WHO IS THE "HUMAN" IN HUMANITARIAN AID?: LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY, DECOLONIAL THOUGHT, AND THE FORMATION OF A MORAL AGENT

By

Alison Waddell Lutz

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion: Ethics and Society

May 31, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

C. Melissa Snarr, Ph.D.

Emilie M. Townes, Ph.D.

Victor Anderson, Ph.D.

Ellen T. Armour, Ph.D

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to offer heartfelt thanks to the people who made this dissertation possible: my advisor Dr. Snarr, who has been a guide and mentor in my formation as a thinker and a teacher for almost twenty years—long before my vocation as a scholar came into view—and who was able to find in every draft I sent her something good to build on; Dean Townes, who taught me how to ask questions of myself and the world that unloose the disruptive and creative power necessary for justice making; Dr. Anderson, who introduced me to categories of philosophical inquiry that opened new intellectual worlds for me; Dr. Armour, who believed in the contribution my work could make to scholarly conversations across the university and around the globe, and connected me to new colleagues; Dr. S. M. Floyd-Thomas, who taught me how to define my terms on my own terms as a way to disrupt an oppressive order that would have me believe its terms are natural, objective, superior, and fair; and Dr. Spillers who affirmed the value of my attention to the moral formation at work in great literature.

I am grateful for the institutions whose support kept my body and soul together by providing not only funding but also a cohort of friends who will be lifelong peers, as well as opportunities to share and workshop my work: Vanderbilt Divinity School and its Theology and Practice program; the Episcopal Church Foundation Fellows program; the Political Theology Network's dissertation workshop and dissertation writing group; and St Augustine's Episcopal Chapel.

To the friends near and far who have listened and responded with unfailing care and wisdom to what was going on in my heart, mind, body, and spirit throughout my doctoral studies—thank you: Edward my finest and most energetically attuned editor, Leonard my cohort-twin from two programs and now a forever chosen sibling, Chelsea, Shatavia, Courtney, Kyle, Michael, Peter, Kishundra, Andrew, Leah, Lis, Hilary, Amaryah, Ashkan, Allie, Douglas, Laine, Linzie, Christy, Cindy, Kate, Amy, Noeleen, and Susan. You each dusted me off, fed me, dressed me, walked with me, texted me, called me, worked out with me, edited my work, inspired me, challenged me, refined my thinking, affirmed the significance of my project, laughed with me, cried with me, and traveled with me in every sense of the word.

To the wise counselors—friends, friends-of-friends, and senior scholars—who steered me in a different direction when I was dazzled by the vision of a Ph.D. in 17th-century Anglican divines; who refined my application to the Ethics and Society program; and who wrote letters of recommendation on my behalf: Dr. Tanner, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Farmer, Regina, Meghan, Katie, and Gretchen. And to the incomparable administrators and librarians who kept me moving through the program and the stacks: Dr. Byrd, Dr. Hamman, Karen, Sha'Tika, Marie, Chris, and Keegan.

To my spiritual advisors: Anne, Jacqueline, and Katherine.

I am filled with abiding awe, admiration, and appreciation for the brave and kind people who welcomed me into the always-incarnate spirit and practice of accompaniment, which is how I learned to be human: Lal and the members of the Vine, the home which opened its heart and its doors to me in London's L'Arche community; and the friends and family I met in Haiti—Father Lafontant and Manmito, Paul, my sister Marie Flore and her daughter Cassandre, Loune, Nancy, Min, Adeline, Jeje, Claudia, Joan, Jon, Cate, Kate, KGK, Ed, Ellen, Angela, Jennie, and Laurie.

And finally deep gratitude for my mom Tracy, who not only guided me into this world as my mother and first teacher, but who also gushes about how much she now learns from me through my teaching and writing. And my late-father John, who never missed the opportunity to say, "I'm proud of you, kid," which were the first words he said when I was accepted into the doctoral program at Vanderbilt. I cannot imagine any more embodied encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

Who is the human?

1.1 The Moral (De)Formation of a Humanitarian

I am from a small town outside Boston, Massachusetts—a white, homogenous, fairly affluent community. My family moved there when I was in kindergarten, from a town with similar demographics in suburban Detroit. I do not remember much about Michigan. In my most vivid memories from those years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I am in church but not on a Sunday morning. I am with my mom who teaches English in the evenings to adult refugees from Cambodia. I know Cambodia is another country, which my mom's students left because life for them there was dangerous. I know that life for my mom's students is also hard here in the United States. Learning English might make things easier for them. In the classroom, concentration, expectation, and fulfillment play across their faces. I vividly remember their smiles and laughter, as well as my mom's. She radiates passion and joy. It might be the happiest I see her in any given week. I know something important is happening. People are coming alive around me: my mom and her students. The transformative power of reaching across lines of difference to ease suffering--especially difference and suffering that have an international dimension--makes an indelible impression on me. It shapes my career path, which leads me to work in the humanitarian sector, as the Haiti program coordinator for the global health and social justice organization Partners In Health (PIH), from 2008-2013. The PIH headquarters are located in Boston, which I now like to call the "back office" to make a point about where the actual humanitarian work of PIH is done. In my role, I physically moved back and forth between Boston and Haiti to act as a living link between the administrative and fundraising center in Boston staffed by mostly white professional coordinators, managers, directors, and officers; and the frontline sites in Haiti where care delivery was being administered (in both senses of the word) by a team of 5,000+ Haitians at every level of the operation—directors, nurses, doctors, cooks, water engineers, cleaners, accountants, surgeons, drivers, security guards…who were all Haitian.

Partners In Health-Zanmi Lasante (PIH-ZL) was founded in the mid-1980s by a Haitian Episcopal priest named Father Fritz Lafontant, and a United States medical student named Paul Farmer. PIH-ZL draws its mission to provide a preferential option for the poor in healthcare explicitly from Latin American liberation theology. And that's what drew me to the work. God knows, it was not the medical piece. I get queasy at the sight of blood. It was the mission. I came to PIH-ZL having studied Latin American liberation theology in seminary. And still, it took me several years working in Haiti's poorest communities with Fr. Lafontant and Dr. Farmer to learn that "a preferential option for the poor in healthcare" is not a preferential option for the poor to receive high quality healthcare from nice, professional-class, well-intentioned, and well-trained foreigners from high income countries. A preferential option for the poor in healthcare means that people who bear the dual burdens of poverty and disease are preferentially engaged to design the interventions aimed at helping them. It is a preferential option for the poor to deliver healthcare to their own communities– for example, as community health workers who are the first to be trained and employed—and for their children to be educated and trained to be the next generation of nurses and doctors for their communities.

I thought I was embracing a preferential option for the poor in health care through my work with PIH, but the earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010 revealed to me how deeply I had internalized the dominant humanitarian script according to which compassionate people from wealthy countries offer resources (food, education, medical care) to people in poor countries. After the 7.0 magnitude earthquake leveled Haiti's capital, I attended a World Food Program (WFP) meeting to coordinate food aid to the rural departments, where PIH worked. Rural families' food security was strained by the arrival of their family members fleeing Port au Prince. The meeting was at the UN compound in Port au Prince, the capital city. You needed a passport to enter, and the meeting was conducted in English. Nevertheless, the coordinators went on and on about the agency of the people receiving food aid. That's when it struck me: the global health and humanitarian experts used the rhetoric of the agency of the people they sought to help, but their actual agency—the critical insights and action of the people closest to the problem of suddenly exacerbated food insecurity in rural Haiti– was not present.

And I was part of the problem. It had not even occurred to me to bring one of PIH-ZL's patients or one of my community health worker colleagues to the meeting to help design food distribution in their communities. I assumed that I as the Western-trained humanitarian

professional (not even trained in nutrition, mind you; just in French literature and Christian theology) knew best. And I failed. I do not recall whether the meetings resulted in a coordinated and widespread food distribution to families in the Central Plateau following the earthquake. What I do remember vividly is that when I was asked to host another round of Port-au-Prince-based UN "expats" that were doing yet another needs assessment in the Central Plateau, my PIH-ZL community health worker colleagues said "Our patients are not willing to talk to them anymore. They have been surveyed on their needs by no fewer than six—and for some families as many as ten—UN agencies, and no one has yet to come back with actual help to meet the needs they expressed. They are done talking about their needs; they are busy trying to meet them."

I am not so naïve now. I know that because of the way the world is set up, I can enter rooms into which people on the underside of Western power are not even invited. I have learned not to take for granted that I belong there and they do not. I can use my access to hold the door open for others who would not get invited. In other words (and using another metaphor), I cannot be a voice for the voiceless; voice is not mine to give. But I can ask "whose voices are being heard, and whose are being ignored?" and pass the microphone that has been handed to me to those who are not being heeded.

I recount my experience as a humanitarian—and this story in particular which demonstrates my assumptions and failures—at the outset of my dissertation on humanitarian power because I have learned well from womanist ethicist Stacey Floyd-Thomas that the first question of theological social ethics is "When and where do I enter?" Ethicists cannot accurately and fully answer the question "What's going on?" (which H. Richard Niebuhr famously calls "the first question of ethics")[1] until they ask "When and where do I enter?" to expose the assumptions of their social world about whose voices are included and whose voices are excluded as meaningful authorities about "what's going on."[2]

Floyd-Thomas draws her question "where and when do I enter" from the Black Liberation tradition. In her book *A Voice from the South. By a Black Woman of the South*, nineteenth-century sociologist and Black Liberation scholar-activist Anna Julia Cooper, writes

[1] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 60.
[2] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, ed., *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York: New York University, 2006), 11.

"Only the Black woman can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with me.'"[3] Floyd-Thomas draws on Cooper's insights to prompt Christian social ethicists to swivel the gaze back on themselves and their own social location as part of their analysis: "When and where do I enter? Who and what do I bring with me?" Theological ethical insights are never objective or neutral: they always come from a particular perspective, which is structured by who is included and who is excluded. Not-so-incidentally, Cooper wrote her Ph.D. dissertation at the Sorbonne arguing that both the French and Haitian Revolutions are mis-remembered because the dominant historical narrative has dropped out the failed push to abolish the enslavement of Black people—"an institution founded only on an abuse of power" (translation mine)— as a central part of the French revolutionary project.[4] Cooper's work shows the importance of counter narrative: research and analysis generated by people on the underside of dominant power who bring their experience and critical questions to challenge the reliability and stability of the status quo. It is not possible to know "what's going on" without asking "says who?"[5]

The problem at the heart of my doctoral work are the imbalances of power that beset any effort—no matter how well-intentioned or critically aware—to relieve socially structured suffering. To address this problem, my dissertation began as an attempt to answer the question: how do we guide the moral formation of humanitarian aid workers without reproducing the dynamics of dominance that created the very social misery humanitarians purport to relieve? This project grew out of the several years I worked in Haiti with PIH; and through the process of writing my dissertation, my committee encouraged me to write myself into the manuscript: to reflect on my experiences as a professional member of the humanitarian industry's white, Western, bourgeois, middle-management class. Swiveling the gaze back on myself helped me get new perspective on what I had taken for granted when writing my prescription to the problem that vexed me: I had assumed that an intervention to reform humanitarian moral identity should begin with the socially powerful humanitarians. I now believe that the best way to reorder

[3] Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South. By a Black Woman from the South* (Xenia, OH: Aldine Printing House, 1892), 31, https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cooper/cooper.html.
[4] Anna Julia Cooper, *L'attitude de La France à l'égard de l'esclavage Pendant La Revolution* (Paris, France: Imprimerie de la Cour d'Appel, 1925), 2, 60.
[5] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 116.

humanitarian power is to challenge the socially determined boundaries of who gets named a "humanitarian."

People who are dispossessed in the global order of being, power, and knowledge are cast as recipients of humanitarian assistance. With a little critical distance, this begins to seem odd, considering that people who suffer from social exclusion and economic exploitation work harder and more tirelessly than any humanitarian to improve their lives and the well-being of their communities. For them, it is not a job; it is life-or-death. Nevertheless, the people actually trying to survive in a world set up to exploit them do not count as "humanitarians." In this dissertation, I argue that the most effective way to disrupt the dynamics of dominance in any effort to relieve suffering is to include the critical action and reflection of people on the underside of power as humanitarian work. Widening the frame of who counts as an effective humanitarian aid worker shifts the moral identity of the current class of humanitarians from dominant social, economic, racial, ethnic, and national groups. Their professional and moral identity will no longer be about providing help to poor, unfortunate people; it will be about laboring alongside them. It is funny that by writing myself—a white professional-class humanitarian—into my dissertation, I wrote myself out of the frame. I was not the most important character to focus on to change the circuits of humanitarian power that make the world.

I define humanitarian broadly to include anyone who crosses one or more lines of social power in order to alleviate suffering—the material misery of another person, and often also, whether knowingly or not, the humanitarian's own psychological or spiritual anguish. My definition can apply to people engaged in a week-long service trip, a career in international development, or in civic or faith leadership of their local community. It could apply, as I argue in chapter two, to people from chronically dispossessed communities who cross lines of power "up" to advocate for the health and well-being of their communities. One limit of my definition "to cross one or more lines of social power to relieve suffering" is that crossing lines of social power is not inherently liberatory, revolutionary, or transformative of the status quo. Well-intentioned humanitarians from dominant classes and social groups can cross lines of difference to offer help, and then cross back. This does not change the status quo. People from poor and working class backgrounds can become professional-class humanitarians through education and employment. This does not change the status quo. The fault lines of dominance remain in place to destroy with violent precision people who are made vulnerable to them. Humanitarians who

want to change the status quo must *transgress* (and not merely cross) lines of social power. Humanitarians from dominant social, professional, racial, ethnic, economic, or national groups transgress lines of social power by heeding the direction of people most directly affected by the suffering humanitarians aim to relieve. Humanitarians who are dispossessed by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power (who are not considered "humanitarians" in the current Westernized construction of this role) transgress lines of social power when they participate in generating the effective action and salient knowledge that serves their communities, without first needing the approval and authority conferred by Western education or Western experts. When people from communities who have been dispossessed get access to dominant humanitarian power through education and employment, they, too must then heed the direction of members of the community they aim to help if they want to participate in new circuits of humanitarian agency with the power to unsettle the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

1.2 Defining the "Human"

The question of whose ideas and whose actions matter in humanitarianism reveals the problem of the human in humanitarian aid. In the humanitarian sphere, the power to act and be human—the ability to know, to plan, to diagnose, to make decisions—accrues to the humanitarians and the centers of dominant world power from which they come. The people and countries who receive humanitarian aid or development assistance, by contrast, are treated as things to be fixed or rescued. Decolonial thinker Sylvia Wynter argues that this conception of the human was indelibly forged when the early modern philosophical revolution of humanism was pressed into service to legitimate Western Europe and white North America's brutal project of conquest and colonization.[6] It dominates the reigning order of being, knowledge, and power today. Wynter calls it the "coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom" because while the era of formal colonial governance has ended, power still flows along colonial circuits to benefit the well-being of the white Western bourgeois ethnoclass.[7] The world's resources are channeled to make them feel superior, in control, and at ease wherever on earth they roam. The coloniality of

[6] Sylvia Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,'" in *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, ed. Aguibou Y. Yansané (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996), 297–316.
[7] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 23.

humanitarian power reproduces the system that advances the comfort and careers of white Western professional elites at the expense of the health, safety, and well-being of everyone else to one extent or another—depending on how many degrees of difference separate them from white Western professional heteropatriarchy's construction of the human. The coloniality of humanitarian power not only replicates what womanist ethicist emilie townes calls the "political economy of misery,"[8] but also protects it by easing and palliating the suffering of masses just enough to keep them from rising up in revolution to overturn the iniquitous world order.

