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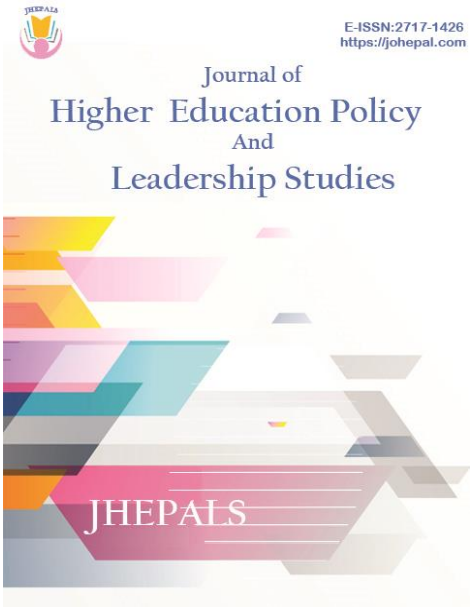
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North/South Hierarchies: The Coloniality of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Access to Education as an Epistemic Good

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Abstract

This conceptual piece explores the differential treatment of refugee and asylum-seeker access to higher education as an epistemic good within host-nation states along racialized hierarchies and geographies. By drawing on Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, this work problematizes the discourses of deservingness in relation to refugees and asylum-seekers of the Global South accessing such state goods of the Global North; and the power relations that undergird constructions of humanity. The paper discusses barriers to refugee and asylum-seekers with respect to policies and practices within higher education in host nations of the Global North, in particular, the UK and EU; and how such policies and state actions operate against the backdrop of whiteness and coloniality. The paper outlines extant policies pertaining to the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in accessing education; the politics of othering people of the Global South; and explores the possibilities for anti-colonial resistance and racial equity in education in the European context and beyond, as refugee populations are projected to surge across the globe.

Keywords: Coloniality; Refugee; Asylum-seeker; Whiteness; Epistemic Injustice; Education

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Introduction

While the international refugee regime, the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and the amended Protocol of 1967, are rights-based initiatives founded upon the belief that refugee rights, such as access to education, are human rights; many are not afforded such status (Abdelaaty, 2021; Howard et al, 2022; Mayblin, 2014; Øverlid, 2022). The 24 February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine exposed widespread racialized and colonial hierarchies divided along Global and North and South lines that depict certain bodies as deserving of asylum and human rights, whilst simultaneously denying such rights to others. Indeed, the same disregard for Black and Brown life is currently unfolding as the world witnesses the West's complicity in the horrors of Israel's settler-colonial genocide of Brown Palestinian bodies (Alyan, 2023; Speri, 2023). The embrace of Ukrainian refugees across the West is juxtaposed against the onslaught of rising right-wing nationalism, Islamophobia, populism and racism, such as PEGADA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) movement, as well as vitriolic rhetoric to describe foreigners during Brexit (Jones, 2017; Kyriakidou et al., 2020; Silver, 2022). These myriad factors that bar Black and Brown bodies from crossing borders renders the rights and humanity of refugees subjective to whiteness (Alyan, 2023; Noury & Roland, 2020; Quijano, 2000). While Canada is often depicted as a bastion of human rights, the government has expedited Ukrainian refugee applications at the expense of Afghan, Somali, Iraqi, South Sudanese, and other non-white refugees (Immigration & Citizenship Canada, 2022). This blatant disregard for non-white humanity has resulted in predominantly Black and Brown refugees being left on the freezing streets of Toronto without access to shelter, with the death of a Nigerian asylum seeker in November 2023 (Lavoie, 2023; Wilson, 2023). Thus, the colonial hierarchization that visibilizes white, and for the purpose of this paper, Ukrainian suffering and humanity, has permitted Western nations not only to breach international refugee and humanitarian laws with impunity, but to also hold authority over which bodies deserve the right to live, as a manifestation of colonial state violence as epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustices are rooted within power relations, such as inequitable participation in knowledge formation, dispossession and state violence, whereby some bodies are granted access to epistemic goods, such as education at the expense of others (Fanon, 1952; Fricker, 2017; Medina, 2017).

