

Background paper for the Futures of Education initiative

# Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures

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## Introduction

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This paper discusses the importance of historical thinking for futures-oriented policy in education. It proposes that a concept of ‘reparative futures’ can be a generative basis for knowledge and learning not only in formal educational institutions, but in community organisations, workplaces and in all sites of cultural exchange. The idea of reparative futures signals a commitment to identify and recognise the injustices visited on, and experienced by, individuals and communities in the past. It understands that these past injustices, even when they appear to be distant in time or ‘over’, will continue to endure in people’s lives in material and affective ways unless, and until, they are consciously and carefully addressed. Although there are certainly different languages and forms of reparative address, we suggest that critical practices of historical thinking can offer a vital starting point for critiquing and reformulating the interrelations of past, present and future.

Our discussions focus specifically on the importance of acknowledging and seeking justice for enduring histories of racial and colonial domination. We argue that UNESCO’s present programme on the Futures of Education needs to be underpinned by a concept of the future that is *reparative* if it is to challenge rather than reproduce such systems of domination. The historical thinking we propose for this work involves the creation of educational relationships that are centred on processes of dialogue and exchange and which proceed explicitly from an anti-racist position of fundamental human equality. Such modes of education, and the radical humanism they embrace, are foundational to, and are indeed a necessary precondition for, imagining and realising futures that are just.

Most attempts to build better futures have proceeded along different lines. In the first part of this paper we examine UNESCO’s efforts at the end of the Second World War to identify and install through education a new ‘universal’ humanism, one which might dispense with hierarchies of ‘race thinking’. However, we show how UNESCO’s search for a new humanism in this period rested on norms of social evolution that denied the ‘coevalness’ of others and assumed a kind of tutelary power over peoples and territories that needed to ‘catch up’ with the West.<sup>1</sup> Busy identifying deficits and filling gaps, experts associated with UNESCO’s activities rarely interrogated their operating assumptions or addressed the racialised violence which structured the global economy and rendered their curative interventions ‘necessary’. Couched in benevolent, colour-blind rhetoric and favouring planning instruments that promoted abstraction and simplification, they set about working on a future premised on the need to govern and ‘develop’ the lives of ‘backward’ populations.<sup>2</sup> We discuss this as the ‘chronopolitics’ of development, and show through a case study of UNESCO-led activity in this period how such technocratic projects tended to negate, or at least radically simplify, the past. In doing so, these futures-oriented policies in education, under the guise of universal humanism, enabled colonial and racialized modes of domination to endure.

How might UNESCO’s present effort to formulate futures-oriented policy in education address this history? In the second part of the paper the practices associated with reparative futures are set out in greater detail. Our focus here is on the epistemic and dialogic conditions of reparation – that is, its educational premise. This does not displace or diminish juridical or material forms of reparation, but rather, we take collective learning – particularly through historical thinking and practice – as a necessary basis for any form of reparative redress. An education for reparative futures would be alive to the structures of power that animate social life, and which have produced deeply uneven opportunities for individuals and communities to flourish. It would involve attending to the epistemic erasures and active silences, political interests and interpretive closures, of the production and legitimisation of knowledge through educational and historical practice itself. After all, these are

the knowledge-politics that have shaped past and present racialised hierarchies, including judgments of whose histories are considered important to know and to learn.

We propose that an education for reparative futures would embed the practice of asking ongoing and difficult questions with the past: cultivating spaces to remember, create, explore and discuss injustices; fostering an ethics of listening and dialogue capable of generating new perspectives; seeking to understand the histories, voices, and experiences that have been silenced or erased through assimilative forms of education; and grappling with the irresolvable difficulties of redemptive thought.<sup>3</sup> It is an education that, like the abolitionist thinking of Black feminism, is defined by its imaginative potential rather than by the constraints of predetermined or delegated outcomes: it is dedicated to building new relationships of reciprocity, modes of collaborative interpretation and collective organisation to imagine life beyond all forms of injustice.<sup>4</sup> Learning with the past – particularly past struggles over the future – is crucial, we argue, for holding open education as a mode of critique, rather than allowing it to sustain systems of domination.