Humanitarianism functions to perpetuate and secure the well-being of the white-Western and Multi-Ethnic-Westernized professional humanitarian classes by exploiting people on the underside of dominant economic and social power. Humanitarians' professional lives depend on the existence of people who suffer greatly from social and economic misery. In this way, the humanitarian aid industry reproduces the dynamics of colonialism, which, as Aimé Césaire puts it, is a project of "thingification." "Colonization = 'thingification,'" Césaire writes in *Discourse on Colonialism*.[9] Colonialism turns people and places into objects that can be commodified to build industries and expand empires—industries like the humanitarian aid sphere which employs a large professional class and strengthens the influence of donor countries at the center of global economic power.[10]

Some Western bourgeois humanitarians question whether they are doing more harm than good. An elite United Nations humanitarian professional in eastern Congo confessed that "Some of us think we're part of the problem, not part of the solution, and that at best we're becoming a containment system for the rich world."[11] The humanitarian aid industry as a whole, however, does not want to face fully its reproduction of neocolonial dynamics and the "thingification" of aid recipients. Humanitarian discourse and rhetoric do not deny outright the humanity of aid recipients; it simply assumes it by positioning people with dominant social power as the most effective moral agents—the epitome of what it means to be human. The humanness of people and countries who receive humanitarian assistance is deferred—their ability to know and to act is

[8] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xiii.
[9] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000), 42.
[10] Noel King, "As Humanitarian Crises Grow, so Does the Aid Industry," *Marketplace*, August 11, 2014, http://www.marketplace.org/2014/08/11/world/humanitarian-crises-grow-so-does-aid-industry.
[11] David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 23.

recognized by the humanitarians only after aid workers have lifted aid recipients out of the poverty, oppression, crisis, or other suffering that dehumanizes them.

My analysis of the way humanitarianism reinforces the coloniality of being follows womanist ethicist Katie Geneva Cannon's model that "[t]o do power analysis means that we investigate the beliefs, behaviors, and assumptions that are often unspoken and unwritten, but yet they dictate institutional culture."[12] My dissertation exposes what is taken for granted in the current construction of humanitarianism. It is not hard to find examples of what is taken for granted about who are effective moral agents in humanitarianism. One is the 2010 book *Why Save Africa: Answers from Around the World* (Figure 1). The title characterizes people of Africa (a vast and extremely diverse continent that is geographically bigger than the continental U.S., China, Europe, and India combined) as one monolithic homogenous *place* needing to be saved.[13] The people who have the knowledge—the "answers"—come from outside Africa, from around the world. It appears that the publishers realized how patronizing this title sounds, and the 2011 edition of the book was retitled *Hope for Africa: Voices from Around the World*,[14] but the power dynamics remained the same: the people of Africa are taken as a block and they do not have something as human as voice; voice belongs to the people from "around the world" who will decide whether or not to save Africa. The publishers demonstrate the book's original patronizing intention in a subtitle written across the bottom of the cover to the new edition: "Twenty Organizations Answer the Question 'Why Save Africa?'" According to this logic, organizations save Africa. Organizations that are most often based in wealthy countries and that receive money and hire professionals whose jobs depend on the existence of people to rescue, which is why humanitarian aid is beginning to be called the "rescue industry."[15]

I chose this book because it includes essays by organizations that are trying to change the status quo in humanitarianism, including the American Jewish World Service (AJWS). AJWS has always adopted a human rights-based approach to funding local organizations at the grassroots level.[16] As its 2009 annual report states, "AJWS's founders understood that charity

[12] Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple*, 24.
[13] Mark Fischetti, "Africa Is Way Bigger Than You Think," *Scientific American Blog Network* (blog), accessed June 21, 2020, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/africa-is-way-bigger-than-you-think/.
[14] June Eding, ed., *Hope for Africa: Voices from Around the World* (Hobart, NY: Hatherleigh, 2011).
[15] Paul Amar, *Global South to the Rescue: Emerging Humanitarian Superpowers and Globalizing Rescue Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
[16] "Our Story - AJWS," American Jewish World Service, accessed March 19, 2021, https://ajws.org/who-we-are/our-story/.

only goes so far, and that for change to be real and lasting in the world's poorest communities, it must be driven by the people who need it. AJWS began by funding a handful of community-based organizations that were implementing their own visions for fighting poverty and responding to crises—and achieving extraordinary results."[17] The content of the book *Hope for Africa* is not the problem per se. It is the presentation of the material (literally, the title) that reinscribes the Western construction of humanitarianism taken for granted in dominant conventional wisdom. The book is issued by the popular press Hatherleigh, which publishes books on wellness and self-improvement. Hatherleigh's tagline is "Improve your life. Change your world." Its mission is to publish books that "empower individuals to embrace a greater understanding of themselves and their world through practical, accessible presentations."[18] I would not fault any organization for wanting to be included in Hatherleigh's book, as it could mean exposure to a large audience…some of whom might become donors to the organizations included in the book. Additionally, being included in this popular press book presents the opportunity to describe an alternative depiction of responding to global poverty to an audience who might not otherwise seek out more critically-minded progressive or academic publications on the topic. Thus the problem is not the book per se, but the social world in which humanitarianism is intelligible and accessible as *Hope for Africa: Voices from Around the World.*

Physician, anthropologist, and PIH co-founder Paul Farmer's 2005 book *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*[19] is an example of a book published by a progressive academic press (University of California) that addresses critically the problem of global poverty. Farmer explicitly articulates the critical lens he found in Latin American liberation theology, and explains how the concept of human rights can shift the weight of the human in humanitarian aid on the people who suffer from the dual burdens of poverty and disease. They are not objects to be counted, fixed, or rescued by humanitarians. They are human beings, holders of interrelated, interdependent human rights: social and economic rights like health care, clean water, adequate shelter, decent employment, and education; as well as civil and political rights of self-determination and full participation in the government and non-

[17] "American Jewish World Service Annual Report 2009" (American Jewish World Service, June 2010), 8, https://ajws.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2009_annual_report.pdf.
[18] "About Us," Hatherleigh Press, accessed March 22, 2021, https://hatherleighcommunity.com/about-us/.
[19] Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2003).

governmental social services aimed at helping them. The current global neoliberal political economy that emphasizes unregulated free markets and unfettered economic growth gravely threatens the lives and livelihood of the poor. In the title of the book, Farmer calls this "the new war on the poor," language which implies that there are sides in a conflict. If humanitarians are not aware of this, they will wittingly or not be on the side of the forces that exploit poor people as objects to be fixed, so that the dispossessed can be made to participate in the global neoliberal economy and at the same time provide an income stream for the free global movement and employment of the humanitarian professional class.

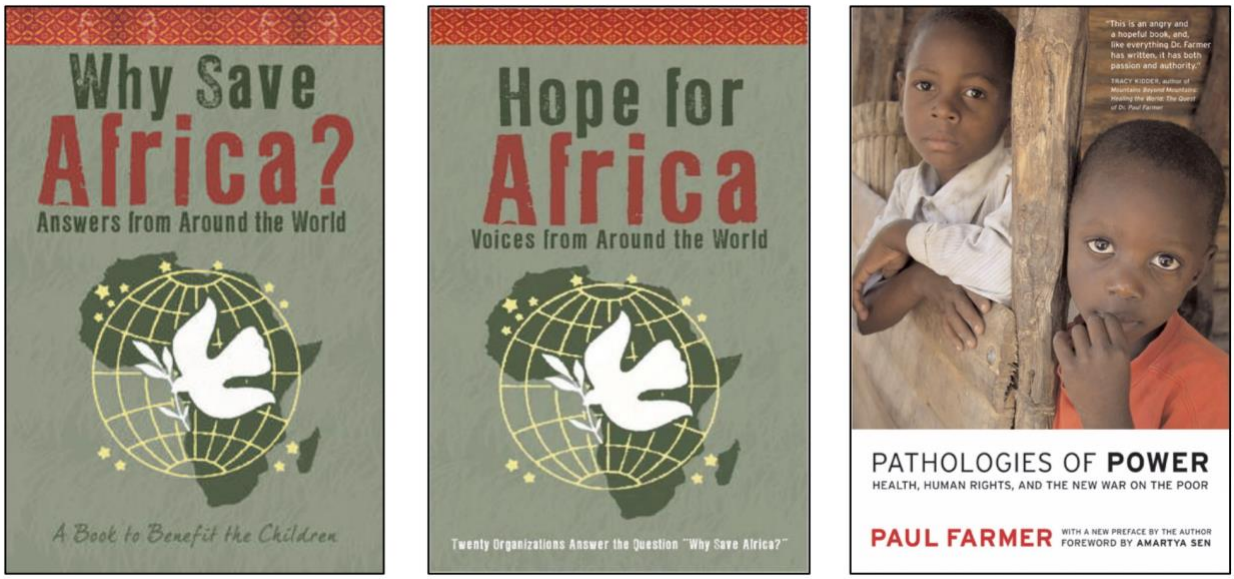

Figure 1*:* Judging humanitarianism by its book covers: *Why Save Africa* (2010); *Hope for Africa* (2011); and *Pathologies of Power* (2005).

Humanitarian aid is built on the assumption that is it normal for middle class people from wealthy Western European and Northern American countries to travel to places they have never been to before where people are suffering from social misery, and presume to take charge and determine what's best for the people there. This dynamic was violently forged and enforced as part of Western Europe and white Northern America's project of conquest and colonization. It created the world and the power dynamics that humanitarians take for granted as natural today. The world formed by conquest and colonialism created both the social misery in countries on the periphery of socio-economic power, as well as the humanitarians who go there and purport to

relieve it. This coloniality of being, knowledge, and power is so thoroughly taken for granted that Western elite humanitarians do not think to ask themselves why they can and should go to a place that they have never been and presume they know how to improve the lives of people in that place.

The coloniality of being in humanitarian aid is created and maintained by technical expert knowledge that white Western professionals generate—most often using people on the underside of power as their subjects in the process, whom they turn into the data that build their professional reputation and secure funding.[20] This knowledge is taught in the countries at the center of global socio-economic power. It is valued over and against all other kinds of knowledge, which means that by definition and design the humanitarians come from dominant communities or have been trained by them in the norms of the dominant classes. The lived experience of people living in social misery on the periphery and their knowledge of how to survive in that setting are not taken as knowledge in the humanitarian sphere. People who have been dispossessed by the coloniality of power cannot be humanitarians or, by extension, human until the humanitarians rescue them and bestow upon them the Western knowledge that makes them fully capable of being human.

The expert knowledge that defines humanitarian aid creates a world in which humanitarians hoard, ration and distribute the recognition of the human. The irony for humanitarians is that in this dialectic of domination they are not fully human, either. Aimé Césaire is unflinchingly clear on this point. In the dynamics of colonization—which I argue continue to circulate in the humanitarian aid industry—it is the colonizer who is inhuman:

> colonization, I repeat, dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform himself into an animal.[21]

The dialectical construction of the human in humanitarian aid predicates existence through negation. In this case, the human status afforded to a humanitarian derives from the dialectical relationship between the giver and receiver of humanitarian aid: an aid giver is human because

[20] Eugene T. Richardson, "On the Coloniality of Global Public Health," *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 6, no. 4 (December 16, 2019): 102–3.
[21] Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 41.

she is not an aid recipient; an aid recipient's humanity is deferred because she needs aid—i.e., because she is not an aid giver. This construction of the human that requires the dehumanizing of another person is by definition not fully human; it is dehumanized.

This Western European and Northern American formation of the human in and through humanitarian aid is morally as well as philosophically untenable. The humanitarians are human because of a moral stance—because they are giving to another person. The definition of the human becomes embedded in a moral process, which makes it harder to see the iniquity of the humanitarian identity. Stepping into the role of the humanitarian and the assumption of moral activity that goes with it makes it harder for humanitarians to perceive the moral and existential danger—not to mention the material misery of the oppressed—created by the construction of the human in humanitarian aid. Here a new dialectical problem is posed: the problem is not only the dialectic of aid recipient and aid giver; it is also the dialectic of the human and humanitarian aid because humanitarian aid negates the human, in both aid giver and aid recipient. It is no longer the aid recipient who poses a challenge to the construction of the human; it is the humanitarian.

Progressive academics who are convinced by my analysis often ask "Why bother with humanitarianism at all, then, if it is nothing more than an instrument of white Western hegemony?" Indeed, humanitarianism functions in exactly the way Antonio Gramsci famously describes hegemony, as power that maintains its control by getting the masses to consent to its assumed superiority. For Gramsci, hegemony is "[t]he 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production."[22] Humanitarians direct the interventions and distribution of resources aimed at relieving the suffering of the majority of the world's people. The people who suffer economic and social misery accept this arrangement because the white Euro-American position at the center of world knowledge production begets the prevailing assumption that the technical expert knowledge white Euro-Americans produce is inherently superior to knowledge generated anywhere else by anyone else. If humanitarianism is nothing more than a hegemonic apparatus, why not walk away from it altogether?

[22] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Kindle Edition, 2005, 1884–86.

The pragmatic answer is that in the current global system tens of millions of people have their basic needs met now by humanitarians.[23] To walk away abruptly for the sake of Western humanitarians' moral purity would increase the material suffering of the masses. Additionally. too many resources are at stake simply to surrender them unchallenged to the reinforcement of the status quo. In 2017, $27.3 billion (US) moved through the humanitarian sphere.[24] Humanitarian resources aim to relieve suffering, so why not hold humanitarians accountable to their stated goals? It is not like trying to convince the defense industry to do no harm (although I am not opposed to such radical action!). The resources flowing through the humanitarian industry represent about half of the $49.4 billion (US) in organic food sales in the US in 2017.[25] "Organic" food labels are often deceptive, but I do not hear calls to abandon half of the organic food industry because it can be manipulated to maintain agrobusiness' harmful dominance.[26] I hear calls to reform and regulate organic foods better. In a similar vein, I am calling for radical reform—not abandonment—of the multi billion-dollar humanitarian industry. I am suggesting that instead of abandoning the moral obligation of helping the one who suffers, humanitarians should let the people closest to that suffering decide what would be helpful and how to direct the billions of dollars in funding intended for their benefit. They should be the humanitarians. If even one percent of humanitarian assistance were shifted to be under the direction and control of the people who suffer from social and economic misery, that would amount to $US273 million each year. A little more than the entire budget of the country of Guinea-Bissau.[27] Or to take another example, elite universities overwhelmingly benefit the Western bourgeois ethnoclass and arguably reproduce an iniquitous status quo as much as they create conditions for the possibility of challenging it. And yet many progressive academics work through institutions of higher education. They aim to transform and not to write off the universities where they work. At the very least they use their positions in the university to try to change the status quo.

---

[23] Jennifer C. Rubenstein, *Between Samaritans and States: The Political Ethics of Humanitarian INGOs* (New York: Oxford University, 2015), 58–59.
[24] "Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018" (Development Initiatives Ltd, June 19, 2018), http://devinit.org/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2018/; Paul Knox Clarke, "The State of the Humanitarian System 2018" (London: ALNAP Overseas Development Institute, 2018), 16, https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/SOHS%20Online%20Book%201%20updated.pdf.
[25] "Maturing U.S. Organic Sector Sees Steady Growth of 6.4 Percent in 2017" (Organic Trade Association, May 18, 2018), https://ota.com/news/press-releases/20236.
[26] Henry I. Miller, "The Organic Industry Is Lying to You," *Wall Street Journal,* August 6, 2018.
[27] "Guinea-Bissau," World Factbook, accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/guinea-bissau/#economy.

The critical theoretical answer is that systems of knowledge create the world. There is no way to stand outside the knowledge that created the current shape of the world to create a new, more just system *ex nihilo.* As Wynter makes plain, no institution of contemporary life has emerged outside of the present governing system of meaning generated by white Western Europeans and European Americans to secure the wellbeing of their Western bourgeois ethnoclass, "Man." Change comes from finding the chinks, gaps, and contradictions in the current system of knowledge that creates and legitimates the world as it is. As I will explain in detail in chapter two "Who is the Humanitarian?", people in a liminal position relative to the predominant organizing principle present a contradiction or problem for the reigning epistemological order. From this liminal position people can generate knowledge that calls into question the current regime of truth, destabilizing it and eventually generating a new ordering schema. For Wynter, the new governing system of meaning will be a new conception of "the human" beyond the current ruling order of "Man."