This paper seeks to problematize the privileging of whiteness informing the preferential treatment of Ukrainians in upholding the rights of refugee and asylum seekers, specifically, the accessibility of education as an epistemic good in comparison to the mainly Black and Brown asylum seekers that have comprised past and ongoing waves of migrants from the Global South. This work is centred on UK and EU policies and initiatives pertaining to access to education that have recently highlighted the discrepancies between white and non-white asylum seekers. By centering the lack of non-white asylum-seeker access to education as an epistemic good utilizing Fricker's concept of 'epistemic injustice', the paper contends that such access operates as a system of neo-colonial violence that invalidates asylum seekers as innately foreign, threatening and therefore undeserving of protection. These hegemonic constructs of devaluation are grounded in the axiology of whiteness and speak to pervasive patterns of coloniality, namely Western neo-imperialism, environmental

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degradation and widespread appropriation of resources, that continue to produce the devastating circumstances for which asylum seekers are forced to flee.

I approach this work as a mixed race, Afghan and Scottish scholar who has witnessed countless waves of family members fleeing Afghanistan, from the 1979 Soviet invasion to the 1996 Fall of Kabul and initial Taliban rule, to the 2001 US invasion, and the most recent 2021 US withdrawal and second Taliban rule. The paper speaks to the privileging of whiteness through state policies that render the lives of asylum seekers of the Global South as both invalid and disposable, the racialization of epistemic injustice in accessing education as an epistemic good provided by the host-state; asylum-seeker access to higher education in particular, and concludes with forging resistance to the ongoing coloniality of oppressive structures that continue to perpetuate racialized power relations that determine which bodies are deserving of state access to education.

Whiteness, the Politics of Asylum-Seeking and the (Re) Production of the Colonial Other

Since the end of World War II, there has been an unprecedented number of people on the move across the globe, more so than at any other time in history with some 82.4 million forcibly displaced persons, forty per cent of whom are children (UNHCR, 2021). As such, international human rights laws pertaining to refugees and asylum seekers are largely permeated with historic and ongoing coloniality and colonial legacies as demonstrated through markedly different asylum policy enactment practices displayed by the Global North toward Ukrainian asylum-seekers (Esposito, 2022; Howard et al., 2022; Näre et al., 2022). This phenomenon widely speaks to the politicization of refugee identities, and which certain bodies are deemed as more suitable to white, Eurocentric, settler-colonial integration (Fong & Saar, 2022). Asylum-seekers from the Global South are often conceptualized as a threat to their Western host countries, as the dichotomous understandings of civilized and uncivilized are reinforced (Walker, 2022). These differing narratives have materialized through widespread media perceptions of Ukrainians viewed as brave freedom fighters, whereby Iraqis, Afghans and Palestinians are constructed as terrorists, criminals and thugs (Alyan, 2023; Elsheikh & Ayazi, 2017; Ma, 2023; Øverlid, 2022). Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, refugees of the Global South had long been subjected to epistemic injustice and violence, often discursively constructed as 'fake' refugees, no longer categorized as refugees, but rather, as economic migrants (Hadj Abdou & Pettrachin, 2021). As such, this manifestation of epistemic violence maintains a two-pronged approach, one being institutional, thwarting access to epistemic goods, the second being material, often resulting in violence and/or death (Spivak, 1988).This violence is enacted through the deportation of asylum seekers to unsafe countries where they often face impending death (Fatal Policies of Fortress Europe, 2023), and widespread indifference and inaction to several incidences of asylum seekers drownings in the Mediterranean Sea when trying to reach Europe (International Organization for Migration, n.d; Mogstad, 2023).

Asylum seekers under international humanitarian law are recognized as persons leaving their countries of origin due to fears of death or other inhuman treatment (UNHCR, 2016). Asylum-seekers are not designated as legal refugees until their asylum claims are processed based on the parameters of hegemonic Global North conceptions of refugee

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legitimacy (Ahmed, 2000; Kyriakidou et al., 2020). Although the terms asylum seeker, refugee and migrant are often conflated, the nuanced definition of migrant generally embodies the element of choice in movement. In this juncture, by morphing 'undesirable' Black and Brown refugees into economic migrants has been a process of convenience, with Europe decrying many war-torn countries, such as Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria as 'safe', yet just not safe enough for their citizens (see Travel Advisories for EU nations, UK, Australia Canada and the United States). Thus, the racial codification and ensuing racial ignorance (Alcoff, 2007) of immigration and humanitarian laws have allowed many Western countries to also hold authority over which bodies deserve the right to life, as a manifestation of colonial state violence. Medina (2017) argues that such white racial ignorance "is a luxury that oppressed subjects typically cannot have" (p. 251) as dominant collective knowledge formations shape neo-colonial world order and racial hierarchies.