## Racism and the chronopolitics of development

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Whilst all past authorities have in some sense attempted to plan for the future – to realise opportunities or sidestep catastrophic events – the ‘Age of Internationalism’ born in 1945 marked a distinctive turn towards a more centralised, globally-oriented, and ‘vertical’ style of futures-thinking.<sup>5</sup> The Bretton Woods institutions and the newly-minted UN agencies, in particular, were mandated to steer the future of human welfare globally – addressing, for example, acute hunger and agriculture poverty (FAO), disease and ill-health (WHO), unemployment and economic hardship (ILO), and the educational needs of children and society (UNESCO).<sup>6</sup>

The futures-oriented institutions of this era consciously sought to set goals and intervene in specific geographies to ‘ready’ communities to receive and absorb their new planning orthodoxies. ‘International development’, as this project has been more commonly called, rested on a ‘one world’ humanism: its colour-blind approach reinscribed racial categories and colonial hierarchies whilst claiming to enshrine ‘universal’ values.<sup>7</sup> For example, along with sanitation, health, and employment, education was an index of differentiation – producing, for instance, hierarchies of the educated/uneducated, literate/illiterate.<sup>8</sup> An ‘arithmetic of standards’, to borrow Nick Cullather’s term, conjured into being people whose ‘needs’ must be calculated, interpreted, prescribed and ‘certified to exist’ before they could be confronted, tamed and overcome in the quest for societal improvement.<sup>9</sup> As historians of race have demonstrated, it is precisely through sociohistorical processes of categorising and differentiating human life that racial meanings and hierarchies are created and sustained.<sup>10</sup>

This was a period profoundly shaped by global fascism, military resistance against decolonisation, the foundation of apartheid states, forced displacement, violent assertions of settler colonialism and anti-Blackness, as well as new forms of imperialism.<sup>11</sup> The UN agencies, and UNESCO in particular, engaged in the intellectual and practical task of challenging the biological racism that sanctioned and legitimised these modalities of political domination.<sup>12</sup> However, as we discuss, their technocratic approaches to making the future disregarded the kinds of historical reflexivity which could be found, for example, in theories and practices of Indigenous self-recognition and anticolonial radical humanism which offered, as they do today, resources to directly interrogate the futurity of racial oppression.<sup>13</sup>

At UNESCO’s founding in 1945, Mexican Minister of Education Jaime Torres Bodet, remarked that the organisation was trying to solve ‘the problem of entering an era of human history distinct from that which has just closed’.<sup>14</sup> Bodet’s phrase was, like so many in the foundational documents of the Organisation, richly

allusive. It begs at least two sets of questions about the kinds of epistemic resources and practices that were debated, elevated and rendered legible to solve the problem of history that Bodet named. The first pertains to how open UNESCO was to understanding the ongoing history of racial and colonial violence *as part of* imagining and creating a 'distinct' new era. The second, and related, is about what sorts of resources could become, in British Prime Minister Clement Atlee's address to the founding conference, the 'instruments of our co-operative international life in the future.'<sup>15</sup> Education sciences emerged as a key 'instrumentality' of international development, legitimising the directives of elite 'experts' whose research, much like today, sought to shape educational systems, curricula and methods of teaching across the world.<sup>16</sup> Here, we draw attention to the *racialised temporalities* inscribed in this early work of UNESCO, particularly in the attempts of its Department of Social Sciences to find technical, disciplinary knowledge and methods for understanding and steering a new global future.

Our discussions in this section draw on an analysis by Kevin Myers and colleagues of UNESCO's Tensions Project that ran between 1947 and 1953.<sup>17</sup> The Tensions Project was an ambitious programme of educational development that included seventeen member states. With the expressed goal of identifying and overcoming 'tensions' that lead to national and international conflict, the Tensions Project involved the design and conduct of research on a wide variety of topics including 'national character', the socialisation of children, and the origins of prejudice and violence.<sup>18</sup> The Project was particularly active in India, which also serves as a focus for some of our discussion below. The experts who sought to devise so-called 'instruments' of development through this research were disproportionately drawn from, and dominated by, scholars from North America and Western Europe. UNESCO staff on the Tensions Project for example, included successive directors, the social psychologists Hadley Cantril and Otto Klineberg; the sociologists Edward Shils, Robert Cooley Angell and Alva Myrdal, and the Tensions Project consultant in India, and psychologist, Gardner Murphy. The course tutors, who designed and taught research methods training (including Erich Fromm, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Henry Dicks and the future peace educator Adam Curle), were all male, all white and all European. They were part of a community of social scientists promoting work that they understood to be scientifically progressive and which, they hoped, would usher in a new, and qualitatively different, internationalist era. However, the boundary-maintenance of this overwhelmingly white, male epistemic community, meant their conceptual frameworks were far from open to the alterity of the historical experiences and interpretive resources of precisely those 'others' who would be the subjects of their work.