I see efforts to decolonize/reform/transform humanitarianism (and not abandon it) as what womanist ethicist Marcia Riggs calls a mediating ethic – a "chicky step" on the way to a new world which will not need a humanitarian industry because that new world will be ordered by the just and equitable creation and circulation of resources, knowledge, and freedom.[28] The creation of a new world does not happen *ex nihilo*: people cannot jump from our current world to a new one. A mediating ethic provides a way forward in the face of a dilemma: capitulating to the current circulation of humanitarian power without a fight and risk reproducing the status quo; or abruptly walking away from humanitarianism without a fight and risk that even fewer resources will circulate to people already on the catastrophic edge of extreme poverty. A mediating ethic can be a platform for the struggle to reshape the world. It is an in-between ethic—a way of living in the current world order—that can create the space, possibility, and perspective to build a new world starting from where we are and not from where we wish we were. A mediating ethic is the scaffolding between the world that is the site of necessary change, and the vision for a new world to be built there. This new world cannot be built using the current conception of the human as a blueprint. A new understanding of the human is necessary, and it will come from the moral agency and praxis (critical action and reflection) of people in a liminal position relative to hegemonic power. Transforming the humanitarian aid industry to include the

[28] Marcia Riggs, *Awake, Arise, & Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994), 20.

agency of the dispossessed as humanitarian work could be one site from which a new conception of the human could emerge. This dissertation aims to use Cannon's mode of power analysis to expose the problem of the human in humanitarian aid so that new knowledge, new channels of power, and new ways of human being might be born.

1.3 Drawing Chalk Outlines

In the chapters that follow I will draw on knowledge about humanitarianism that is taken for granted, reported in mainstream media, and analyzed by academics in order to answer the question of chapter two: "Who is the humanitarian?" There I will delve in more detail into Sylvia Wynter's work. Wynter explains how Western technical expertise has become the primary mode of knowing that shapes the conception of the human which circulates in humanitarianism today. Wynter is my main interlocutor for decolonial thought because she deals explicitly with the developmentalism as a manifestation of the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.[29] I apply Wynter's analysis to humanitarianism in chapter three. In chapter four, I argue that Latin American liberation theology—born as a critique of developmentalism articulated by priest-theologians who took into account the experiences of people dispossessed in the global order—is a salient critical theory for unsettling the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power in the humanitarian sphere. Finally, in chapter five, I demonstrate the impact of Latin American liberation theology by taking Partners In Health (PIH) as a case study. I argue that PIH embraced "a preferential option for the poor" as an epistemological claim: a preferential option for the poor to shape, plan, and direct the interventions aimed at helping them. PIH included the knowledge and action of PIH's poorest patients in its efforts, which radically changed health outcomes for dispossessed communities around the world. It is possible to reorder humanitarian power to create a new world. It begins with the moral agency of people on the underside of the coloniality of power. The ongoing fights, successes, and failures of PIH also show that this effort must be a continuing cycle of liberation praxis—critical action and reflection that heeds the direction of the people most relentlessly targeted by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

[29] Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped.'"

CHAPTER 2

Who is the humanitarian?

2.1 Revealing the Humanitarian's Social World, and the Social World Humanitarians Make

The impulse among humans to serve the one who suffers from social misery is ancient.[30] In the Judeo-Christian tradition, words written in the sixth century B.C.E. codify as divine command the drive to help those in need: "Is not this the fast that I choose [says the Lord]: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58:6-8).[31] The injunction to care for those who suffer extends to helping strangers, people unrelated by family, tribe, or nation—indeed, orphans, widows, and sojourners who are without family or nation. When Moses delivers the law that God has given him on the mountaintop, he makes it plain: "the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger" (Deuteronomy 10:17-19). The instructions are specific:

> When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow (Deuteronomy 24:19-21).

Scholars of the Hebrew Bible use the term "humanitarian" to describe to contemporary readers the requirement that runs through ancient Israelite law to care for those who suffer social and economic misfortune.[32]

---

[30] I do not presume to limit this capacity to the human species. The question of how other forms of life are of service to beings in distress is beyond the scope of my inquiry.

[31] All biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

[32] Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986), 343; Walter Brueggemann, *Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2003), 62.

The earliest Christian tradition expands the "humanitarianism" that the Torah demanded by making it mobile. Those who seek to follow the command to love God and to love their neighbor as themselves do not wait for the suffering to make it to their fields. In the parable of the Good Samaritan which Jesus tells to explain the essence of the law, the Samaritan is on the move. He does not wait at home. He journeys. On his travels he encounters a man who has suffered violently at the hands of other people. The Samaritan goes out of his way to care for this one who has suffered, interrupting his own journey to get the suffering stranger to safety and shelter.

I draw this intentionally anachronistic picture of humanitarianism in the ancient Levant both to describe how I felt about humanitarianism when I chose to enter the field, and to reveal what is taken for granted about humanitarianism in Western centers of power today. In this chapter I begin analyzing the social construction of humanitarianism that I took for granted when I signed up to be a humanitarian. I use the decolonial thought of Sylvia Wynter and an extensive account of the history of Haiti to frame my argument that the current construction of humanitarianism serves the wellbeing of the white bourgeois ethnoclass Wynter calls "Man." I then turn to situate my work within the current academic discourse on humanitarianism. I discuss Luke Bretherton's influential work in my field, Christian ethics. I locate myself among the thinkers on whom Bretherton draws. I find Bretherton's distinction between humanitarianism that participates in a paternalistic order of beneficence and humanitarianism that participates in a transformative order of blessing very helpful. Bretherton's work provides a compelling diagnosis of the problem and a vision for what is possible. My intervention asks what kind of moral agency can change circuits of humanitarian power to move toward realizing such a reordering of our common life. I make a decidedly decolonial turn to argue that critical reflection and action outside of the current channels of humanitarian common practice can create new humanitarian praxis beyond the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power. I analyze humanitarianism's "we," to consider how humanitarian power gets embodied by a certain class of people/characters in the current global system, and what is at stake in this process of the formation of a moral subject. I contend that making the moral agency of people on the underside of dominant power—their critical action and reflection—intelligible as humanitarian work creates new circuits of humanitarian power that can dismantle iniquitous structures. I delve into this argument more fully in chapter five, "Partners In Health and the Praxis of Becoming Human Beyond the

Coloniality of Being, Knowledge, and Power" to analyze how PIH's critical reflection and action based on Latin American liberation theology's preferential option for the poor radically changed the world of global health. The insights and action of people on the underside of the coloniality of being created new channels for the circulation of global resources to serve the wellbeing of people who had been dispossessed by the current world order.

2.2 Man's Humanitarianism

A standard definition of humanitarianism is "concern for human welfare as a primary or preeminent moral good."[33] Dominant conventional wisdom holds two seemingly contradictory assumptions about humanitarianism. One is that humanitarianism is intrinsic to human nature. It can therefore be identified throughout human history and culture, which is what allows biblical scholars to use the term to explain to modern readers the ancient Hebrew command to care for people who are without the protection of family or nation. The other is that humanitarianism is an inevitable and unequivocally salutary pinnacle of "Western Enlightened Christian" sensibility (itself taken as an unequivocally salutary monolithic pinnacle of human achievement) bestowed upon the world in the 18th century, and spread to the rest of the world through Western Christian missionary activity in the 19th century. Historian Semih Çelik offers a pithy summary of this view: "humanitarian values first appeared in the Christian 'West' in the eighteenth century and were applied to the non-Christian 'rest' in the nineteenth century."[34]

When taken separately out of context, these prevailing ideas that humanitarianism is both an innate human quality and also a product of "Western Enlightened Christianity" appear contradictory. What critical theorist Sylvia Wynter calls the coloniality of being, however, reveals that both ideas reinforce the same hegemonic organizing principle according to which being, power, and knowledge circulate today: modern white Western European and Northern American professional-class heterosexual males are quintessentially human. As Wynter puts it, they are "overrepresented as being isomorphic with the being of being human."[35] A particular and provincial conception of the human born in the intellectual hothouse of the western

[33] "Humanitarianism, n.," in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 8, 2020, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/272189.
[34] Semih Çelik, "Between History of Humanitarianism and Humanitarianization of History. A Discussion on Ottoman Help for the Victims of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1852," *Werkstatt Geschichte*, no. 68 (2015): 13.
[35] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 310.

European Renaissance gets positioned as universal and ultimate in order to advance the Western European and Northern American project to amass capital through worldwide conquest, colonization, and enslavement. Wynter calls this finite though masquerading-as-ultimate descriptive statement of the human "Man" (which I will henceforth capitalize without scare quotes, following Wynter's use of the term). In her multi-stage account of how this overrepresentation comes to be (which I trace in detail in the next chapter), Wynter points out that Man achieves global dominance in being, power, and knowledge by casting every other group as Man's "Human Others": inferior presentations of humanity.[36] Anything that white Western Enlightened Man develops is both characteristic of human perfection, innate to the essence of the human; and also something Man can teach or bestow on members of other human groups subordinate to Man. In other words, "the West" can teach "the rest" of the world how to be fully and effectively human according to the ideal model, Man.

In the opening lines of her most well-known work, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," Wynter makes plain her argument that one particular cultural and socio-economic class of white Western professionals has become positioned as if it were the complete and total form of "the human." This operation is not neutral or benign. The stakes involve how material resources are invested to secure or starve the well-being of people globally:

> The Argument proposes that the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the well-being, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves.[37]

Wynter goes on to underline that at issue is not an academic argument or theory, but rather the struggles of people who suffer social and economic misery on the underside of the dominant power of Man. "All our present struggles," she writes, "…are all differing facets of the central ethnoclass Man vs. Human struggle."[38] Throughout the essays that comprise the body of her critical decolonial discourse, Wynter traces how this comes to be our present condition.

Western European and Northern American rhetoric that casts colonized people as children functions to justify Western control. The infantilization of "Man's Human Others" gives

[36] Wynter, 313.
[37] Wynter, 260.
[38] Wynter, 261.

Man the power (and, in Man's own sanctimonious discourse, the responsibility or "burden") to govern subjugated groups as long as necessary to bring them as close as possible to the human ideal embodied by Man. This discourse has circulated for five hundred years. In 16th century Spain, Francisco de Vitoria whom many call the "father of international law" compared the Indigenous people in the Americas to children: "having the potential for use of true reason but not there yet," they needed to "remain in just tutelage under the king of Spain."[39] At the dawn of the 20th century, future United States President William Taft called the people of the Philippines "our little brown brothers" who would need a century of US governance "to develop anything resembling Anglo-Saxon political principles and skills."[40]

The high-minded connotation that humanitarianism enjoys today is a relatively recent phenomenon, which makes its pretentions to a universal, ideal quality of the "human" found throughout all generations and also brought to its fulfillment by Man even more startling. When it emerged in English in the mid-nineteenth century, the term "humanitarianism" was used to mock as softhearted and weak-headed any call to care for people who were poor or in prison, because such people deserved their suffering and punishment.[41] Within a century, however, humanitarianism underwent a shift. In the 1930s, the adjective "humanitarian" began to circulate in journalism to designate large-scale human physical suffering caused by sudden natural disaster or political turmoil which required a coordinated response, including military intervention or broad-based aid.[42] Responses to the suffering caused by World War II increased the frequency of this particular use of the term "humanitarianism" in Western discourse. An extensive apparatus of international institutions emerged under the guise of humanitarianism following World War II (about which I will say more in chapter three), solidifying this meaning of "humanitarianism" for the current era. The end of the Cold War obviated the need for Western European and Northern American powers to channel aid directly to national governments in the global south in order to prevent newly independent nation-states from joining the communist block. According to the small-government ethos of the neoliberal era that followed the Cold War, aid was no longer

[39] Justo L. González and Ondina E. González, *Christianity in Latin America: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), 43.
[40] Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903, Benevolent Assimilation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1984), 134.
[41] "Humanitarianism, n."
[42] Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg, "Humanitarian," in *New Oxford American Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University, 2010); "Humanitarianism, n."

given directly to governments, but rather to international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Humanitarian INGOs sprouted up like mushrooms following a rainstorm.[43] Whether large or small, these INGOs are overwhelmingly headquartered in Western centers of power, reinforcing the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power—even though the era of formal colonial governance is over.[44]

As a result of this neoliberal privatization, Man's humanitarianism has professionalized as a sphere of special expertise, creating a humanitarian industrial complex that employs Western or Westernized bourgeois elites: "Individuals send contributions to charitable organizations when there is a humanitarian crisis, and then these organizations rush trained aid workers into the zone of danger and desperate need."[45] The three most common collocations of humanitarian circulating in the Oxford English Corpus today are "aid," "crisis," and "assistance."[46] Like modern medicine, humanitarianism is today intelligible as a universal good bestowed on the world by Man while also comprising a special role for certain people from particular places or with specific training responding to a defined kind of suffering in designated places. For example, in the United States, humanitarianism is intelligible only if it takes place outside of Western centers of power; or if the targets of its interventions are people from a country on the underside of dominant global power arrangements. San Francisco's exponential increase in people experiencing homelessness or Flint's contaminated water disaster, for example, are not intelligible as targets for Man's humanitarianism according to the meaning taken for granted in the dominant discourse. Calls for large-scale humanitarian intervention to address homelessness in San Francisco and unsafe water in Flint come from outside of the United States.[47]

In his book *The Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor,* development economist William Easterly illustrates the geo-political boundaries of

---

[43] Linda Polman, *Crisis Caravan: What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?*, trans. Liz Waters (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010), 9–10; Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California, 2011), 14–15.
[44] Madhukar Pai, "Global Health Needs To Be Global & Diverse," *Forbes*, March 8, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/madhukarpai/2020/03/08/global-health-needs-to-be-global--diverse/.
[45] Michael Walzer, "On Humanitarianism," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (August 7, 2011): 69.
[46] Stevenson and Lindberg, "Humanitarian"; *Sketch Engine Language Corpus Management and Query System*, accessed May 22, 2020, https://www.sketchengine.eu/.
[47] Alastair Gee, "San Francisco or Mumbai? UN Envoy Encounters Homeless Life in California," *Guardian*, January 22, 2018, sec. US news, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/22/un-rapporteur-homeless-san-francisco-california; "Flint Michigan Crisis 'Not Just about Water,' UN Rights Experts Say Ahead of President Obama's Visit," UN News, May 3, 2016, https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/05/528272-flint-michigan-crisis-not-just-about-water-un-rights-experts-say-ahead.

humanitarianism that are as strict as they are unnamed. Easterly describes a development project that institutions, international corporations, and foreign governments undertake in Ohio in the name of humanitarianism. The intervention ends up having disastrous consequences for the rural farmers there. It is a truly shocking story and Easterly recounts it vividly to provoke a feeling of outrage. But there is a twist. "Is this story really true?" Easterly asks, knowing how appalling it is. "It is true," Easterly writes, "except for one geographic detail— the events did not occur in Wood County, Ohio; they occurred in Mubende District, Uganda."[48] What is intelligible as humanitarianism in Uganda horrifies in Ohio.

The one-way traffic of humanitarianism from Western centers of power to countries on the periphery is so thoroughly entrenched that actual events reveal it, no thought experiment required. In an opinion piece in *Al Jazeera*, Caleb Okereke and Kelsey Nielsen point out that when asked about the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S.-based global humanitarian philanthropist Melinda Gates described her worries of "bodies lying around in the street of African countries" because lower and middle-income countries have less resources with which to respond to the pandemic. Gates made no connection to the reports of the bodies of COVID-19 victims decomposing in homes and in the streets of the United States and other Western countries. She did not mention the enormous disparities in access to resources for health between wealthy communities and poor communities in the United States, which have resulted in starkly elevated COVID-19 mortality rates among communities of color. As Okereke and Nielsen put it, "the White gaze knows no rest, even amid a pandemic that has struck the West."[49] Only suffering far from Western centers of power is legible to dominant constructions of humanitarianism.

This construction of humanitarianism leaves out the suffering of people born in communities in the United States that have been systematically, historically, and intentionally dispossessed. During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the Humanitarian Policy Lead for Oxfam America—a very well-regarded humanitarian agency—sent an email urging its supporters to join its effort to secure the release of all immigrants and

[48] William Easterly, *Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2014), 3–4.
[49] Caleb Okereke and Kelsey Nielsen, "The Problem with Predicting Coronavirus Apocalypse in Africa," *Al Jazeera*, May 7, 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/problem-predicting-coronavirus-apocalypse-africa-200505103847843.html.

asylum seekers in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention. The argument was on health grounds:

> As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, these [detention] facilities are potential tinderboxes for the virus – putting the lives of detained migrants, detention center workers, and local communities at risk. We must act urgently. As more and more people – both detainees and workers – test positive for COVID-19, the risk of a major outbreak in detention is extremely high. […] Mass outbreaks in detention facilities would also overwhelm local hospitals, impacting the health of the local communities where detention centers are located.[50]

People incarcerated in prison and jails in the United States—the most of any country in the world, comprising 21% of the population of people who are incarcerated globally, even though the United States contains only 4% of the world's population—are subject to the same dire health consequences of detention during the COVID-19-pandemic.[51] Their wide-spread suffering from a sudden threat to their physical safety and well-being imposed on them from the outside requires a coordinated response. The suffering of people in U.S. prisons and jails, however, does not register in humanitarianism's scope of work. It is justice advocates like the American Civil (ACLU) and scholar-activist Michelle Alexander who called for a comprehensive response to COVID-19 that included releasing people from overcrowded prisons and jails in the United States—populated mainly by people of color targeted by a racist justice system and often too poor to pay for adequate legal representation, convicted of non-violent drug offenses or technical violations like not being able to pay fees or to post bail.[52]

To be intelligible as humanitarianism, not only the recipients of aid but also the causes of suffering must fall outside Western centers of power and be of a certain kind. In the current epistemological order, humanitarianism is situated to address physical suffering if the proximal cause is abuse of political power or natural disaster. Suffering resulting from the brutal exercise of economic power, however, does not fall under humanitarianism's accepted purview. For example, if a state actor like Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria poisons people in chemical attacks or tortures people who resist its power, immediate humanitarian intervention by the U.S.