Rodríguez (2018) describes the 'coloniality of migration'; as one that is underpinned by the nexus of racial capitalism and the asylum-migrant nexus. The mechanisms that inform migration and asylum-seeking policies within the neo-colonial landscape are mirrored through the revitalization of colonial dichotomies of the Orient and Occident (Said, 1978). Therefore, the racial stratification of asylum-seeker hierarchies vastly frames the ways in which refugees and asylum-seekers are received, portrayed by national governments, international bodies, politicians and the media alike (Georgi, 2019; Van Hootegem et al., 2020). Media discourses have largely portrayed predominantly Black and Brown Muslim refugees and asylum-seekers as innately foreign and ultimately illegal (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024). When scores of non-white asylum seekers emerging from Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, and Somalia, showed up on European shores in 2015-2016, exercising their basic humanitarian right to claim asylum, Europe's response was marked by xenophobia, apathy and dehumanization (Magos & Margaroni, 2018). The 2015 influx of Muslim asylum seekers mobilized widespread anxiety and existential fears pertaining to the demise of Western society, should such asylum-seekers be permitted to remain in Europe (Georgi, 2019). The experience of Muslim migrants sits in stark contrast to that of asylum-seeking Ukrainians who moved across Europe unrestrained and provided with unprecedented access to the epistemic goods of their host countries (Esposito, 2022; Global Detention Project, 2022).

What continues to be conveniently omitted from such depictions and narratives, is that despite Europe's assertions of these asylum seekers supposed cultural misalignment and incompatibility with the continent, most asylum seekers of the Global South originate from former European colonies or countries that have at some point been subjected to European imperialism across time and space (Rodríguez, 2018; Zagor, 2024). Most recently in 2021, notwithstanding France's role in military imperialist activities in Afghanistan, French president Emmanuel Macron asserted that France ought to "anticipate and protect itself from a wave of migrants from Afghanistan" following the resurgence and seizure of Kabul by the Taliban (Mammome, 2021). In contradiction to the steady rise of right-wing populist vitriol that was strategically spurred on and served to heighten white anxieties, is the fact that the majority of the world's refugees in fact reside outside of Europe. Approximately 85 percent of refugees reside in the Global South, meaning the proportion of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe in comparison to the rest of the world is miniscule (UNHCR, 2022). Mainstream narratives underpinning refugees, migrants and asylum seekers from countries

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of the Global South have far reaching policy implications, such as access to education in host nations.

Asylum-Seeking Politics and Subjectivity

As highlighted in the 1951 Convention and its consecutive 1967 Protocol upheld by international humanitarian law, it enshrines the right of all people to seek and enjoy asylum and the benefits associated with it (UNHCR, 2016). Externalization practices in the UK, European Union, as well as the settler-colonial states of Canada, the United States and Australia have worked cohesively to restrict the exercise of such rights (Frelick et al., 2016; Rodríguez, 2018). Externalization mechanisms have incentivized the manipulation of legal definitions, the undermining of duties, and the overall circumvention of processes legality through fear-based tactics; including the nefarious claim touted by politicians and the media, such as the example quoted in the abstract, that asylum seekers are predators, terrorists in disguise and inherently othered. Some of the ways that countries of the Global North re-assert their dominance and positionality of power within the hierarchy of neo-colonialism is by offloading human rights responsibilities to third countries, also known as 'safe countries'; that often lack the capacity and infrastructure to process asylum-seeking applications. Another ominous tactic is the outsourcing of asylum application processing to offshore sites such as Guantanamo Bay, widely utilized by the US (Erfani & Garcia, 2021; OHCHR, 2022).

This coordinated effort is not unique to the European context, rather, it spans the Global North, from the 1981 Interdiction Agreement between the US and Haiti aimed at thwarting Haitian immigration. Australia's 2001 enactment of the 'Pacific Solution', authorizes the displacement of asylum seekers on offshore islands where gross human rights violations have been reported (Frelick et al., 2016) and the EU's Frontex unified border patrol of 2008 and consecutive European Immigration and Asylum Pact of 2005. In the United States, the Trump administration infamously authorized the cruel and systematic separation children from their families, while also forcibly removing more than 70,000 asylum-seekers between 2019-2021 through its Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP), forcing them to await their asylum application decision in Mexico where many, especially women and children were subject to endemic sexual and gender-based violence (OHCHR, 2022). Each of these initiatives spanning the Global North operate to uphold white supremacy and prevent Black and Brown asylum-seekers from accessing the protections and rights that ought to be afforded to them.