Acting politically 'envisages a desired future; [and] invokes a formative past' and it is thus steeped in normative notions of time.<sup>19</sup> Post-war projects of international development understood 'progress' as a unilinear series of stages from 'primitive' to 'civilised' living – a view that sociologist Wolfgang Sachs terms 'chronopolitics'.<sup>20</sup> We argue the social scientists involved in the Tensions Project shared the same basic racialised temporality of development. Theirs was an intellectual world held together by the merger of history and chronology that achieved dominance in the wake of the industrial revolution and European imperialism.<sup>21</sup> Time – linear, mechanical and absolute – became central to the scientific thought they championed, and influential in a range of intellectual theories drawn on to understand, and change, human behaviour. Chronological time provided a kind of abstract container into which discrete events and people could be gathered, synchronised and compared. So, while the 'universal' humanism of this period sought to 'include' every human phenomenon – personality, culture or society – historically and in the process of change, particular people or cultures or societies were allocated different positions or points in the process of empty and homogenous time.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps most influential of all was a universal developmental framework of phases and stages into which individuals, families, communities and nations could all be placed.<sup>23</sup> In the Tensions Project they were refugees who needed rehabilitating, children who needed developing, tribes in need of protection, villagers who needed to adapt, but underneath them all was an imperialist and racialised teleology – an evolutionary account of change where the endpoint was modelled on European modernity.<sup>24</sup>

For despite a declared interest in cultural difference, UNESCO activities, like the Tensions Project that is offered as an example here, tended to overlook or simplify the differing pasts that would become part of a collective future. Progress towards tolerance and peace would be achieved without recognising, far less addressing, the global inequalities produced by colonialism and other related forms of domination and exploitation. In practice, this meant that Tensions scholars were intolerant of any form or language of experience that could not be assimilated to a Euro-American model of historical development. Adam Curle, an Oxford University graduate in History and Anthropology, with fieldwork experience in the Middle East and who took leave from his job at the Tavistock Institute rehabilitating war veterans to teach on the Tensions Project training course, was perhaps not an obvious proponent for a dogmatic western social science. However, Curle appeared oblivious to the possibility that the many languages, belief systems and cosmologies that made up newly independent India could have competing ideas about, and experiences of, both past and present. Instead, the term ‘fantastic’ was used as an antonym for rationality and societies experiencing conflict and tension were judged to be stuck in an:

‘emotional lag which prevents people from accepting the reality of new situations and retards the emergence of fresh and more appropriate structures ... Such escape mechanisms may become stereotyped and institutionalised in primitive society, where they have a long time to develop, but in modern society, in which a major trend of development is the freeing of the individual from the bonds of taboo and fantasy, they only cause an additional frustration and misery which very is apt to find an outlet in violence’.<sup>25</sup>

It should be remembered that the strong conception of historical development at play here helped shape UNESCO’s educational outlook precisely as the moment the organisation was assuming a global leadership role. Indeed Curle’s emphasis on developmental deficiencies (lags, barriers, blockages, constraints and impediments) and racialized imagery (primitive emotions, taboo and fantasy) soon became a prominent feature not only of UNESCO’s post-war worldview, but of UN development policy in general.

The social scientists, administrators and planners who represented India at UNESCO, men like Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Ashfaq Husain, and Tara Chand, both identified and criticised the dominance of western knowledge and personnel in the fledging organisation. However, opportunities for them to represent or explain the significance of diverse histories and cultures of the Indian subcontinent were highly circumscribed, not only by their social locations – having been part of the English-educated elite – but also by the dominance of western social scientific categories within the knowledge institutions in which they worked. Although they often invoked the anticolonial sentiment of the period, their articulation of the legacies of colonialism and their discursive representations of the new citizen and nation were also conditioned by racial categories and temporalities of development. Biraja Shankar Guha, for example, was a Harvard-educated Indian anthropologist who was commissioned to lead research on refugees as part of the Tensions Project. Significantly, Guha also had a prominent role in the Anthropological Survey of India that informed the retention and renewal of upper-caste Aryanism in postcolonial India.<sup>26</sup> Guha’s ‘absolute faith in the racial separation of upper and lower castes’ was not challenged by, and may have reinforced, the evolutionary framework of UNESCO’s research programmes.<sup>27</sup>