---

[50] Noah Gottschalk, "URGENT: Act Now to Help Immigrants and Asylum Seekers at Risk of COVID-19," May 26, 2020.

[51] Aaron Horowitz and Brooke Madubuonwu, "New Model Shows Reducing Jail Population Will Lower COVID-19 Death Toll for All of Us," American Civil Liberties Union, accessed May 26, 2020, https://www.aclu.org/news/smart-justice/new-model-shows-reducing-jail-population-will-lower-covid-19-death-toll-for-all-of-us/.

[52] Horowitz and Madubuonwu; Michelle Alexander, "Let Our People Go," *New York Times*, May 13, 2020, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/opinion/coronavirus-prison-outbreak.html.

military becomes a legitimate (though contested) option to stop this suffering.[53] Humanitarianism has not applied, however, when a corporation like Chevron poisoned entire communities of people through its petroleum extraction process in Ecuador, or pressured local police forces to torture and kill labor organizers opposing its power in Nigeria. The options for a coordinated global response to suffering caused by corporate interests have been court cases drawn out for decades, not humanitarian intervention. The results of the legal approach are disheartening: the people of Ecuador won their case, but have yet to receive any reparations from Chevron; the people of Nigeria lost their case.[54] Some voices in the humanitarian industry are starting to call on humanitarianism to respond to this kind of suffering caused by economic non-state actors. In a recent example, *The New Humanitarian* reported on pollution and adverse health effects caused by a large gold mining enterprise in Ethiopia.[55]

Suffering caused by natural disaster is humanitarianism's bread and butter. In the dominant imaginary, natural disasters cause sudden, acute suffering that can be remedied with largescale, coordinated aid. The word "natural" implies the impartiality, universality, and neutrality Man's humanitarianism has assumed in the present epistemological order.[56] "Natural" simplifies the story of suffering and how to respond to it. This frame comforts the elite conscience, covering over with the seemingly innocent and neutral word "natural" the iniquitous social, political, and economic structures that condition suffering.[57] Following a "natural" disaster in a poor country, donations stream in to fund international humanitarianism's response: $6.25 billion following the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, and $13.5 billion following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Several years after a large "natural" disaster in a poor country, people there are not much better off, if at all. Donors in wealthier countries cry "where did all the money

[53] Clare Malone, "America's Fickle Relationship With Humanitarian Intervention," *FiveThirtyEight* (blog), April 10, 2017, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americas-fickle-relationship-with-humanitarian-intervention/.
[54] "Human Rights Violations and Access to Justice for the Victims of Chevron in Ecuador" (CETIM, November 11, 2014), https://www.cetim.ch/human-rights-violations-and-access-to-justice-for-the-victims-of-chevron-in-ecuador/; "Chevron Lawsuit (Re Nigeria)," Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, accessed May 28, 2020, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/chevron-lawsuit-re-nigeria.
[55] Tom Gardner, "Health Woes, Outrage, and Toxins near Ethiopia Gold Mine," *New Humanitarian*, May 27, 2020, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigation/2020/05/27/Ethiopia-Oromia-Shakiso-gold-mine-health-problems.
[56] Shai M. Dromi, *Above the Fray: The Red Cross and the Making of the Humanitarian NGO Sector* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2020), 2.
[57] Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi, *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 9–17.

go?"[58] It turns out that while "natural" disasters may have a natural proximate cause, vulnerability to "natural" disaster is structured by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.[59]

The 7.0-magnitude earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010 lasted 35 seconds, and left more than 250,000 dead and 1.5 million people homeless, mostly in the capital Port au Prince, which is 15 miles northeast of the earthquake's epicenter.[60] Indebtedness to Western colonial powers thwarted Haiti's efforts to develop a thriving self-determined economy from its beginning as an independent nation, and locks Haiti in subordination to Western economic powers even to this day. Haiti won its war for independence from France in 1803, establishing a free republic for people who had formerly been enslaved. Western powers punished Haiti for challenging the White supremacist world order. The United States and England refused to trade with Haiti. France returned to Haiti's shores with gunboats, threatening to invade and re-enslave the people of Haiti if they did not pay France the equivalent of $21 billion for the property France had lost—this "property" being not only the value of Haitian land, but the commodified value of the life and labor of the Haitian people who had been enslaved by French colonists. Haiti borrowed money from the Banque de France to make the first payment, and continued to pay this debt to France until 1947. In the early days of the republic, Haiti could not invest in public goods like education, health, or the infrastructure of civil society like an independent judiciary because it was paying back its "debt" to France and building military installations to ward off colonial re-occupation.[61]

---

[58] Carla Kweifio-Okai, "Where Did the Indian Ocean Tsunami Aid Money Go?," *Guardian*, December 25, 2014, sec. Global development, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/dec/25/where-did-indian-ocean-tsunami-aid-money-go; Richard Knox, "5 Years After Haiti's Earthquake, Where Did The $13.5 Billion Go?," *NPR*, January 12, 2015, https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/01/12/376138864/5-years-after-haiti-s-earthquake-why-aren-t-things-better.

[59] Tracy Kidder, "Country Without a Net," *New York Times*, January 13, 2010, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/14/opinion/14kidder.html.

[60] Jacqueline Charles, "Ten Years after Haiti's Earthquake: A Decade of Aftershocks and Unkept Promises," *Miami Herald*, January 8, 2020, https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article238836103.html; "'15 Minutes to Leave': Denial of the Right to Adequate Housing in Post-Quake Haiti" (London: Amnesty International, January 8, 2015), 8, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/document/?indexNumber=AMR36%2f001%2f2015&language=en; "Haiti's Earthquake Death Toll Revised to at Least 250,000," *Telegraph*, April 22, 2010, sec. World, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7621756/Haitis-earthquake-death-toll-revised-to-at-least-250000.html.

[61] Rocio Cara Labrador, "Haiti's Troubled Path to Development" (Council on Foreign Relations, March 12, 2018), https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/haitis-troubled-path-development; Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2007), 11–12; Jonathan M. Katz, *Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster* (New York: St. Martin's, 2014), 39.

In the early twentieth century, the United States sent a Marine force to invade and occupy Haiti from 1915-1934. The first thing the Marines did was steal Haiti's gold reserves (valued at $500,000 at the time) and give them to the National City Bank of New York (which is Citibank today) because City Bank owned a controlling interest in the Haitian national bank.[62] The occupation was brutal. U.S. president Woodrow Wilson—himself a southerner with openly white supremacist views—ordered southern troops to Haiti, who likely had been socialized to enforce white control through racial terror in the Jim Crow south. The Marines forced peasants to join chain-gangs to build roads; they tortured anyone who resisted U.S. rule; they terrorized Haitians for fun. Fifteen thousand Haitians were killed by the U.S. forces during the nineteen years of occupation. The U.S. captains of industry and military who directed the occupation articulated their belief that black people were incapable of self-rule without extended tutelage from white men. These white men used the occupation of Haiti to benefit U.S. businesses that wanted to extract Haiti's cheap labor and abundant tropical products for export. City Bank was the depository for all of the Haitian government's tax and other revenue. City Bank pressured the government of Haiti to take out tens of millions of dollars in loans. Future U.S. president Franklin Delano Roosevelt—Secretary of the Navy at the time, under whose command the Marines serve—rewrote the Haitian constitution to allow foreign entities to own land in Haiti, which had been outlawed in Haiti since it overthrew French colonial rule.[63]

The U.S. press publicly criticized City Bank for "its support of US imperial rule in Haiti and its role in the unceremonious suppression of Haiti's hard-fought sovereignty."[64] In 1920, James Weldon Johnson, field secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) wrote a scathing critique for *The Nation* of the U.S. occupation of Haiti and the City Bank's central role in it, calling it "a strangle hold on the financial life" of Haiti.[65] These press reports ignited public outrage in the U.S., which spurred an internal investigation by the Marines and U.S. congressional hearings. Both the military's internal

[62] Peter James Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2017), 104.
[63] Paul Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1994), 17–19; Edwidge Danticat, "The Long Legacy of Occupation in Haiti," *New Yorker*, July 28, 2015, https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/haiti-us-occupation-hundred-year-anniversary; Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*, 109–10, 113–15; Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By*, 41; Crystal Eddins, "W.E.B. Du Bois, Haiti, and US Imperialism," African American Intellectual History Society, *Black Perspectives* (blog), January 28, 2020, https://www.aaihs.org/w-e-b-du-bois-haiti-and-us-imperialism/.
[64] Hudson, *Bankers and Empire*, 82.
[65] Hudson, 112.

investigation and the congressional hearings were, in Johnson's assessment, "a White wash," determining that the U.S. was acting in ways beneficial and beneficent towards Haiti.[66] This despite the fact that when president Franklin Roosevelt ended the U.S. occupation of Haiti in 1934, he called it the Good Neighbor Policy, implying that during the years of imperial occupation the U.S. had *not* been a good neighbor to Haiti.[67] The dominant historical narrative is a whitewash, too, recording the military occupation of Haiti as an example of U.S. "humanitarian intervention."[68]

During the Cold War, the United States government, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) poured money in the form of loans to prop up brutal Haitian dictators, who spent little money on social goods like education, health care, and infrastructure. Instead, this succession of dictators enriched themselves and spent money on building the military to guard against a communist uprising, which satisfied their U.S. benefactors and kept the coloniality of power in place.[69] In the neoliberal era following the Cold War, the terms of structural adjustment programs for foreign debt placed limits on spending for social programs in poor countries like Haiti while, again, allowing for unfettered military expenditures—which usually meant multi-million-dollar orders for U.S. defense contractors.[70]

In the mid-nineteen nineties, the Clinton administration pressured Haiti to lift its tariffs on imported food, which Haiti used to protect its national agricultural industry. The dominant global order deemed these tariffs a violation of free trade. The multi-billion-dollar subsidies the United States government offers to its farmers to protect its national agricultural industry—which a poor country like Haiti could not afford to do, and used import tariffs as an alternative—were never deemed a violation of free trade. The U.S. threatened to block IMF and World Bank loans to Haiti. In the current global economic order, Haiti is totally dependent on foreign aid, so Haiti dropped its tariffs. The United States government bought surplus rice from farmers in Arkansas (Clinton's home state) and dumped it on the Haitian market in the name of humanitarian food aid. Haitian farmers—who had been supplying more than enough food for the Haitian market and even exported some—could not compete with free grain, and abandoned

[66] Hudson, 112, 115.
[67] Labrador, "Haiti's Troubled Path to Development."
[68] Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 17.
[69] Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan, eds., *Participation, from Tyranny to Transformation?: Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development* (London: Zed Books, 2004), 43.
[70] Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 1–38; Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 105–42.

their farms. They moved to the capital, Port au Prince, to work in light manufacturing of clothing and baseballs for the global market. A country that had been self-sufficient in food began to import half of the food it consumes, leaving people at the whim of fluctuations in commodity prices. A capital city that was designed to accommodate three hundred thousand people now housed three million, most of whom lived in poorly-constructed homes which met no safe building codes. There was no incentive to improve or repair these sub-standard homes (and families' poverty made scraping together the necessary resources for this all but impossible) because most residents of Port au Prince do not own the homes they live in. Land tenure laws that were influenced by or passed in reaction to foreign intervention kept land ownership in the hands of a few dozen elite Haitian families. When Asian markets opened with wages lower than Haiti's, factories left Port au Prince. The average income of Haitians fell by half. When the earthquake hit, 75% of Haitians lived on less than $2 per day.[71]

This is how the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that hit fifteen miles southwest of Port au Prince on January 12, 2010, killed a quarter of a million people in less than a minute. Poorly constructed homes crumbled. Because of centuries of exploitation and dispossession, there was no public infrastructure on which to rebuild. All of Haiti's infrastructure—roads that lead only to the capital; an economic system designed to make low wages Haiti's most attractive resource; political instability; an agriculture system favoring foreign exports over national food sovereignty; land tenure that secures ownership in the hands of Haitian elites who live in other Western capitals like New York, Montreal, or Paris—had been engineered by external powers and local elites to make colonial control and plunder easier. The city of Port au Prince has no sewer system, which made Haitians trying to rebuild their lives following the earthquake vulnerable to the cholera outbreak introduced by United Nations peacekeepers.[72] Man's humanitarianism is not set up to undo the harm caused by this kind of chronic structural inequity. Man's humanitarianism protects the world built to promote Man. At best Man's humanitarianism patches up the most egregious suffering, more to assuage the conscience of those who benefit

[71] Maura R. O'Connor, "Subsidizing Starvation," *Foreign Policy*, accessed May 31, 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/01/11/subsidizing-starvation/; Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, 5–9; Katz, *The Big Truck That Went By*, 47; Christopher Joyce, "Haiti's Buildings Weren't Fit To Withstand Quakes," *NPR.Org*, January 14, 2010, https://www.npr.org/2010/01/14/122547242/haitis-buildings-werent-fit-to-withstand-quakes.
[72] Richard Knox, "Port-Au-Prince: A City Of Millions, With No Sewer System," *NPR*, April 13, 2012, https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2013/01/29/150501695/port-au-prince-a-city-of-millions-with-no-sewer-system.

from the current system so that the iniquitous world order can go on unchallenged than to change long-term patterns of exploitation and neglect that leave the dispossessed vulnerable to harm. At worst Man's humanitarianism reproduces the dynamics of dominance that create socially structured suffering.

Haiti's vulnerability to "natural" disaster was caused by centuries of exploitation, and dispossession. Man's humanitarianism cannot accurately assess the causes of this suffering, because it implicates the global system set up to benefit the wellbeing of Man at the expense of misery for the multitudes of Man's Others. Because Man's humanitarianism could not and did not consider the root causes of why the earthquake created so much suffering in Haiti, the billions pledged for relief and rebuilding could not and did not relieve the suffering or help Haiti rebuild. As health policy researcher Nicole Gastineau Campos and Paul Farmer observe, "The very terminology we use to describe events—like 'humanitarian crisis' or 'complex emergency'—tends to cloud their causes, making our accounts ahistorical and limiting our ability to respond effectively."[73] Farmer borrows from the field of medicine to describe the agony caused by the earthquake as "acute-on-chronic."[74] Any effective response "must go deep into Haiti's history to illuminate what caused the chronic disabilities, engendered over five centuries by transnational social and economic forces with deep roots in the colonial enterprise."[75] In the current epistemological regime—ordered by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power—humanitarianism is constructed to focus on the temporary, not the chronic.