The Polarization of Asylum-Seeking Responses

The collective embrace of Ukrainian asylum seekers in Europe, as well as Australia and North America, has affirmed the right of white people to seek and enjoy asylum as well as be afforded fundamental human rights, including epistemic goods wherever and whenever they please (Balogun et al., 2023; Damon, 2022; De Witte, 2022). Following Russian aggression, several marketing avenues, including billboards, placards, social media advertisements, banking apps and even Starbucks, saturated countries of the Global North, with plastered pleas to incentivize financial support to the Ukraine; uncovering overtly racist double standards (Esposito, 2022; Howard et al., 2022). Howard and colleagues point to a racist logic that depicts some people as victims in need of sympathy and protection, in

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contrast to those deemed undeserving and unworthy of such basic human rights. The authors assert that liberal constructs of justice fail to consider the humanity of Black, Indigenous and other racialized bodies, relegating non-white refugees and asylum seekers as disposable.

The ontology of whiteness and its ongoing legacy of dominance, coloniality and hegemony effectively positions bodies within relations of power with one another (Almeida, 2015). In this vein, the colonial narrative determines what constitutes valid knowledge, and in this case, legitimate suffering, in need of protection (Almeida, 2015). When writing about the widespread atrocities and genocide unleashed against Palestinians, Alyan (2023) asserts that Palestinians must prove that they deserve their humanity and right to live by 'auditioning' for empathy. She notes that the Israeli-state commissioned genocide against Palestinians is portrayed by media outlets as ahistorical and lacking in context, thereby justifying the brutality of Palestinians based on racist, colonial tropes, notably that Palestinians are terrorists and that Israel embodies the epitome of white racial innocence (Griffin, 1998), justifying mass murder of Brown bodies. Hawthorn (2022) refers to this phenomenon as the 'racial empathy gap'. Such colonial narratives are also prevalent in US politics, with former US President Donald Trump stating that immigrants 'poison' the blood of the country, even recently going as far as to assert that migrants eat cats and dogs during a Presidential Debate (Lebowitz, 2023; Thomas & Wendling, 2024). These racist tropes and narratives shape policy implementation and initiatives; notably Arizona's SB 1070 legislation legalizes the racial profiling of 'suspected' migrants through provisions that allow law enforcement to arbitrarily check identity documents and arrest people without warrants (American Civil Liberties Union, 2024). While Plyler v. Doe outlines the right of refugee and asylum-seeker children to K-12 education in the United States, numerous barriers prevent full access to and participation in the education system (Konings, 2017). The coloniality of the production and legitimacy of refugee discourses bifurcated along racial and geographical lines will be explored through Fricker's analogy of epistemic injustice in the following paragraph.

Racialized Hierarchies and Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic injustice is situated within power relations, such as inequitable participation in knowledge formation, state violence and dispossession, whereby some bodies are granted greater access to epistemic goods, is deeply rooted in ongoing colonial projects (Fanon, 1952; Fricker, 2017; Medina, 2017). In this tandem, epistemic injustice is premised upon the idea that one can be discriminated against in their capacity as a knower and agent of knowledge based on the prejudices and imbalanced power relations between speaker and listener. British sociologist Miranda Fricker draws on two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. Testimonial injustice involves the diminishing credibility of the speaker who is providing testimony based on their socially situated positionality (read non-white asylum seekers). The subsequent withdrawal of credibility determined by the more powerful agent, strips the validity of the speaker's testimony thereby rendering their voice irrelevant and unviable (Fricker, 2007/2017; Byskov, 2020). Testimonial injustice informs hermeneutical injustice as testimonial injustices are morphed from the individual to the collective; thereby marginalizing and excluding the voices and lived experiences of the 'other' at structural, systematic and institutional levels. Epistemic injustice cannot be

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divorced from epistemic norms and with it, larger social structures of power and dominance that are undergirded by positionality; namely race, gender, social-economic status, citizenship and so on (Bohman, 2012; Coady, 2017; Fricker, 2007/2017). Hegemonic collectives have the advantage of shaping and reproducing knowledge and holding authority over knowledge forms, in this case white racial ignorance that actively suppresses non-white ways of seeing and being in the world (Medina, 2017).

