redistribution of wealth in as equal a manner as possible

- the democratization of the economy, so that it is owned, and controlled *democratically* in the true sense of the word (rule of the people) *by* and *for* workers and communities

- the production of goods and services for *need* and not for profit
- the basic necessities (free food, drink, housing, healthcare, education, and childcare for all) as a right
- full equality for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and age, irrespective of faith or no faith, and no discrimination on grounds of these identities or any other identity
- no death penalty
- no imperialism, colonialism or militarism
- self-determination for Indigenous Peoples
- the need to address climate change seriously; end fracking, pipelines, and extractivism
- follow the lead of Indigenous Peoples in protecting water, land, and air (adapted from Cole, 2019, 110-111).

It cannot be stressed enough that the last two bullet points self-evidently are a *pre-condition* for the building of socialism. In October, 2018, a landmark report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people (Watts, 2018).

At the same time, the devastating onslaughts of neoliberal capitalism are increasingly being questioned, with austerity being exposed as an ideologically-driven fraud. Time is running out for humankind to save the planet. It may be the last chance for those of us who refuse to acquiesce in the environmentally destructive hegemonic world capitalist order to engage in revolutionary dialogue.

Notes

¹ I should point out here that I have never rejected the contributions that CRT can make to a progressive politics. Indeed, I have consistently made the case that CRT has a number of strengths, albeit ones that can be enhanced by Marxist analysis. My aim in this paper is not to elucidate these strengths. However, elsewhere (Cole, 2017a, pp. 77-104), I devote a whole chapter (chapter 3, pp. 77-104) to them. They include the following: First, *the use of the concept of property to explain historically segregation and white supremacy in the US; the importance of voice; the concept of chronicle; an insistence on the all-pervasive existence of racism in the world; interest convergence theory; contradiction-closing cases; transposition and CRT and the law in the US*. This is not an exhaustive list, and I would now particularly want to include the CRT concept of ‘micro-aggressions’ (see Cole, 2017b, pp. 102-104).

Black radicalism, as elucidated by Kehinde Andrews, however, is new to me, and this is the first time I have commented on his analyses.

² While the ‘shifting signifier’ argument is commonplace in Critical Race Theorists’ defences of the CRT use of ‘white supremacy’, not all Critical Race Theorists invoke the ‘economic’. Walton’s inclusion of this dimension may well relate to one of his overall aims, namely to align CRT with (neo-) Marxism (and Black radicalism). There are no *a priori* reasons for ‘white supremacy’ to be grounded in economics, politics or history. While ‘history’ often figures in CRT theorizing, particularly in some of the classic (founding) literature (see Cole, 2017a, pp. 15-27), as does party politics (e. g. Gillborn, *passim*) the economic, with some notable exceptions (e.g. Richard Delgado, *passim* and Charles Mills, *passim*), is not central. Thus Gillborn (e.g. 2005, 2006) makes the case for CRT and ‘white supremacy’ without providing a discussion of the relationship of racism to capitalism.

³ It needs to be stressed, however, that the practical implications of this recognition in the form of remedial action in institutional practices in the UK have virtually disappeared.

⁴ This upsurge in fascism is, in part, a reflection of the crisis in neoliberal capitalism, as people disillusioned with neoliberalism’s excesses and sick of the dishonesty and corruption of the bankers and their political backers (Bramble, 2018) turn to populist parties and individuals (Cole, 2019a).

⁵ While quite rightly completely rejecting the absurd notion that the Labour Party, of which I am a member, is institutionally antisemitic, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has nevertheless acknowledged that the Party has a real problem, and that it must be quicker and sometimes ‘more ruthless’ in eradicating antisemitism from the Party (Sky News, 2019). For a spirited defence of Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership from over 200 Jewish members and supporters of the Labour Party, see Guardian Letters, 2019, where the signatories state that Corbyn’s ‘lifetime record of campaigning for equality and human rights, including consistent support for initiatives against antisemitism, is formidable. His involvement strengthens this struggle’.

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