One feature of the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power is the chronic condition of war for the dispossessed. The terror, dispossession, dislocation, poverty, hunger, and threat of death, sexual violence, physical violence, dismemberment and disfigurement that civilians experience in warzones has become the everyday experience of Man's Others under the coloniality of being. This suffering is not a by-product of the global order; it is how the current shape of the world was designed. The blueprint for this misery was drawn up in the fifteenth century with Western Europe's project of colonization, conquest, genocide, and enslavement of indigenous people in the American and African continents. Critical theorist and decolonial

[73] Nicole Gastineau Campos and Paul Farmer, "Partners: Discernment and Humanitarian Efforts in Settings of Violence," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 31, no. 4 (2003): 507.
[74] Paul Farmer, *Haiti After the Earthquake* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011), 3.
[75] Farmer, 3.

thinker Nelson Maldonado-Torres characterizes colonization as the "non-ethics of war," because the militarized colonial project did not observe the conventions and "ethics" of armed conflict between subjects of European kingdoms.[76] These "non-ethics of war" come to define the coloniality of being today: "*coloniality of Being,*" Maldonado-Torres writes, "primarily refers to the normalization of the extraordinary events that take place in war."[77] Campos and Farmer raise a similar insight about the chronic conditions of war in formerly colonized countries as it pertains specifically to humanitarian intervention: "Many speak of this humanitarian assistance in violent settings as 'emergency relief,' which implies that the situation is a temporary crisis that requires discrete humanitarian assistance; but in many areas war is not a limited one-time event, but rather 'the way a society functions in "normal" times.'"[78] The global system channels funding for humanitarianism to keep it focused on a temporary and surface-level response to suffering at the expense of attention and resources to address the chronic and structural roots of misery. Funds are made available for the latest crisis, emergency, or disaster; not for long-term building of public infrastructure that meets the needs of people chronically dispossessed by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

International humanitarian organizations depend on donations for their existence—from individuals and nation states that benefit from the current global system. Humanitarianism's "crisis caravan moves on whenever and wherever it sees fit, scattering aid like confetti."[79] The chronic warzone for those on the underside of the coloniality of being remains, while the professional class transnational actors are distracted by the latest emergency. Every place that Man's humanitarianism intervenes has a history of genocide, enslavement, exploitation, or extraction shaped by colonial control, because these dynamics that have impacted the circulation (or lack thereof) of people and resources globally for the last five hundred years. No community is unaffected. It is not any individual humanitarian actor's intention to reproduce the world's iniquitous global order; it is the design of the system in which they operate and which they fail to interrogate because they take it for granted. Literary theorist and decolonial thinker Walter

[76] Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2/3 (March 2007): 246–47.
[77] Maldonado-Torres, 255.
[78] Campos and Farmer, "Partners," 506.
[79] Polman, *The Crisis Caravan*, 157.

Mignolo characterizes this coloniality of power as "local histories/global designs."[80] The coloniality of power is devastating in its details, and sinister in its common shape.

Man's humanitarianism can ignore these root causes of suffering that Western powers unleashed on the world because--according to the current construction of humanitarianism in the world set up to benefit Man--Western power and Westernized people know what is best for everyone everywhere. Western democracies, for example, can use military force in the name of humanitarianism to end suffering.[81] I am not arguing in favor of or against this kind of intervention. If I were at risk of being massacred, I would want a global superpower to stop the perpetrator by any means necessary. What I want to draw attention to is the construction of the meaning of "humanitarianism" that is taken for granted in the reigning epistemological order; and how it functions to reproduce the social world. Humanitarianism as it is taken for granted today pertains to action taken in designated places (outside of Western centers of power or among non-Westernized people) to respond to certain kinds of suffering (natural or from political turmoil, not economic or structural) by certain people or powers (Western democracies or Westernized bourgeois professionals). Humanitarianism functions to excuse, justify, and normalize any action Western powers or Westernized professionals take to keep suffering contained among people on the underside of the white Western coloniality of being. As a case in point, the act of detaining people fleeing violence now counts as humanitarianism in Western democracies. In *Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention,* philosopher Kelly Oliver opens her analysis with a haunting quotation from Hannah Arendt, who was a refugee fleeing Nazi Germany: "Apparently nobody wants to know that contemporary history has created a new kind of human beings—the kind that are put in concentration camps by their foes and in internment camps by their friends."[82] Seventy years after Arendt made her observation, scholars from the global North are paying attention to humanitarianism as a significant feature of the current world order. I join the academic discourse to draw attention to the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power that is reinforced through Man's humanitarianism; and to point to the

[80] Walter D. Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2012).
[81] Walzer, "On Humanitarianism."
[82] Kelly Oliver, *Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017), 1.

possibility that new channels of humanitarian action and reflection can create a new conception of the human that will shape a new world.

2.3 Scholars' Humanitarianism

Luke Bretherton's analysis of humanitarianism in *Christ and the Common Life* provides a comprehensive and salient Christian ethical engagement with Western humanitarianism. He is the most recognized Christian ethicist whose scholarship addresses humanitarianism explicitly. Bretherton also addresses Latin American liberation theology in particular as a tool for analyzing contemporary humanitarianism. For these reasons, I focus on his work to situate my argument and set apart the intervention I am making in a Christian social ethical analysis of humanitarian identity and the transformation of the world. Bretherton draws on the major figures in contemporary scholarship on humanitarianism from across varies academic disciplines. Citing the work of anthropologist and sociologist Didier Fassin, Bretherton embraces humanitarianism as a form of political theology. In *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*, Fassin offers a Foucauldian genealogy of humanitarianism. Fassin considers humanitarian reason a political theology because it exercises its ruling authority based on "the constitution of life as sacred and the valorization of suffering."[83] His analysis focuses on humanitarianism as a "potent force" in the world's reining order of knowledge and power.[84] Humanitarian reason, according to Fassin, operates beyond the institutions or apparatuses explicitly named as "humanitarian" in the dominant social imaginary. For Fassin, humanitarianism is a "mode of governing" that impacts all policies and structures of power.[85] Humanitarianism represents a relatively recent invention that emerged to deal with human suffering related to any kind of precariousness globally (i.e. not just inter-nationally, but including the local), caused by the shape of the world order.[86] Humanitarianism as a mode of governing deploys state and non-state apparatuses that transcend national boundaries to alleviate suffering by appealing to a common humanity ("humanitarian reason"), which both alleviates and covers the unequal and brutal shape of the world that channels resources based on national identity: "humanitarian government," Fassin writes, is "the response made by our societies to what is intolerable about the state of the contemporary

[83] Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*, 251.
[84] Fassin, xi.
[85] Fassin, 11.
[86] Fassin, x–xi.

world."[87] À la Foucault, Fassin uses stories and artifacts ("letters of application for financial assistance, medical certificates for the undocumented, testimonies published by humanitarian organizations, a support service in a housing project, or a military intervention after an earthquake") to render humanitarian reason visible for critical analysis.[88] Fassin's work both tracks the invention of humanitarian reason, and analyzes the "complex ethical and political issues" it raises.[89]

To trace the history of humanitarianism, Bretherton draws on scholar of international affairs and political scientist Michael Barnett's *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Barnett takes the traditional view that humanitarianism as it would be recognized today is a product of the European Enlightenment. Barnett points to the "pan-European" response to the earthquake that struck Lisbon in 1755, and to the development of the concept *l'humanité* by 18th century French philosophers.[90] Barnett goes on to identify three "ages" of modern humanitarianism: the Age of Imperial Humanitarianism from the early nineteenth century through World War II (1800-1945); The Age of Neo-Humanitarianism from the post-World War II era through the Cold War (1945-1989); and the Liberal Humanitarian Age from the end of the Cold War through today (1989-present). Each age exercises humanitarian power under a particular construction of compassion: civilization, sovereignty, and human rights, respectively.[91] Barnett's angle on the history of humanitarianism is that its capacity to help and its capacity to harm have always developed together. Barnett turns to paternalism as a prime example. He cites Gerald Dworkin's definition of paternalism as "the interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interest or values of the person who's liberty is being violated," and argues that humanitarian efforts have and always will be plagued by it.[92] Barnett believes that a salient history of humanitarianism must relate to humanitarianism's present condition, for example the paternalism that perennially besets it.[93] While Barnett comes to the regrettable conclusion that paternalism is not "necessarily a bad thing,"—an idea he presses in his 2017 edited volume

[87] Fassin, 252, 255.
[88] Fassin, 12.
[89] Fassin, ix.
[90] Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2011), 50–51.
[91] Barnett, 30–31.
[92] Barnett, 34, 130.
[93] Barnett, 7.

Paternalism Beyond Borders—his history of humanitarian efforts is nonetheless highly instructive.[94]

Sociologist Peter Stamatov's account of Western humanitarianism begins earlier, in the sixteenth century. Stamatov understands humanitarianism as "an enduring institutional model of political practice" characterized by "long-distance advocacy" which arose in religious groups as a response to the suffering created by Western Europe and North America's global colonial project. Stamatov traces humanitarianism's origins to Roman Catholic missionary religious orders from Spain and Portugal that decried the conquest and colonization of the Indigenous people of the Americas in the sixteenth century; and to members of Protestant denominations – Quakers chief among them—who railed against the transatlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century. [95] This insight is important to Bretherton's political theological analysis of humanitarian reason because Bretherton considers abolitionism "a precursor to modern humanitarianism."[96] This emphasis is helpful for my project because it holds my critique of current humanitarian practices accountable to my assertion that humanitarian agency which includes the action and reflection of the dispossessed can indeed transform the global order and "bend the moral arc of the universe" toward justice, as the movement to abolish chattel slavery did.[97]

In situating his political theological analysis of humanitarianism in which "Christianity is both an insider and an outsider, committed to and, at the same time, detached from humanitarianism," Bretherton draws on the work of Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield, who contribute to the academic discourse on humanitarianism from the field of anthropology with the edited volume *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics*.[98] In their introduction, "Anthropology of Humanitarianism," Bornstein and Redfield name how various the activities contained within the discourse of humanitarianism can be, spanning religious calling to military intervention. They interrogate the Christian hegemony at work in humanitarianism, and describe other religious imperatives and frameworks for relieving suffering from Buddhism,

[94] Barnett, 130, 35.
[95] Peter Stamatov, *Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy* (New York: Cambridge University, 2013), 1–2.
[96] Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 81.
[97] Kief Davidson and Pedro Kos, *Bending the Arc*, Documentary (Impact Partners, Scout & Scholar, Urban Landscapes Productions, 2017).
[98] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 52.

Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism.[99] They explicate how the term humanitarianism is used very broadly in dominant conventional wisdom; and also point out that in professional and academic circles, humanitarianism gets parsed as distinct from development work (often the purview of economists) and human rights work (a domain pioneered by lawyers). In this schema, humanitarianism's primary concern is saving lives, which makes it a sphere heavily influenced by health professionals.[100] As anthropologists, Bornstein and Redfield take the broadest view of the term humanitarianism in their work, and treat particular definitions and distinctions as opportunities for critical reflection on "when and how they appear" rather than as "categorical certainties."[101] My project follows Bornstein and Redfield's critical method more than it does Bretherton's. Bretherton brings humanitarianism into view as "a form of faith, one that is simultaneously Christ-forgetting and Christ-haunted, playing off a Christological pattern of atonement and redemption while pursuing a wholly immanent eschaton."[102] My intervention into the possibility for new forms of humanitarian agency analyzes the effects of particular examples of humanitarian discourse and practice.

In charting the landscape of critical scholarship on humanitarianism, Bretherton includes political theorist Jennifer Rubenstein in his category of revisionist critics who, Fassin among them, "articulate the ambiguities, contradictions, and failures of humanitarianism."[103] Rubenstein hones her analytical lens on humanitarianism more narrowly to "large-scale, Western-based, donor-funded, humanitarian INGOs" (international non-governmental organizations).[104] Rubenstein rejects an all-or-nothing view of INGOs: that they are either above reproach as "Good Samaritans" or hopelessly condemned as instruments of Western hegemonic power. She argues that, as institutions founded to promote human welfare in complex situations, their activities are capable both of doing "considerable good" and also of causing grievous, unintended harm.[105] In other words, how an INGO operates makes a difference, which is the starting point of Rubenstein's ethical analysis: how to help INGOs embrace actions, postures, and ways of working that increase the good they do for the people they aim to help, while

[99] Erica Bornstein and Peter Redfield, eds., *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2011), 7–13.
[100] Bornstein and Redfield, 4–6.
[101] Bornstein and Redfield, 6.
[102] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 53.
[103] Bretherton, 57.
[104] Rubenstein, *Between Samaritans and States*, 3.
[105] Rubenstein, 2.

minimizing immediate and long-term harm. My analysis of the coloniality of humanitarian power falls into this category of critical reflection focused on the contradictions and failures of current humanitarianism, as well as on the effects of this circulation of power in reproducing the global order of being and knowledge. Additionally, Rubenstein's argument bolsters my claim that an INGO like PIH can indeed transform the lives of people who are dispossessed; and change (rather than replicate) the global order that structured their misery in the first place. My ethical task--like Rubenstein's--is to identify the particular praxis INGOs must enact to do more good than harm.

Based on his review of the recent scholarship on humanitarianism, Bretherton deems humanitarianism "the most significant revolution of the modern era" because it stakes an absolute moral claim about the inherent value of human life that transcends political divisions. Humanitarianism also radically expands who is included in the body politic that is owed love and care: "the acme of moral action is no longer love for a proximate 'brother' but love for a remote 'other.'" [106] From there, Bretherton offers a theological critique of humanitarianism. He argues that humanitarianism is a "a political theology born out of the question of how to respond to human suffering and poverty."[107] In Bretherton's analysis, both Christianity and humanitarianism have the potential to reproduce an "order of beneficence" that maintains the cruel power dynamics of the status quo by covering them with a sanctimonious gloss, or to move towards an "order of blessing" that dismantles wicked power imbalances.[108]

Bretherton's description of the difference between humanitarianism as a paternalistic order of beneficence and as a transformational order of blessing gets to the heart of why I put forward my analysis. I think humanitarianism can play a role in the transformation of the world: from a top-down order in which beneficence is bestowed by the wealthy to mitigate the suffering caused by the shape of the world that benefits them; into an order of blessed interdependence where gifts (including critical reflection and action) are shared freely by all for the common good, "rather than the benefit of the one, the few, or even the many."[109] Bretherton's point here about blessing shared by ALL is important to my argument: including the critical action and reflection of the dispossessed in humanitarian praxis does not take away the critical action and

[106] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 51.
[107] Bretherton, 52, 80.
[108] Bretherton, 54.
[109] Bretherton, 54.

reflection of Western professional class elites. A truly new order of knowledge and being beyond the coloniality of power holds in common the gift of critical action and reflection that makes a world; everyone engages in it, and everyone contributes to it. Transcending the coloniality of knowledge, being, and power is not just flipping the current pyramid of value. My intervention dives deeper into how people can move toward this new conception of humanitarian power. How can humanitarians turn away from a Westerncentric order of beneficence, and move toward an order of blessing that transcends hierarchies of power, knowledge, and identity?

My answer lies in creating new forms of humanitarian agency--concrete action and critical reflection--that create new humanitarian actors. As a Christian ethicist, Bretherton is not unconcerned with practices. His analysis of humanitarianism, however, does not turn on practices. Bretherton analyzes humanitarianism primarily as a type of theological moral reason that has migrated into the dominant secular epistemological order. I focus on humanitarianism as a sphere of moral activity—the humanitarian industry and humanitarian institutions— through which people, power, and resources circulate to shape moral agents and produce particular effects. Bretherton wants to reform humanitarianism so it can live up to its original ideal of love for neighbor that transcends political or social affiliation. Because it was conceived as the action of the powerful to save the helpless--regardless of the moral or theological claims inspiring it--Man's humanitarianism in my view was always a product of an iniquitous world order of being, knowledge, and power. I don't, however, want to toss humanitarianism out. No modern institution stands outside of this knowledge/power regime. I focus on changing humanitarianism in order to change the world order in which it plays a significant part. I want to shift how humanitarian power operates to include people on the underside of power as the *primary* agents of humanitarianism. They can shape a humanitarianism that builds a world from the underside of the white Western coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

I seek to place the tools of Christian social ethics in service of a decolonial and liberationist praxis to transform Man's humanitarianism—which is institutionalized in the multi-billion-dollar humanitarian industrial complex—in order to transform iniquitous circuits of global power that created misery for billions to serve the status-quo of comfort for what Wynter calls the white Western bourgeois ethnoclass (Man). I follow Wynter in seeking nothing short of a new conception of the human beyond Man. This new conception of the human has profound stakes for Christian theology. How to understand what it means to be "human" is a vital

theological issue, implicating theological anthropology and theologies of the incarnation. The stakes are life and death: what people believe about "the human" determines the individual actions, public policies, and global power dynamics that promote or obstruct access to the resources necessary for human flourishing. To play on Athanasius' fourth-century theological aphorism and adapt it for Man's distortion of the human: What if God assumed humanity that we might become fully human beyond the current dominating and deforming construction of Man?[110] In other words, can pressing the question "who is the human in humanitarian aid" be concrete contextual ground from which to reveal the coloniality of being, power, and knowledge that has conditioned the current construction of the "human," in order to open new possibilities for conceiving the "human" (and any attendant theological anthropologies) beyond the current channels of thought shaped by the limited and death-dealing construction of the human pressed to serve exploitation, iniquity, and domination?