The systematic silencing of and stripping of testimonial credibility of asylum seekers of the Global South as speakers in relation to the power of European listeners constitutes both testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. Whereby the narratives of such asylum seekers are doubted, discursively constructed as unintelligible and deemed as lacking credibility based on the prejudices of the white listener that desensitizes Black and Brown bodies, their experiences and categorizes them as undeserving of accessing full humanitarian rights that are considered the property of and reserved for whiteness (Harris, 1993). These colonial norms invalidated their stories; in addition to politicizing the definition of 'legitimate' refugees based on their dominant collective consensus of desired archetypal refugees-in this case Ukrainians. Diverging from the marginalization of asylum seekers of the Global South are the ways in which Ukrainian asylum seekers have been taken up as credible and believable refugees that require immediate humanitarian assistance and protection (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024). The testimonial and hermeneutical power and privileging of white, European Ukrainians underlines the socially powerful position of such asylum seekers as in alignment and within proximity to European nationalism.

Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Access to Education in the Global North

Data from 2019 suggests that only 63 percent of refugee children compared to 91 percent of non-refugee children globally are enrolled in primary education; 24 percent of refugee children versus 84 percent are enrolled in secondary school and only three percent compared with 37 percent enrolled in higher education (UNHCR, 2019). Access to education for refugee and migrant children and youth is critical for social integration, overall economic development and political contributions to their communities and society at large (Magos & Margaroni, 2018). The UK and other European countries were among the first signatories of the 1951 Convention which was initially signed to protect overwhelmingly white, Jewish and other Europeans fleeing horrendous circumstances, notably the atrocities of the Holocaust. Despite the UK and other EU nations being the first on-board to pledge their commitment to the Convention and Protocol, it is these nations that have been among the most inhumane (Walker, 2022). Ukrainian asylum seekers have benefited enormously from the Temporary Protection Directive implemented by the EU (European Commission Migration and Home Affairs, 2022). Under this initiative, Ukrainians are not subject to the tedious asylum seeker application process that other asylum seekers must painstakingly endure, often taking years, during which asylum seekers are confined to a murky gray-zone of belonging. Indeed, this two-tiered asylum process is also mirrored in the settler-colonial countries of Canada, Australia and the United States. Similarly, the Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada's enactment of the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), which also removes caps on the number of Ukrainians eligible to enter Canada (IRCC, 2022). Australia also authorized three-year temporary visas for Ukrainians to work and study in the country, in addition to bridging visas known as Permanent Protection Visas

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(PPVs) should they feel threatened to return to the Ukraine (Home Affairs, 2022). The valid testimonies of fear and of persecution of Black and Brown asylum seekers are not given such merit and consideration within policy formation. In alignment the United States put forth the 'Uniting for Ukraine' initiative to fast-track applications for asylum from Ukrainians which permits entry for three-years providing the applicant has a supporter in the US. In stark contradiction, the US Citizen and Immigration Services has rejected upwards of 90 per cent of applications for asylum from Afghans, many of whom risked their lives and the lives of their families to help the US armed forces, only to be abandoned to face certain death under the Taliban who considers them traitors (Shajjan, 2021).

Morrice (2022) underlines the polarizing factors undergirding differential treatment witnessed in these two European examples: "In stark contrast, geographical, cultural, religious and racial proximity, coupled with conformity to the archetypal refugee in the European imaginary, has made it easier for European countries to empathize and connect to the current crisis" (p. 252).

The humanization of the plight of Ukrainians goes beyond policy and is also exacerbated by the sympathies of the Western media reserved for whiteness (el-Nawawy & Elmasry, 2024). This same outrage and distraught was noticeably absent when scores of Afghans desperately clung to airplanes carrying the lives of deserving white Westerners out of the country, in a world of open borders that people of the Global South can only dream of. The fact that many of the Afghans hanging from the aircrafts were youths was irrelevant to the American pilots flying the planes, as they were deemed to be disposable youths whose brutalization is easily tolerated by the Global North (Shih et al., 2021). This same outrage is noticeably omitted in the continuous slaughter of Palestinian children in Gaza. Such selective outrage hegemonically constructs Black and Brown bodies as doomed to a life of despair, unable to cultivate hope for themselves and their futures, pointing to the politics of inequitable allocations of both hope and empathy across discursive landscapes (Hage, 2003; Kleist & Jansen, 2016; Zemblyas, 2022).