Through this brief account of its early activities, we suggest that there was potential for UNESCO to be an intellectual arena in which a new humanism might have emerged, one based on a recognition of historical injustices and specifically of the dehumanising premise of colonialism and racism. But there remain questions about how far UNESCO’s organisational structures, epistemic frameworks, and educational activities were committed to engage and reckon with different interpretive resources, multiple histories, and structural violences and racial injustices. It was not apparent within the available archival material that the Tensions Project, for example, cultivated a community of practice that was alive to questioning received historical

narratives and supportive of forms of reparative remembering which could have led its participants to think critically about historical trajectories and envisage a wider range of futures.<sup>28</sup> Notably missing from Project discussions were the theories and educational visions of anticolonial thinkers whose radical humanism offered a different future for the world.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the example of UNESCO's Tensions Project helps us identify a critical issue in the ongoing 'chronopolitics' of the Futures of Education. Try as we might, the future – or even plural 'futures' – can never be constructed by drawing a line in the sand with the past. Such ambitions remain stiflingly limited because they fail to both recognise alternative histories that would themselves entail their own visions of the future as well as imagine futures that reckon with reparative address for past injustices.

## Learning with the past

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We've argued that an understanding of the past and its active formations today is crucial for futures-thinking. In this section we set out, albeit briefly, what we mean by historical knowledges and historical practices, to consider how critical approaches to history can be a generative process for imagining futures which are reparative rather than reproductive of injustices past and present. These approaches to history involve processes of dialogue and exchange; they are constituted through educational relationships and thus they point to the ways in which education is a necessary precondition of reparative address.

### Historical knowledges

In our call to 'learn with the past', we are advocating for something more than, or different to, the common sense trope that 'history has something to teach us'. Such claims echo European enlightenment ideals of universal knowledge that, in practice, reduced the capacious category of the past to the disciplined procedures of scientific History. This science privileges apparently empirical knowledge that can only be established and verified through specific evidential standards and specialist hermeneutic techniques usually located within socially closed academic institutions. The resulting categories of this dominant European historiography have, for example, produced racialised temporalities of people and societies who are held to 'deviate' from, or lag behind, an assumed benchmark of European colonial-modernity.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, in emphasising the importance of historical knowledge in futures-thinking, we argue that a reparative future requires expanding what counts as historical knowledge itself. This may involve what Ariella Aisha Azoulay calls 'potential history': a rejection of the conceptual apparatus of colonial-modernity and its racialised chronopolitics. Potential history, Azoulay argues, is 'a commitment to attend to the potentialities that the institutional forms of imperial violence – borders, nation-states, museums, archives and laws – try to make obsolete or turn into precious ruins'.<sup>31</sup> For example, it would foreground and trace the experiences of, and enduring questions of justice surrounding: slavery and genocide in empire building;<sup>32</sup> colonial projects of mass famine, poverty and dispossession;<sup>33</sup> the emotional regimes and psychological consequences of different imperial formations;<sup>34</sup> programmes of forced removal, educational assimilation and state violence against Indigenous children;<sup>35</sup> and the different types, and impacts of, anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements and resistance.<sup>36</sup>

Even in the scholarly disciplines where these histories are discussed and debated, there is still a tendency to dismiss them as polemical, excessively political or peripheral to the 'proper' subjects of study. Such judgements reflect the continued influence of narrow epistemological categories, and rules of method, that render themes of racism, violence, dispossession, slavery, famine and poverty forgotten, invisible or unspeakable. This is also

despite growing acknowledgement in fields of practice and activism of the ways that histories shaped by violence, discrimination and poverty are traumas that are ‘experienced over time and across generations’.<sup>37</sup> Even though the concept of trauma should be treated with some care, it has considerable potential, along with concepts of memory, abolition and epistemic justice, to inspire educational practices that foster reparative futures.<sup>38</sup> The lived experiences of racism and colonialism – felt, in different formulations, over centuries – have been by and large excluded as an epistemic basis for the kind of futures-thinking occurring in state, corporate, and transnational institutions. This, and the very narrow conception of historical knowledge that underpins such futures-oriented policy, needs to change.