I share with Bretherton the view that Latin American liberation theology's "preferential option for the poor" is an epistemological claim. Because this idea is central to my work, I want to quote Bretherton on it at length:

> By seeing our common life from the perspective of the poor, what is unveiled is who counts and what is valued. The experience of poverty should be given epistemological priority, as it is a vital vantage point from which to discern the true order of things. As a truth-telling measure, a preferential option for the poor should be antihegemonic and anti-ideological: if the poor are really to be preferred, then the privileged must listen to and be in a meaningful relationship with them rather than make them subject populations on whom they impose various bureaucratic, colonial, collectivizing, or commodifying programs. Beginning with repentance means presuming one does not speak for all, one does not know everything, and one does not determine the meaning of this time and place. It is to begin from a position of epistemic humility best characterized by a posture of listening. Listening is the first act of any move from an order of beneficence to an order of blessing, as it assumes the poor have something to teach the privileged about how to live and that a common life between them is necessary to the flourishing of each and the flourishing of all.[111]

Bretherton's deployment of an epistemological preferential option for the poor helps me articulate why my project is different from his. I am not doing an analysis of humanitarian*ism* per se. I do not want Man's current humanitarians to listen to the perspective of the poor so that they can be better and more effective humanitarians to get humanitarianism back to its original,

[110] Athanasius, *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*, trans. A Religious of C.S.M.V. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2002), 93.
[111] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 77–78.

neutral promise. I want Man's humanitarians to heed the direction of the poor because people on the underside of the coloniality of being, power, and knowledge have the potential to be true humanitarians—that is, people whose very action and leadership upend the world's circuits of power, and actually relieve socially structured suffering. To begin to shift the weight of the "human" in humanitarianism from Man to the people who have been dispossessed and dehumanized by the world set up to benefit Man, I ask "Who is the humanitarian that Man's humanitarianism creates?" Man's humanitarians are Western or Westernized bourgeois elites. They are a product of the white Western coloniality of being, power, and knowledge. This limits their ability to relieve the suffering of the people they purport to help--and seriously hinders their ability to participate in the transformation of the iniquitous world order that is the root cause of much of the misery they aim to alleviate--as my experience with the World Food Program in Haiti and my analysis of the current social construction of humanitarian identity show.

My social ethical analysis of humanitarianism describes the formation of a new moral subject in humanitarianism. This project follows the pattern of Christian social ethical reflection that Melissa Snarr opens up in *All You That Labor: Religion and Ethics in the Living Wage Movement.* Snarr describes the moral formation that happens through the process of labor organizing. She focuses on the moral agency that is built among low wage workers. They shift circuits of dominant economic power, breaching the socially-constructed limits that had previously consigned them to the role of cogs in the economic system and excluded them from being active decision-makers of public policy.[112] They "introduce a form of economic democracy and accountability into the dynamics of municipal politics" that concretely benefits the lives and livelihoods of people who had been relegated to the underside of dominant economic power.[113] Snarr's social ethical analysis attends to the "actual, rather than imagined or projected, challenges of ethics and agency that the movement faces."[114] Snarr's focus is on the actions that concretely and effectively shift how power circulates in a socially constructed sphere of activity (in her case, municipal political systems) to actually change the status quo from the underside of dominant power. She analyzes the practices of the low-wage workers themselves, and also assesses what people with socially dominant economic positions can do to support the

[112] C. Melissa Snarr, *All You That Labor: Religion and Ethics in the Living Wage Movement* (New York: New York University, 2011), 6.
[113] Snarr, 5.
[114] Snarr, 7.

creation of new patterns of economic power. My project aims to describe the moral formation that happens in humanitarian work. In particular, I analyze how to shift the moral agency in humanitarianism from Westernized bourgeois elites to people who are actually surviving in a world set up to exploit them. I describe what people with socially and professionally dominant identities can do to support the creation of new forms of humanitarian power. Though I do not engage in ethnographic work as Snarr does, I draw on my experiences working in Haiti with the global health organization Partners In Health to keep my social ethical analysis focused on "actual, rather than imagined or projected, challenges of ethics and agency" in the world of Man's humanitarianism.

2.4 Humanitarianism's "We"

In addition to the very helpful distinction Bretherton draws between humanitarianism as an order of paternalistic beneficence and as an order of mutually transforming blessing, Bretherton names the problem of the professional-class Western "we" in the presuppositions undergirding humanitarianism, which is the starting point for my project:

> The first is that "we" (tacitly assumed to be privileged Westerners) should care for distant strangers irrespective of whether they agree with us or share our way of life. The second premise is that "we" can effectively alleviate the poverty and suffering of others. […] Poverty becomes a stimulus to generate technocratic and anthropocentric interventions in the lives of those "we" think should be more like "us" rather than a provocation to repent and ask questions about the way our lives are structured to exclude the poor and corrode creation.[115]

Bretherton points to how humanitarianism solidifies the identity of the elite Westernized "we" through dominant efforts to alleviate suffering that are seen as superiorly effective. Because my intervention in the field of Christian ethics and humanitarianism argues that a change in the circulation of humanitarian power requires a disruption of who counts as a humanitarian, I train critical analysis informed by decolonial thought onto the "questions about the way our [humanitarian] lives are structured to exclude the poor" that Bretherton suggests poverty should provoke, but which the construction of the dominant humanitarian "we" papers over. In what follows I dig more deeply into this problem of humanitarianism's predominantly-white, professional-class Western "we."

[115] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, 51–52, 64.

To illustrate how strongly the Western "we" is taken for granted in dominant humanitarian discourse, I compare two articles about the women who led protests against the Sudanese government in 2019: an article by the humanitarian organization Global Fund for Women (GFW)[116]; and an article from the news outlet the *Washington Post* (WP).[117] My aim is not to paint the Global Fund for Women as the problem. Rather, GFW helps reveal the pervasive problem of the Western "we" particular to humanitarian self-understanding precisely because GFW uses feminist epistemology and a rights-based approach for grantmaking practices to transform the iniquitous status quo in gender justice and equity.[118] Political scientist Brooke Ackerly conducted an independent social scientific review of GFW's grantmaking that attests to the impact of GFW's feminist and rights-based approach: "The Global Fund for Women's grant making strategy has been able to develop and innovate ahead of industry standards," Ackerly writes.[119] She goes on to name what a rights-based approach to humanitarian grantmaking entails: "poverty, education, and development require social change. Social change requires a rights-based approach. If policy makers cannot attend to the power dynamics behind the major problems of global injustice, then they are not looking at the actual problems."[120] The Global Fund for Women is not the problem. The problem is the humanitarian "we" that structures the discourse through which humanitarian agency (in both senses of the word: action and organization) is intelligible in the global order of knowledge, being, and power. Even Partners In Health describes its work in terms of the humanitarian "we": "We stand in solidarity with those living at the margins of society."[121] It is this Western "we" taken for granted in the humanitarian sphere --even by organizations like GFW and PIH whose critical reflection and action take aim at the iniquitous status quo-- that is the entry point of my intervention to generate critical action

[116] "Women's Revolution in Sudan: We Stand in Solidarity with Feminist Activists Fighting for Their Freedom," *Global Fund for Women* (blog), June 20, 2019, https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/sudan-womens-revolution-fighting-for-freedom/.
[117] Siobhan O'Grady, "Why This Viral Photo Is Becoming a Symbol of Women's Rights Protests in Sudan," *Washington Post*, April 9, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/04/09/symbolism-behind-viral-photo-protesting-woman-sudan/.
[118] Brooke Ackerly, "Breakthrough Evaluation: An External Rights-Based Evaluation of Grantmaking for Gender Equality" (The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and The Global Fund for Women, February 26, 2012), 10, 29, 36, 59.
[119] Ackerly, 13, 15.
[120] Ackerly, 29.
[121] "What Drives Us," Partners In Health, accessed March 13, 2021, https://www.pih.org.

and reflection that can create new humanitarian moral agency beyond the predominantly-white, professional-class Western coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

The following analysis compares a Western humanitarian account and a Western journalistic account of local action for democracy in Sudan led by women. I aim to demonstrate that the Western humanitarian "we" is as particular to the humanitarian sphere as it is pervasive. The title of the Global Fund for Women's article on the protests in Sudan is "The Women's Revolution in Sudan: We stand in solidarity with feminist activists fighting for their freedom." The "we" and its active verb "stand" apply to the elite GFW donors and staff members. The women in Sudan actually fighting for their freedom are the "them" in humanitarianism. The situation does not improve in the article's first paragraph:

> Military forces have violently cracked down on civilian protesters in Sudan over the past year, killing more than 100 people and injuring over 500 in a recent weekend in June alone. Protesters have been bloodied, burned, gang-raped, and killed, some disfigured and thrown into the Nile. The numbers of dead and injured may be far higher, these figures and accounts reflect only what has been documented.

Military forces are the actors: they violently cracked down. The women protesters are objects to whom things happen—in this case, they *have been* brutalized by the military forces. In the last of the three sentences that make up this paragraph, these women protestors have been turned into numbers. Even when the article quotes Sudanese women about the protests they have organized and led, it does not cast them as a "we." They are still "them" and GFW is the "us": "'Women have been in the forefront of the revolution,' a women's rights activist in Sudan told *us*" (emphasis added).

The dire description of the oppression of Sudanese women by the Sudanese state makes it seem like only an outside force could rescue *them* from it:

> Sudan's "public order" laws regulate women's everyday actions, including how they dress, cover their hair, and travel in public. Thousands of women have been sentenced to floggings under the laws, with poor and minority women particularly affected. Laws govern women's rights and bodies in other ways as well. Sudan legalizes child, early, and forced marriage, giving the father the right to marry off his daughter at the age of 10. One in three women are married before the age of 18. Violations of women's rights are part of a larger context of human rights abuses by the government.

Another Sudanese women's rights activist is quoted, and the quotation that GFW chose from her still frames the women of Sudan as a "them": "'They were criminalized for just being themselves, they were criticized for wearing pants, their lives have been threatened,' Al-Karib said." The GFW is the "we" who stands in solidarity with "them."

The *Washington Post* article reads differently. Admittedly, its title "Why this viral photo is becoming a symbol of women's rights protests in Sudan" does center on an iconic photograph, which frames the women's rights protestors in Sudan as objects circulating through Western technologies for a Western gaze (compare this to the title of the *Al Jazeera* article "Sudan's female protesters leading the pro-democracy movement").[122] Nevertheless, the WP article establishes the Sudanese women's rights protesters as the main actors in their fight from the start:

> A crowd of Sudanese protesters -- mainly women -- necks craned, phones held up to capture the moment, looks toward a young woman standing on top of a car. Her white thobe a sharp contrast against Khartoum's evening sky, she raises her right arm as she leads the crowd in a chant, all of them echoing her words back to her.

The WP article then goes on to quote Hala Al-Karib, whom the GFW article cites: "For Hala Al-Karib, a Sudanese women's rights activist with the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, the photo, taken by Lana Haroun, sums up 'this moment we have been waiting for the past 30 years.'"[123] In the WP article, Al-Karib and her fellow protestors are the "we" of the story. They take the photo that goes viral; they capitalize on this moment; and they structure their work through local humanitarian organizations like the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA).[124] Even mainstream Western journalism—which runs along the circuits of the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power—can make space for people on its underside to be primary moral agents. Man's humanitarianism cannot.

Monina Kraus opens her book *The Good Project*: *Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason*, with a brief analysis of the rhetoric "we must act" that is so very prominent in humanitarianism's donor appeals, as the Global Fund for Women article on the women's rights protestors in Sudan shows. Krause's book does not explicate this construction of the "we" further, however. She names the space in which NGOs operate as between the *we* of "who give" and the *them* experiencing "the suffering of the world" in order to set the context of her argument that NGO work has become structured and commodified as a market of "projects"

---

[122] Mohamed Hamza, "Sudan's Female Protesters Leading the pro-Democracy Movement," *Al Jazeera,* April 23, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/sudan-women-protesters-leading-pro-democracy-movement-190423134521604.html.
[123] O'Grady, "Why This Viral Photo Is Becoming a Symbol of Women's Rights Protests in Sudan."
[124] "Siha – Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)," accessed June 11, 2020, https://sihanet.org/.

pitched to donors.[125] Krause's analysis helps explain why the GFW did not mention Hala Al-Karib's affiliation with the African-led humanitarian network SIHA when it quoted her: GFW and SIHA compete for donors in the marketplace of humanitarianism.

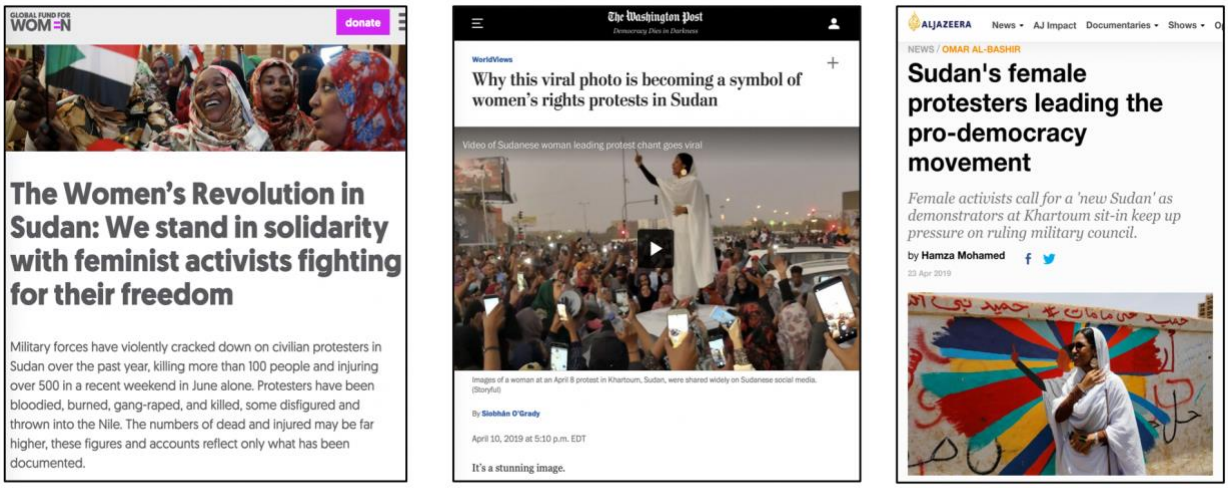

Figure 2: Framing Sudanese women's rights activists (l to r): Global Fund for Women; *The Washington Post; Al Jazeera*

The question "who is the humanitarian?" is the lens that brings into view and focuses the problem my dissertation addresses. As mentioned previously, I frame humanitarianism as a sphere of activity through which people, power, and resources circulate. I take a very broad view of the humanitarian apparatus, not drawing the inside-the-industry distinction between humanitarian aid and development assistance, for example. I fold them all under the umbrella of "humanitarian" institutions.[126] I am, however, excluding militaristic and carceral humanitarianism. My interest is in the institutions and industry that draw well-meaning Western bourgeois do-gooders into a profession where they can relieve human suffering and also make a comfortable middle class living. They are the people who currently count as humanitarians in the dominant social imaginary. These humanitarians fit my definition of humanitarian that I introduced in chapter one: people who cross one or more lines of social power to relieve suffering. People from dispossessed communities who cross lines of social power to participate with bourgeois professional humanitarians in the work to relieve socially structured suffering

[125] Monika Krause, *Good Project: Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014), 4.
[126] Bornstein and Redfield, *Forces of Compassion*, 4; Stevenson and Lindberg, "Humanitarian."

also fit my definition of humanitarian, too; though they are often over-looked because of what is taken for granted as humanitarian. My definition of humanitarian makes space for them. It is not only Western or Westernized bourgeois professionals who cross lines of social power to relieve suffering, though they are the only ones who get labeled as "humanitarian" (the "we" in humanitarianism) in the dominant social imaginary.