The glaring contrast between Europe's adherence to international human rights conventions informing its response to the 2015-2016 'migrant' crisis; the Syrian War, Iraqi invasion, and most recently, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in comparison to the current Ukrainian conflict, strongly informs access to epistemic goods, for the purpose of this work, the right to education for asylum seekers. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles claims that all children, irrespective of status, have the right to an education as a human right enshrined in Article 14 of the Reception Conditions Directive (ECRE, 2023). In 2021 alone, out of the 535,000 asylum applications received (excluding the UK), over 80 per cent were from applicants under the age of 35. Overall, these so-called rights are performative concerning asylum seekers of the Global South, as several barriers continue to impede the full access of and participation in education for asylum-seeking children, youth and adults. The weaponization of humanitarian law and education is delineated by the Ukrainian experience, who in lieu of their white privilege, are able to bypass the asylum application process, and are thus afforded immediate access to elementary, secondary and higher education (Palik & Østby, 2023; Morrice, 2022). In 2015, the Institute of International Education estimated that some 100,000 Syrian asylum seekers were in the EU, the Institute's calls for providing accessible education were met with fierce backlash, ultimately hindering the provision of basic services (Al Ahmad, 2016). In Germany, asylum seekers are exempt

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from compulsory education until their applications are processed and they are moved from detention centres that often place women and children in particular, in grave danger (Esposito, 2022). When and if they are granted asylum, refugees are streamed into lower academic programs fueling high absenteeism and dropout rates, with refugee children performing worse than their immigrant and locally born peers (Berg et al., 2019; Dustmann et al., 2017). The lack of equitable access to education and support spills over into the labour force, with a Danish study pointing to discriminatory policies against refugees that result in underemployment and poverty (Andersen et al., 2019). Hungary, Belarus and Poland are notorious for barring asylum seekers from accessing education in their countries, with Hungary segregating them into classrooms with poorer education standards and limited resources (ECRE, 2022; Koehler & Schneider, 2019). In the Netherlands, school is not mandatory after the age of 15, stripping away access to the final years of high school and subsequent progression to higher education programs. Because Ukraine is a member of the Bologna Process, prior educational credentials are recognized throughout the EU. Europe and the UK have also granted Ukrainians the right to study at the post-secondary level, even going as far as to waive tuition fees and provide tuition reduction programs to fund their studies in higher education. Austria, Finland and Scotland, for example, have waived all higher education fees for Ukrainians, culminating in unprecedented racial preferences and unprecedented levels of support never allocated to non-white asylum seekers (Ali, 2022).

In 2023, the UKs Education Policy Institute (EPI) suggested that substantial barriers impede migrant and refugee children's access to education, which work to harm their educational outcomes. The Institute pointed to restrictive immigration policies, including the 2022 Nationality and Borders Act; that mandates asylum seekers undergo lengthy delays leaving many in limbo with interrupted schooling. Schools are also reluctant to enrol asylum-seeking children, and when they do, the school environment is often one of racist hostility from staff and students alike, based on widespread anti-migrant sentiments plaguing the UK and EU. Ultimately, the lack of national policy frameworks pertaining to the needs of asylum seekers coupled with such anti-migrant sentiments have further marginalized attempts to attend higher education institutions. Currently, over half of England's universities alone do not recognize refugees as a distinct group with unique needs (Lambrechts, 2020). The precarity of asylum seekers and refugees attending institutions of higher education is also compounded by the 'no-choice basis' provision that bars prospective students from accessing social housing should they move to another city to study (Lambrechts, 2020). This section highlights the disparities in education policy and access for refugee and asylum-seekers along the global colour line (see DuBois, 1900 in Lake & Reynolds, 2008) that privileges whiteness as a determinant of access to state epistemic goods, such as higher education and subsequent social-economic vitality.

Conclusion

This paper asserts that asylum seeking policies in Europe are reminiscent of and perpetuate Europe's brutal coloniality that works to dehumanize Black and Brown asylum seekers of the Global South and thus deprive such bodies of access to epistemic goods-particularly higher education. Barriers to accessing education for refugee and asylum-seeker children and youth have become yet another bordered entity reserved for whiteness. W.E. DuBois