## Historical practices

What kind of historical practices, then, might support reparative futures? A first step in opening a space to listen to other pasts is to admit that the present, the contemporary, is not a unified, synchronic moment. Just as globalisation does not mean that there is such a thing as a universal, single global culture – however many points of contact and exchange there may be – neither is the present a simultaneous confluence of all pasts.<sup>39</sup> And so, historical practices for a reparative future can begin by recognising that, to the extent that they are constituted by myriad historical experiences, there are multiple presents and therefore multiple visions of the future that need to be heard in democratic deliberation.<sup>40</sup> At a practical level, futures-oriented policy in education must give space to the experiences and knowledges of people whose histories have been silenced by or made marginal in educational systems and processes. The Tensions Project discussed above offers a case in point of the closing down of such space. This should not be a matter of paternalistic ‘outreach’ but an acknowledgement that such historical knowledges – as sources of expertise and learning for the future – exist beyond and in spite of institutional engagement.<sup>41</sup>

Recognising this multiplicity requires opening up opportunities to have both different pasts and different visions of the future understood. Educative cultures of listening, dialogue and reflection are thus key. Indeed, reparative futures can only be ‘co-produced’: they involve collective practices that are committed to learning about multiple pasts, to people seeking to tell their stories and make their histories, but also to critically engaging with received histories.<sup>42</sup> The usual building blocks of history – the actors and the periods and the concepts used to tell it – potentially become an object of discussion and debate. The framing of the story is no longer a matter of common sense or implied knowledge but a process open to dialogue and contestation. Such dialogue should be based on the recognition that the production and performance of histories is, in part, a creative act.

The historical practices we see as central to reparative futures are thus committed to expanding the identification, construction and use of sources in order to generate new collective recognition of the injustices of multiple pasts. These are educational processes which can foster reparative remembering. The practices of oral history, the recording of life histories, the writing of autobiographies, public testimonies, performances of song and dance, and visual sources of all kinds offer salient examples of how histories are continually created at the ‘margins’ and ‘from below’. Ideas about past-present relations are narrated and rehearsed through diverse and often mundane practices, circulating for example in families, communities and schools. The symbolic worlds they create are central to individual and collective claims for recognition and representation, for creating new solidarities, and for changing the way we think about the past and its legacies today.

Such a view understands historical ‘archives’ in open terms. Archival collections – from physical collations, to databases and websites, to walking tours and so on – are not repositories of inert data or historical facts but can be central to modes of representation for people and groups and are thus sites that can support collective engagement. The creation of digital archives, for example, has not only increased the number of people who can research the past, but also enabled new forms of collaborative interpretation which may have reparative

potential. Take for example: the creation of databases for tracking how universities have been funded by expropriated Indigenous land;<sup>43</sup> mappings of housing injustice and narratives of displacement and resistance;<sup>44</sup> databases on the legacies of British slave ownership;<sup>45</sup> publicly available records of colonial frontier massacres;<sup>46</sup> and open-access immersive storytelling of present and erased localities under settler colonialism.<sup>47</sup> Having such archives and sources to learn with can potentially open up new dialogues for reparative futures.

## Education for Reparative Futures

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UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education proclaims the present moment as one of potentially transformative change whose immanent possibilities for addressing inequality and injustice can only be realised by a commitment to global solidarity.<sup>48</sup> As we hope we have demonstrated, this is not a new claim. UNESCO has been here before, expressing laudable hopes for the future, calling on scholars to help build a new world and, in doing so, posing a challenge that invites educators to move from positions of critique to projects of construction. We welcome that challenge but, if our analysis is correct, it also clearly requires reformulation. For a radical reshaping of the world cannot be achieved by leaving the past behind with exhortations for greater commitment to 'public education, common goods and global solidarity'.<sup>49</sup> Instead, we need to encourage educative processes of reparative address because these are a necessary precondition for a politics of solidarity, justice and equality.

To be sure, important UNESCO's initiatives such as its Slave Route Project and its ongoing work on truth, peace and reconciliation position education as central to reparative justice.<sup>50</sup> However, its work in global educational policy, under the rubrics of international development, continues to be captured by instrumental, technocratic and economically-driven notions of education that remain actively silent about enduring histories of racism and colonialism.<sup>51</sup> The pledge to 'leave no one behind' encapsulates the unrelenting forward march of development.<sup>52</sup> And so, the racialised chronopolitics of development goes on, despite ongoing histories of dissent and their different visions for the future. As we write, the Black Lives Matter movement refuses the continuation of what Tiffany Lethabo King has called 'conquistador humanism' – the seizing of the future to craft and sustain 'European human life and self-actualization through Black and Indigenous death.'<sup>53</sup> Can UNESCO's programmes – from its coordination of the Education Sustainable Development Goal 4 to its global initiative on the Futures of Education – encourage learning with such histories of survivance and such visions of alternative futures?