Paul Farmer illustrates this dynamic in an internal "mindfulness memo" he wrote to the Partners In Health staff, board, partners, and supporters in 2018. He frames it as "Three Questions, an Example, and Three Suggestions." The first questions he asks are "Where do we do this work, and what do we do?" In his answer, Farmer addresses the oft-repeated phrase among progressive professional-class social justice workers that "we are working ourselves out of a job":

> Any hope of influencing policies that might diminish our own role in care delivery, if this is indeed a worthy and ethical aspiration, is related to how much skin we have in the game. I doubt the aspiration of "working ourselves out of a job" is the right one for a global confederation like Partners In Health. Do we want our trainees and 17,000 co-workers to work themselves out of a job? Or is it really a question of working more and more people into the sorts of jobs that are taken for granted in some of the places where we were born?[127]

The mindset "working ourselves out of a job" presumes that effective humanitarian activity does not currently include people on the underside of dominant power. In this view, elite white Western "we" needs to Westernize people who have been dispossessed by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power before these people can meaningfully take part in humanitarian work. This pattern replicates Man's humanitarianism: Man's humanitarians need to train and certify anyone who can count as a humanitarian. It may allow humanitarianism to position itself as more ethnically and racially diverse, but it will not change the global order that exploits some at the expense of many. It will simply bring people from the bourgeois class of poor countries into the elite few to whom humanitarian power accrues.

Humanitarians with a decolonial orientation are starting to raise this concern. A focus group participant for the Social Medicine Consortium's global Campaign Against Racism put it this way at a meeting in 2017: "The biggest growing industry is the White savior complex, and it is seriously growing, and we are part of that movement. And now we are getting

[127] Paul Farmer, "On Partnership and Accompaniment: Three Questions, an Example, and Three Suggestions," November 4, 2018.

into a multi-ethnic privileged foreigner savior complex, so how do we not evolve into that?"[128] This dissertation posits a two-part answer to this question: become critically aware of dominant assumptions about who is the humanitarian; and organize humanitarian work to heed the existing knowledge and action of people most directly affected by the suffering that results from the coloniality of power. Their knowledge and action constitute perhaps the most effective humanitarian intervention. They must be seen not as objects of humanitarian aid, but as primary humanitarian actors directing the activity of organizations who have access to humanitarian funding.

My critical analysis of "who is the humanitarian?" continues in chapter three to show how the social construction of technical expert knowledge generated in the West restricts the humanitarian identity to Western or Westernized bourgeois professionals. Chapter four argues that Latin American liberation theology—born as a critique of developmentalism articulated by priest-theologians who took into account the experiences of people dispossessed in the global order—is a salient critical theory for unsettling the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power in the humanitarian sphere. Chapter five then demonstrates that it is possible to include people on the underside of dominant power in "who is the humanitarian." I describe in detail how Partners In Health drew on Latin American liberation theology to heed the direction and insights of the communities it serves—communities grievously harmed by colonial exploitation and dispossession—to contribute concretely to a radical change in the status quo for global health. Partners In Health and its patients did not accept the limits of the social construction of knowledge and power that created a world consigning some to misery and defining others as humanitarians come from far away to rescue the unfortunates. Instead they worked together to introduce new forms of knowledge and activity which changed the world.

[128] "Campaign Against Racism," Social Medicine Consortium, accessed June 9, 2020, http://www.socialmedicineconsortium.org/campaign-against-racism.

CHAPTER 3

Technically human

What drives the problem of the human in humanitarian aid? By what mechanism do people who are struggling against a world set up to dispossess them get dehumanized into objects of humanitarian intervention? This chapter identifies Western technical expertise as a mode of knowing that turns people on the margins into objects to legitimate Western humanitarian power. While religious imperatives dominated the early centuries of humanitarian intervention, technical expertise is the primary mode of knowing that shapes humanitarianism today. Technical expertise developed in the West has been set up to run on a logic of lack that keeps the majority of the world dependent on white Western European and Euro-American elites. People in other parts of the world and from other racial and social classes are insufficiently knowledgeable to act effectively according to dominant standards of human agency until the Western or Westernized elites bestow their technical knowledge on them. Once trained in Western centers of power on the technical aspects of aid delivery, humanitarians assume they can go anywhere in the world and know what is best for people there. The unquestioned superiority of Western technical knowledge for humanitarian work is so thorough that technical experts assume a moral authority. They do not need to ask what is right or wrong; only what is possible or not from a technical standpoint.

This chapter briefly examines how Western technical expertise assumes a moral authority, before turning to the work of Sylvia Wynter to define technical expertise, and to describe the process by which it supplants religious authority in legitimating the Westernized conception of "the human" in global circulation today. A similar shift occurs, I argue, in modern humanitarianism when religious imperatives give way to technical expertise as the primary legitimation of Western authority. Sylvia Wynter offers a decolonial analysis of the tyranny (absolute authority) of Western technical expertise in the current conception of "the human." Wynter provides a helpful way forward as she points to a site of knowledge production—a liminal space relative to the dominant epistemological regime—with the potential to precipitate a new order of being, power, truth, and freedom beyond the current iniquitous global system.

3.1 Technical Knowledge as Moral Force

Technical expertise is taken as the property of the West and functions as absolutely authoritative in the current regime of being, knowledge, and power. This arrangement gives white Western elites dominant authority over all other kinds of reasoning, too—including moral reasoning, my own field of expertise. emile townes cites Antonio Gramsci on this point: "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership.'"[129] Humanitarianism is not immune to this circulation of Western technical expertise that shapes moral authority. As medical anthropologists Seth Holmes, Angela Jenks, and Scott Stonington argue, the humanitarian impulse in medicine that has developed into the field of global health is "less an orientation to geography than a technology of subjectivation that structures expertise and morality."[130] Humanitarian power forms a moral agent—the humanitarian—that is defined by a particular construction of technical expertise. Experts require an object of their expertise, which turns the recipients of humanitarian aid into objects of Western humanitarians' technical expertise and moral agency. Humanitarians "must constitute the objects of their expertise," as anthropologist Betsey Brada states in an argument called "Experts and Objects: Making 'Global Health' in Botswana."[131] In a field like global health that includes clinical research as well as direct service delivery, data is the object that white Western technical expert professionals create to build their academic empire and secure their dominant position in the global order. As a result, people who are dispossessed become a very particular kind of object in the field of global health: they are constituted as data for global health researchers.[132]

The current construction and circulation of Western technical expertise contributes significantly to the problem of the human in humanitarian aid. We must understand this problem critically because another way of constituting knowledge and moral agency is possible. In his BBC Reith Lectures *Representations of the Intellectual*, Edward Said puts it this way:

> an intellectual can become a professional who is specialised in one bit of turf, accredited, careful, speaking not the general language of a wide audience but rather the approved

[129] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 20.
[130] Seth M. Holmes, Angela C. Jenks, and Scott Stonington, "Clinical Subjectivation: Anthropologies of Contemporary Biomedical Training," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 110.
[131] Betsey Brada, "'Not Here ': Making the Spaces and Subjects of 'Global Health' in Botswana," *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (2011): 285.
[132] Richardson, "On the Coloniality of Global Public Health," 102.

> jargon of a group of insiders. For not only does this shield the individual from a coarse reality; it also gives one a sense of moral and certainly technical superiority.[133]

While Said describes how the dominant order socializes intellectuals with the promise of superior status, he contends that intellectuals can chart another path to disrupt the status quo. They must disavow the stability and comfort that the system of dominant power bestows on those who align with its workings:

> Thus in my view the principal intellectual duty is the search for relative independence from such pressures. Hence my characterizations of the intellectual as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power…[T]he challenge of intellectual life is to be found in dissent against the status quo at a time when the struggle on behalf of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups seems so unfairly weighted against them… And this role has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.[134]

Knowledge can be produced to make a different world, if that knowledge comes from the margins of dominant power circuits. Said has hope for the Western or Westernized intellectual who is willing to operate outside of the channels through which professional stability and security flow. Not wholly setting aside this hope, my dissertation instead focuses on the critical reflection and action of people on the underside of the coloniality of being, power, and knowledge.

3.2 Sylvia Wynter and the Technocultural Fallacy in the Mind of Man

As discussed in chapter two, Sylvia Wynter argues that white Western professional class Man "overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself."[135] Wynter unfolds the genealogy of Man in two stages, which both use Western scientific expert knowledge to legitimate the order of being, power and knowledge that promotes the wellbeing of the white professional ethnoclass. "Man1" was invented during Europe's Renaissance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when lay scholars struggling to bring Renaissance humanism to birth in Europe strained against the reigning epistemology organized around a Spirit/Flesh hierarchy that legitimated clerical

[133] Edward Said, "Representation of the Intellectual: Speaking Truth To Power," *The Reith Lectures* (BBC, July 21, 1993), https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gxqyb.
[134] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage, 1996), xvi, xvii, 11.
[135] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 260.

power over lay intellectuals and constrained their intellectual pursuits.[136] The lay intellectuals took aim at the legitimacy of claiming God as the extra-human standard by which to measure the worth of all human being and activity, as determined by the clergy who represented God in the world and thus were the arbiters of all knowledge in the reigning Spirit-over-flesh hierarchy.[137] In God's place, the humanists positioned scientific rationality as the extra-human measure by which to assess who counts as "human" and to what degree. The hierarchies of reason-over-sensuality and rationality-over-irrationality defined the measure of "the human."[138] The lay humanists—that is, the European male intellectual class—embody full rationality, representing "the human" in the world order. They legitimate their power by deeming who is not "human," defining themselves against those whom they have designated their "Others." This positioning of rationality as the standard for all knowledge ushers in a revolution in physics, which no longer needed to limit its questions and knowledge to the reigning theological frame. "The human" becomes defined by technical scientific knowledge generated by the European intellectual class. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, physics and mechanics dominate Western technical scientific knowledge, as a result of the new descriptive statement of the human that Wynter calls "Man1."

In the nineteenth-century—as Western European and Euro-American elites solidify into a Western bourgeoisie to consolidate their economic and social power—"Man" defines himself over and against his de-generate others. A revolution in biological sciences erupts and evolutionary reason (genetic, social, and economic) emerges to legitimate what Wynter conceptualizes as "Man2" or *homo oeconomicus*.[139] In this organizing schema, "the human" is defined along the hierarchy of genetic selection/dysselection and biological superiority/inferiority. This move has consequences for how race gets constructed to legitimate Western Man as *the* defining construction of "the human." During the era of Man1, any people exploited and enslaved in the process of western Europe's conquest of the so-called new world represented the irrational subhuman. This included both Indigenous people of the Americas and enslaved people from Africa in what Wynter calls "the physical referent of the idea of the

[136] Sylvia Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," *Forum N.H.I.: Knowledge for the 21st Century*, Knowledge on Trial, 1, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 52.
[137] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 313–14.
[138] Wynter, 287.
[139] Wynter, 263–66; Katherine McKittrick, ed., *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2015), 9.

irrational/subrational Human Other." [140] With the shift to the genetically-determined Man2 in the nineteenth century, however, Black Africans were cast as the quintessential "Human Other" to white European "Man." All other people were assigned a race that positioned them somewhere between the two poles of the superior/genetically selected white race and the inferior/genetically dysselected Black race:

> in the wake of the West's second wave of imperial expansion, pari passu with its reinvention of Man in now purely biologized terms, it was to be the peoples of Black African descent who would be constructed as the ultimate referent of the 'racially inferior' Human Other, with the range of other colonized dark-skinned peoples, all classified as 'natives,' now being assimilated to its category— all of these as the ostensible embodiment of the non-evolved backward Others— if to varying degrees and, as such, the negation of the generic 'normal humanness,' ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West. [141]

This construction of the human based on race functions to determine how material resources are distributed: "'Race' or the Color Line functions to systemically predetermine the sharply unequal re-distribution of the collectively produced global resources." Wynter does not ignore the role class plays, as well. "[H]umanness and North Americanness," she writes, "are always already defined not only in optimally white terms but also in optimally middle-class variants of these terms."[142] As Wynter underlined from the beginning, the western overrepresentation of Man as "the human" serves the material interests of the white western professional class.

In the modern era, technical expertise performs the same legitimating function for the construction of the social world that religious legitimation served in the middle ages. To argue this point, Wynter turns to Hans Blumenberg who makes a "key comparison between the phase of objectification embodied in the theological Absolutism of the late Middle Ages and the parallel phase of our own times, one dominated by the Absolute of the Technological rationality."[143] Just as religious knowledge controlled by the clergy legitimated the reigning epistemology of the human before the European Renaissance, technical knowledge generated by Western European and Euro-American professionals now legitimates the current conception of "the human." These white elites "use technology as their ultimate criterion of human value."[144]

---

[140] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 266.
[141] Wynter, 266.
[142] Wynter, "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues," 44.
[143] Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism," *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 22.
[144] Sylvia Wynter, "The Pope Must Have Been Drunk, The King of Castile a Madman: Culture as Actuality, and the Caribbean Rethinking Modernity," in *The Reordering of Culture: Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada in the Hood*, ed. Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1995), 31–32.

To trace Western scientific technical expertise as a legitimating force in Western humanitarian power, I derive my definition of "technical expertise" from Wynter's description of the "technocultural fallacy" at the heart of the Westernized concept of "Man": technical expertise is knowledge developed by Western or Westernized educated elites using the Western scientific method as an external standard to claim the impartiality, objectivity, and universality that legitimates Western elite authority and control of resources anywhere. Legitimating knowledge discourages attention to the contradictions and inconsistencies in the assumptions that create the world order.[145] While humanitarians purport to relieve socially and economically generated suffering, technical expertise functions as a legitimating knowledge that distracts attention from the iniquitous global order at the root of socially and economically generated suffering. Wynter cites Eritrean anthropologist Asmarom Legesse whose work demonstrates that "the techno-cultural fallacy by which the West evaluates degrees of 'humaness' according to its cultural criterion of technology capacity and efficiency," hides "the immense failure of its social institutions."[146] The technocutural fallacy legitimates the grossly unjust circulation of the world's resources, minimizing the friction of thorny questions about the unequal shape of the world as it funnels global goods to promote the life and well-being of white Western European and Euro-American professional classes. The resources at stake include the billions of dollars invested annually in the humanitarian industry.

I think it is important to note that the problem is not technical expertise in itself, but rather how technical expertise gets pressed into service to assign and reinforce human worth according to the hierarchy of the prevailing social order. In other words, the problem is the over-valuation of technical expertise. This point bears articulating in an era when technical expertise is being challenged and denigrated in the United States, with dire consequences.[147] The anti-vaccine movement, for example, has surged despite solid scientific evidence that vaccines do not cause autism. The result is dozens of measles outbreaks across the United States in 2019, where

[145] Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Open Road Media, 2011), 29–32.
[146] Wynter, "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped,'" 315-316 fn34.
[147] Tom Nichols, "How America Lost Faith in Expertise," March 20, 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-02-13/how-america-lost-faith-expertise.

the disease was considered eradicated in 2000.[148] President Donald Trump embraces the anti-expert mantle: "The experts are terrible," he said at a 2016 rally in Wisconsin. "Look at the mess we're in with all these experts that we have."[149] He uses this anti-expertise logic to cast doubt on an international report on climate change, and to call instead for an increase in coal use.[150] In the Trump era, it is vital to point out that technical expertise is not in itself bad. The problem becomes when technical expertise over-reaches and uses its position to legitimate a grossly unjust status quo. That is when technical expertise is open to precisely the kind of attack to its credibility in which Trump traffics. Trump's critique, however, is not for the sake of freedom, justice, or equity; he wants to obliterate technical expertise in order to seize its legitimating power for himself. This will cause more harm than good, because technical expertise is not bad per se. Indeed, in most instances it is a good developed to contribute to human flourishing.