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(1903/1994) suggested, modern societies, particularly those of the Global North are constituted through racism, and through these axes of power dictate who ought or ought not to be a citizen. Asylum seekers of the Global South are perceived as underdeveloped and uncivilized through the white, colonial gaze (Medina, 2017). Mills (1997) refers to the 'racial contract' whereby due to the pervasiveness of white ignorance, the white subject is unable to understand the fragmented and deeply inequitable world that they have collated and sustained. This willful ignorance highlights the contrasting asylum seeker experiences, where one 'speaker' or experience is accepted as a genuine experience, while the other is stigmatized to the 'listener'. White ignorance (Alcoff, 2007; Mills, 2013) provides Europeans with the privilege of being oblivious and desensitized to the suffering of Black and Brown people. This active silencing of the asylum-seeking experiences and stories of those of the Global South amounts to epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988). Where Ukrainians are met with food, blankets and warm welcomes, Black and Brown asylum seekers are beaten and viciously pushed back into colonial subordination for daring to challenge the status quo, or in other words, by simply advocating for their humanity (Sajjad, 2022). What these discursive constructions conveniently gloss over is that the Global North has genealogically maintained its status as the culprit of military imperialism, the proliferation of transnational corporate reach that transcends the autonomy and agency of people of the Global South, as well as unparalleled environmental destruction that catalyzes the movement of people across borders in search of asylum.

The treatment received by Ukrainian asylum seekers demonstrates the possibilities of collective action that extends beyond the limits of white supremacist hegemony. Medina (2017) calls for 'epistemic insurrection' to dismantle oppressive systems and with them their epistemic norms to disrupt whiteness. Zemblyas (2022) draws on Freire (1994) to centre anti-colonial hope within the context of great social and political upheaval, where hope for radical and critical social transformation can be mobilized by the global majority, which is non-white. Almeida (2015) discusses the exclusion of Black and Brown bodies against the backdrop of racial hierarchies, writing that "the ontology involving the racial non-person, the existence of a racial hierarchy, and/or white supremacy as 'real' explains the exclusion of racialized bodies from several spaces across time" (pp. 82-83).

Thus, the exclusion of the racialized, asylum-seeker/refugee other is excluded from the international human rights regime and legal protections that ought to protect them and offer access to services and goods within the host country. Ukrainian asylum seekers, being white Europeans, have their experiences affirmed, legitimized and sympathized with. Zemblyas (2022) conceptualizes anti-colonial hope as one that "not only recognizes the legacy of colonialism, domination and exploitation, but also finds ways to resist this" (p. 30). In other words, anti-colonial hope that effectively empowers non-white people, in this case, by re-centering the testimonies of asylum seekers of the Global South. Only through empowerment and resistance can testimonial justice and hermeneutical justice materialize and thus shift the balance of hegemonic collective knowledge. Further, Zemblyas (2022) constructs anti-colonial hope as a biopolitical act of resistance that flourishes in colonial settings, where colonialism as a political ideology shapes the discourses of the Global South and its people as failed and under-developed. Within this racial logic (Howard et al., 2022), people of the Global South can only prosper through their proximity to whiteness, systematically ignoring the coloniality of world order by focusing on the perceived deficits

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of Black and Brown people which operates as the epitome of white ignorance. Without the enactment of anti-colonial hope and with it, the mobilization of active resistance, the coloniality of racially stratified hierarchies informing neo-colonial imperialism will continue to underpin brutal policies, practices and conditions in the Global South that compel people to leave. Once many unaccompanied children and youth flee their countries of origin they are met with more hostility and borders excluding them from an access to education. The institutional and systematic exclusion of refugee and asylum seeker children and youth to education only serves to further exacerbate social, economic and political inequalities within host countries.

The racialized hierarchies of asylum-seeking policies and access to epistemic goods, such as education are critical facets for understanding the manifestations and materializations of colonial and decolonial praxis. Education that is centred on racial justice cannot materialize without providing access and support to refugee and asylum-seeker children and youth from the Global South in host countries of the Global North. The subject discussed throughout this paper is not a far-off, isolated event unique to Europe, but rather, one facet of hegemonic imperialism that is ubiquitous across the Global North. The limitations of humanity to racialized bodies extends across the globe from Canada's failure to house refugees and asylum seekers, subjecting them to inhumane and dangerous conditions; to the horrific Palestinian genocide where the slaughter of children continues through the backing of the Global North, to the racist rhetoric of presidential hopeful Donald Trump that dangerously dehumanizes refugees and migrants. Resistance to colonialism through access to education must not be a top-down endeavor, as this body of work has demonstrated, resistance must start by collectively and intentionally dismantling the voracity of white racist imperialism that permeates the social-political landscape of which knowledge is constructed, reinforced and reproduced.

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