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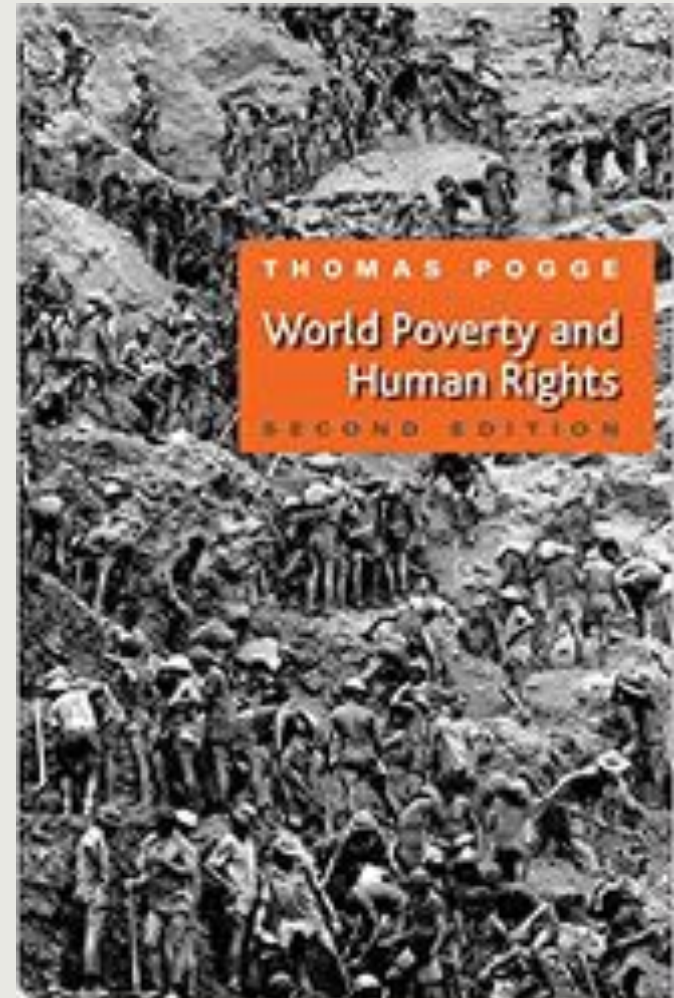
Epidemic Illusions: On the Coloniality of Global Public Health

Eugene Richardson, MD, PhD

26 May 2021



- Descendants of colonialists are not morally related to those they've exploited and oppressed as potential helpers or saviors; but rather—as Thomas Pogge would say—as supporters of, and beneficiaries from, a global institutional order that systematizes this oppression.



Bourgeois Empiricism¹

- Models of disease causation that obscure socio-historical forces are themselves “political act[s], giving support to social structures that hide behind scientific objectivity to perpetuate dependency, exploitation, racism, elitism, colonialism.”

Source: Richard Levins & Richard Lewontin, *The Dialectical Biologist* (1985)

¹ Meredith Turshen, *The Political Ecology of Disease in Tanzania* (1984)

Symbolic violence

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- Symbolic violence can be thought of as the capacity to impose the means for comprehending and adapting to the social world by representing the economic and political world in disguised, taken-for-granted forms.



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The symbolic violence of ‘outbreak’: A mixed-methods, quasi-experimental impact evaluation of social protection on Ebola survivor wellbeing

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- What effect social protection and job creation programs have had on survivors' (of the 2013-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa) wellbeing?
 - We enrolled 200 randomly selected EVD survivors from Port Loko, Kenema, and Kailahun districts in Sierra Leone and stratified them based on the amount of instrumental social protection received post-discharge from an Ebola treatment unit. We then conducted a survey and in-depth interviews to assess participants' wellbeing and food security.

WHOQOL-HIV BREF



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Household Food Insecurity Access
Scale (HFIAS) for Measurement of
Food Access: Indicator Guide

VERSION 3

August 2007

Jennifer Coates
Anne Swindale
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- Social protection categories II-IV (moderate to extensive) were each significantly associated with ~15–22% higher wellbeing scores compared to minimal social protection ($p < 0.001$). Only social protection category IV (extensive) was significantly associated with being food secure (adjusted odds ratio 6.11; 95% confidence interval, 2.85–13.10) when compared to minimal social protection.

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- We conclude that, for EVD survivors, short-term social protection during the vulnerable period post-discharge can pay dividends two years later. Based on the empiric evidence presented, we discuss how terms such as “outbreak” and “epidemic” do symbolic violence by creating the illusion that social suffering ends when transmission of a pathogen ceases.
 - Stigma
 - Survivor

Spatial and temporal dynamics of superspreading events in the 2014–2015 West Africa Ebola epidemic

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- Ebola patient?
- Superspreader
- PPE-bereft care nexus

Superspreaders Drove Ebola Epidemic, Study Finds



"Powerful and timely."
—Cornel West

Epidemic Illusions

On the Coloniality of Global Public Health



Eugene T. Richardson
foreword by Paul Farmer

Imagining Social Alternatives



Lancet Commission on Reparations and Redistributive Justice





Social Science & Medicine

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Reparations for American Descendants of Persons Enslaved in the U.S. and their Potential Impact on SARS-CoV-2 Transmission

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PhD ^d, A. Kirsten Mullen BSc ^e, Michelle E. Morse MD, MPH ^{a, b}, Maya Malik MSSW ^f,
Aletha Maybank MD, MPH ^g, Mary T. Bassett MD, MPH ^h, Paul E. Farmer MD, PhD ^{a, b}, Lee
Worden PhD ^{i, 2}, James Holland Jones PhD ^{j, 2}



Reparations for slavery could have reduced Covid-19 transmission and deaths in the US, Harvard study says

By **Scottie Andrew**, CNN

🕒 Updated 2042 GMT (0442 HKT) February 16, 2021

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- By tracing human rights failings to the impoverished discursive infrastructure of objectivist epidemiology (Good 1994; Pogge 2008; Kleinman 1994), we can transform global health by transforming its representations (Richardson, Kelly, et al. 2017; Bourdieu 1981; Cornwall and Eade 2010; Sachs 2009; Freire 2000).

THANK YOU

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