Indeed, we suggest it is imperative for UNESCO to imagine a future that is committed to reparative address and therefore to a different kind of education. Educational processes and practices for a reparative future would focus on the principles of a radical humanism that, as Aimé Césaire so clearly declared, is made to 'the measure of the world'.<sup>54</sup> As anticolonial thinkers have shown us, this is a humanism that is not established through a predefined, universal container for human life, as liberal humanism has sought. Nor is it oriented towards 'walled in' notions of difference and particularity that feed toxic nationalism and cultural chauvinism. Both have authorised systems of racial domination. Rather, as Gary Wilder summarises, it is a humanism that works through histories of lived experience: it is situated, embodied, and enriched by the coexistence of all particulars – an emancipatory worldview 'that could indicate how to live a more fully human life'.<sup>55</sup> It is a humanism, therefore, that must be alive to past and present injustices. It calls for critical practices of history.

Our focus on historical knowledge and practices has not forfeited categories such as freedom, democracy and solidarity as important to futures-thinking, but rather underscores the need for dialogue across different lived experiences – indeed, for *education* as shared learning and unlearning – in order to fill hopeful categories, such



as reparation, with meaning. Drawing on Edward Said's reflections, an education for reparative futures involves learning 'concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others'.<sup>56</sup> It is dedicated to what Satya Mohanty calls 'epistemic cooperation', a concatenation of ideas that recognises that ideas of justice, democracy, freedom and so on, stem from, and thus have a debt to, subaltern lives and histories.<sup>57</sup> Or, in Robin Wall Kimmerer's terms it is a process of 'braiding' multiple knowledges and experiences for new forms of restorative reciprocity and responsibility.<sup>58</sup> Education for reparative futures would seek to understand the entangled histories of people who have been differently positioned by systems of racial and colonial domination and would see this understanding as essential for building the kinds of solidarity a future without racism requires.

Indeed this is not a simple act of historical recovery, nor a historicist rescue of an oppositional identity in an imagined past. The radical humanism of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and, more recently, Paul Gilroy and Sylvia Wynter, warns against that particular seduction and argues, in Wynter's words, for a re-imagining of the 'human in the terms of a new history whose narrative will enable us to co-identify ourselves each with the other'.<sup>59</sup> What we are calling for here is an education that fosters processes of reparative remembering; questioning received narratives and supporting histories that 'revindicate' the lifeways of the oppressed.<sup>60</sup> An education for reparative futures takes seriously 'our knowledge of the past as a source of present and future action' and it accepts that humans have symbolic attachments to 'the past' that are located far from a register of historical events or empirical facts.<sup>61</sup> In recognising these attachments, and the psychic functions they serve, it practices an ethics of humility, or a mode of thought that is cautious of not recentring dominant positions or recuperating an assimilative education. It creates spaces for listening to multiple, and often competing, knowledge traditions so that all have opportunities to be recognised, explored, debated and critiqued. These spaces, we argue, can offer possibilities for reparative remembering because they make available to individuals and groups new resources for interpreting individual life stories and group histories and the means to work through them.

We do not underestimate the practical, educational and emotional difficulties of these processes. Nor does our appeal to dialogue seek to evoke a liberalism of the kind that has become familiar in the statements and reports of institutions like UNESCO. As historians and political theorists alike have thoroughly demonstrated, liberalism has comfortably accommodated colonial relations of racial domination, particularly through assimilationist, colour-blind orientations to education.<sup>62</sup> Instead, we maintain that reparative futures cannot be based either on systemic silences or on oppositional models of remembering. Reparative futures requires recognising that we are all differently marked by historical processes; that we all have capacities for affect and cognition and that dialogue – however challenging and difficult – is a starting point for all educational relationships that are self-consciously orientated toward material justice. We must not come to inhabit a future that carries with it uninterrogated injustices of the past and present. It is precisely through education that new forms of recognition of these injustices and a solidarity for creating something different can be fostered. Education is, therefore, necessary for reparative futures.

## Notes

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