If, for example, I were to need heart surgery, I would want the best trained cardiac surgeon. Her technical expertise would contribute significantly to my health. Her technical surgical acumen, however, is not ultimately and inherently a superior kind of knowledge. It is but one subspecialty in a specific field with a very particular social construction of health: Western biomedicine, which carries the inheritance of Cartesian mind-body dualism; uses conquering metaphors like "battling a disease" and "magic bullet"; isolates the individual as the only intelligible site for diagnosis and intervention; ignores structural causes of illness; revolves around thwarting disease rather than promoting wellness; and is good at isolating pathologies to expel, but not so good at understanding the interaction of the physical body's complex and interrelated systems like digestion and lymphatic flow.[151] Furthermore, expert knowledge in one sphere of Western biomedicine does not make my surgeon a superior human being. It does not qualify my surgeon to rule the social order. Technical expertise is but one aspect of what I and all people need for overall wellness. My cardiac health also requires economic stability that

[148] Azhar Hussain et al., "The Anti-Vaccination Movement: A Regression in Modern Medicine," *Cureus* 10, no. 7 (2018); Pam Belluck and Adeel Hassan, "Measles Outbreak Explained: Your Questions Answered," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2019, sec. Health, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/us/measles-outbreak.html.
[149] Nick Gass, "Trump: 'The Experts Are Terrible,'" POLITICO, accessed April 24, 2019, https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/04/donald-trump-foreign-policy-experts-221528.
[150] Isaac Stanley-Becker, "Who Drew It? Trump Asks of Dire Climate Report, Appearing to Mistrust 91 Scientific Experts," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/10/who-drew-it-trump-asks-of-dire-climate-report-appearing-to-mistrust-91-scientific-experts/.
[151] Deborah Lupton, "The Cultural Assumptions behind Western Medicine," *The Conversation*, January 1, 2013, http://theconversation.com/the-cultural-assumptions-behind-western-medicine-7533.

affords me time to exercise and the ability to access healthy food; a peaceful and just environment; and community that engenders the sense of belonging that reduces stress. Technical expertise alone cannot fulfill and distribute equally all of these vital human needs. Technical expertise alone cannot answer the difficult questions of equity nor ensure the just distribution of the material and social resources that belong to the common good. The question is not whether technical expertise is good or bad, but whether technical expertise is placed in service of the full flourishing of all people; or, by contrast, if it is deployed to justify and reproduce the current iniquitous regime of power, being, and knowledge.

Though technical expertise has eclipsed religious knowledge as the primary legitimating knowledge that orders the modern regime of being and power, religion as a legitimating knowledge does not disappear. It is deployed as long as it covers over rather than draws attention to the contradictions in the governing epistemological order. For humanitarianism, the shift in legitimating knowledge begins in the nineteenth century and is completed with the end of World War II. The term "humanitarian" gained common usage in English in the nineteenth century, and originally called attention to religion as an insufficient legitimation for the Western pretension to relieve suffering across the globe. To call someone a "humanitarian" mocked the outsized confidence, self-righteousness, and naivete of religious people who believed that they knew what was best for the entire world and thought they could bring it about.[152] Following World War II, the primary legitimation for Western humanitarian power shifted from the subjectivity of Western religious ideology to the alleged objectivity of Western rationality and its dominant mode of knowledge production, the scientific method. A confluence of circumstances made religion a less-stable legitimation for Western humanitarian power. First, Western nation states became central to global efforts to relieve suffering. Western countries created the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)—today, part of the World Bank—to finance the rebuilding of a Europe decimated by war.[153] The religiously-motivated humanitarians who sought to relieve suffering embraced the project of development launched to rebuild war-torn Europe.[154] Humanitarian agencies that wanted to access this funding needed to position their

[152] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 10.
[153] "International Bank for Reconstruction and Development" (World Bank), accessed January 14, 2018, http://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are/ibrd.
[154] Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 24.

work not as motivated by the heartfelt ardor of true believers, but by the rational qualities of "neutrality, independence, and impartiality."[155]

Once created, institutions through which significant power and resources circulate are hard to dismantle. After the economies of Western Europe were rebuilt, the humanitarian development apparatus turned to the Global South—poor countries in Latin America and newly-independent nations in Africa and Asia—to perpetuate its existence. These institutions had to justify their global designs. In the mid-twentieth century—and especially after the spectacular failure of the vast majority of Western European and Euro-American religious institutions to stand up to the evil of the Third Reich—Western religious ideology was a contestable legitimation for moral action. Western technological prowess, however, proved much easier to position as impartial, objective, and neutral. Western science purports to disavow subjective bias, thus disguising the ideology that drives it. The term "humanitarian" itself becomes more stable. It loses the dubious connotation of a self-righteousness do-gooder preaching what is best for other people around the world. It takes on the moral shine of a self-assured technical expert selflessly sharing universal knowledge to improve the lives of unfortunate people.

In *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*, political scientist and international relations scholar Michael Barnett narrates the shift away from religion and toward technical expertise as the most powerful legitimation of humanitarian authority:

> If previous humanitarians […] believed that God was on their side, these new humanitarians believed that science was on their side. This attitude was present not only among aid workers but also among a generation of development economists, who believed that their training and knowledge would allow them to accelerate the development of the Third World, rarely questioning their assumptions that they knew what was best and how to get there. Technocratic authority replaced religious authority.[156]

Whether authorized by religion or science, the power dynamic remains the same: superior Western knowledge justifies Western control. In Barnett's words, "[e]xpert knowledge does more than provide a basis for intervening – it also provides a mechanism for keeping power concentrated at the top."[157] Even the Evangelical Christian aid organization World Vision moved toward a technical orientation as early as the 1970s.[158] Barnett draws a distinction between the

[155] Barnett, 31.
[156] Barnett, 130–31.
[157] Barnett, 224.
[158] Barnett, 130.

religious missionaries' expertise of place and the technocratic humanitarians' expertise of method. Barnett observes that

> the missionaries tended to stay in one place for years at a time, which compel them to learn local languages and customs, which in turn could foster a genuine appreciation of local ways of knowing and doing. Compare that lifestyle with the professional humanitarian, whose expertise is not a place but rather a method, whose presence is always temporary, whose qualifications prioritize technique at the expense of knowledge of local cultures and languages, and his orientation is always home base, many thousands of miles away.[159]

What Barnett fails to note is that even the missionaries' expertise of place reinforces the supremacism of Western rationality. Local people's knowledge of their own culture is inconsequential and ineffective until it is picked up by Western humanitarians. It is only when Western minds perceive this information about a local culture that it can be used to change the world through humanitarian efforts. Whether religious or technical, expertise developed and acquired by Western European and Euro-American elites legitimates humanitarians' paternalistic control to determine what is best for multitudes of people on the underside of power in any place humanitarians roam. Barnett's summary hits the mark: "Knowledge is the trump card. There is, of course, a growing respect for 'local knowledge,' but since local knowledge is contrasted with expert knowledge and local knowledge therefore can never be expert knowledge, experts usually get the first – and last – word."[160] Technical expertise developed in Western centers of power reigns supreme and the world remains unchanged. The (de)fault lines of dominance remain in place to destroy with violent precision people who are made vulnerable to them in times of natural, social, economic, and ecological disaster.

The shift from religious authority to technical expertise as a means of legitimating top-down humanitarian control is not a shift to a more enlightened, progressive humanitarianism. It is a shift that covers the pathological and persistent preference for knowledge generated in Western centers of power. The atrocities of World War II revealed to the white elite professional class what Black, Indigenous, and People of Color on the underside of power had long known: dominant Western Christianity works to legitimate brutal oppression. After World War II, Western European and Euro-American elites could no longer present their religion as a universal ideal by which to justify humanitarian efforts. Technical expertise became a mode to present

[159] Barnett, 235–36.
[160] Barnett, 235.

knowledge generated in the West as ideal and unbiased. As Barnett observes, "expert authority denies its own politics by presenting itself as objective and impartial."[161] Technical expertise runs on the logic of the mechanical, which buries Western domination in what Barnett calls "the machinery of humanitarianism."[162]

Technical expertise proves to be a highly efficient legitimation for humanitarianism because its position is not threatened by its own failings. Indeed, when technical expertise fails to relieve the suffering of people on the underside of dominant power, the international elites call for an increase in technical expertise. This is especially true in today's humanitarianism which has more resources than ever before, particularly following the elite international community's failure to prevent the genocide in Rwanda. Whereas the Jewish genocide of World War II dealt the final blow to Western Christianity's legitimating function for humanitarian control, the Rwandan genocide only increased Western technical expertise's ability to legitimate humanitarian power. As Barnett puts it:

> With more resources and opportunities than ever before, on a grander stage than ever before, their [humanitarians'] shortcomings are now more grievous and conspicuous. The response was to rationalize, a necessary development in many respects in keeping with the 20th century's traditional response to failure. If the machine does not work, then the machine must get bigger, stronger, and more technically adept.[163]

In other words, when the machine is broken, you don't call the people who were the victims of its failing to get their input on how to do better; you call the Western technical expert who built the machine.[164] Thus does the overvaluation of technical expertise generated by the West serve to maintain the status quo of global power through humanitarian efforts, keeping control in Western hands and not changing the lives of people who suffer from social and economic oppression.

Wynter offers a way to loosen the Western grip on humanitarian power. Change comes from finding the chinks, gaps, and contradictions in the current system of knowledge that creates and legitimates the world as it is. Like the lay intellectuals of the middle ages, people in a liminal position relative to the predominant organizing principle present a contradiction or problem for the reigning epistemological order. From this liminal position people can introduce critical

[161] Barnett, 234.
[162] Barnett, 170.
[163] Barnett, 219.
[164] Barnett, 170.

knowledge and action that calls into question the current regime of truth, destabilizing it and eventually generating a new ordering schema. In the following chapter, I explicate a mode of knowledge that disrupts the absolute grip technical expertise has on the circulation of humanitarian power: Latin American liberation theology, which centers the critical insights, action, and moral agency of people who have been dismissed and dispossessed in the global system. Because theological discourse has been displaced by technological prowess to legitimate for the status quo, theology can generate critical perspective from the margins of the current governing epistemological order. To sound the promise of Latin American liberation theology to reorder humanitarian being, power, and knowledge, I use as a case study the global health organization Partners In Health (PIH), for whom I worked in Haiti from 2008-2013.

PIH draws its mission to provide "a preferential option for the poor in healthcare" explicitly from Latin American liberation theology. For PIH, a preferential option for the poor does not only mean that people who are poor receive high quality healthcare from PIH, but also that they are preferentially engaged in designing interventions and in delivering healthcare to their communities. Their perspective from the underside of dominant power affords them insight to diagnose better than outside experts what blocks their access to healthcare in the first place. They generate knowledge and take action from liminal positions relative to the white bourgeois governing system of meaning. I believe, as Wynter suggests, that this knowledge can help invent nothing short of a new conception of "the human" beyond the current racial, social, gender, and economic ethnoclass. This new humanism will ineluctably reshape the human in humanitarian aid, altering the circuits of humanitarian politics and practice, and disrupting the dynamics of dominance currently embedded there.

CHAPTER 4

Latin American liberation theology: action and reflection from the underside of development

Latin American liberation theology is an apt tool to critique top-down humanitarian power through a social ethics lens because Latin American liberation theology was born out of the critical insights and concrete action of indigenous and poor people who suffered extreme physical, emotional, and spiritual harm in the system set up to exploit and denigrate them in order to increase the position, power, and comfort of white European and North American land-owning people. The Roman Catholic Church offered religious legitimation for the oppression of people on the underside of colonial power in exchange for prestige, protection, and profits for the Church in the global social and economic order. Theologians, bishops, and priests from Europe and North America, with a few Latin American clergy members educated in Europe or North America, working from opulent offices in Europe or colonial capital cities managed the suffering of the masses in Latin America.[165] This professional clergy class deemed top-down hierarchical orders natural, immutable, and ordained by God. They palliated with promises of comfort and reward in heaven the grievous deprivation and dispossession that the majority of people suffered in the social-economic order. These clerical experts functioned not unlike the professional managerial class of today's non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whom *Economist* called the "new Gods overseas" in 2001.[166] This chapter charts the landscape of Latin American liberation theology as a lens for a Christian social ethics' critique of humanitarian power—the "new Gods overseas" who manage inequity. In many ways humanitarianism still relies on logics of development theory and thus liberation theology continues to be a vital methodological and theoretical counter. The chapter begins with a detailed history of Latin American liberation theology, focusing on its critique of developmentalism in the years following World War II, when multilateral institutions founded to rebuild Europe turned their attention to low income nations in the global south.

[165] Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review, 1997), 30–31.
[166] Campos and Farmer, "Partners," 506.

Like the Roman Catholic church during the conquest and colonization of Latin America, international NGOs today are staffed largely by professionals from high income countries (HIC) or local people who have been educated in HICs. Today's NGO workers assume the mantle of Western or Westernized experts who claim to know what is best for people who suffer from extreme social and economic misery. They are funded by the world's elite institutions, individuals, and states to manage extreme suffering. Paul Farmer calls humanitarian professionals who operate in this dominant mode "TBMI": transnational bureaucrats managing inequality.[167] In short, like the majority of Roman Catholic bishops and priests who managed the church's work in Latin America from the conquest through the post-independence neoliberal era, today's humanitarians palliate and legitimate the moral contradictions of the global hierarchy of being, power, and knowledge. They make a good living doing it, often from the comfort of airconditioned headquarters and staff housing nicer than anything they could afford back home in North America or Europe.[168]

Latin American liberation theology broke with the Catholic church's legitimation of the status quo. In the mid-twentieth century—anticipating and inspired by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council which oriented the work of the church around the lived experience of its lay people—Catholic priests and bishops in Latin America began to draw closer to the lay people to whom they were called to minister, most of whom lived in extreme poverty and social misery. For example, Archbishop Óscar Romero—martyred for being a champion of the poor and oppressed—was not a radical when he was selected to lead the church in El Salvador. Indeed, he was considered a conservative diocesan bishop who the elite in San Salvador and Rome believed would promote their interests as archbishop and rein in activist priests. Romero's conversion to the side of the poor began when he eschewed the customary lavish accommodation of an

[167] Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains* (New York: Random House, 2004), 216; CDC Global Health, "List of Acronyms - Zimbabwe," 216, accessed September 4, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/zimbabwe/annual-report/list-of-acronyms.html#; "Humanitarian Health Action Acronyms and Abbreviations" (World Health Organization), accessed September 4, 2020, https://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/tools/manuals/who_field_handbook/acronyms_abbreviations/en/; "List of Abbreviations and Acronyms" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development, n.d.), https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7846List%20of%20abbreviations%20and%20acronyms2.pdf; Jorn Baas, "List of Common Acronyms," The International NGO Safety Organisation, accessed September 4, 2020, https://ngosafety.org/acronyms.

[168] Nora Schenkel, "I Came to Haiti to Do Good ...," *The New York Times*, May 15, 2013, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/16/opinion/global/i-came-to-haiti-to-do-good.html.

archbishop in a wealthy neighborhood of San Salvador surrounded by the elite and chose instead to live at the Hospital of Divine Providence in a poor neighborhood. Living among people who suffered economic exploitation enforced by a vicious military regime, Romero took the side of the people against the brutal status quo and began to amplify their calls for liberation from his platform in the pulpit and popular radio broadcasts.[169]

Latin American liberation theology as an academic discipline was born when a significant number of the professional clergy-class started listening to the people they were supposed to manage. The collective reflection and action that began with the critical insights of people in communities on the underside of dominant power forced an upheaval in the starting point, scope, and shape of Latin American liberation theology. Having been trained in the critical theory that was popular in European universities in the mid-nineteenth century, this first generation of Latin American liberation theologians used the social theories of the day to contextualize their theological thinking. In Latin America, they drew on critiques of developmentalism that, in the decades following World War II, had promised to lift Latin America out of poverty by imposing foreign state, private sector, and multilateral influence over the economic life of the country. Latin American liberation theologians refused to remain silent about the global economic order responsible for genocide, conquest and colonization in Latin America, which was now morphing into neo-liberal capitalist exploitation of the majority of the region's people.

4.1 A Social Theory for Social Transformation

Latin American liberation theology is as much a social movement as it is a theological approach.[170] It is theology born in Latin America in the 1960s through Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs). These communities—known in English as ecclesial base communities,[171] base ecclesial communities,[172] basic ecclesiastic

[169] Ana Carrigan and Juliet Weber, *Monseñor: the Last Journey of Óscar Romero*, Documentary film (United States: First Run Features, 2011).
[170] Miguel De La Torre, ed., *Introducing Liberative Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015), 5.
[171] De La Torre, 4.
[172] Anna L. Peterson and Manuel A. Vasquez, eds., *Latin American Religions: Histories and Documents in Context* (New York: NYU, 2008), 221.

communities,[173] base church communities, base Christian communities, or grass-roots communities[174]—are groups of Catholic lay people from communities experiencing poverty, exploitation and social exclusion who meet with a trained leader for critical reflection and action on scripture and on the concrete problems they face in order to transform their world. Liberation theology's inextricable synthesis of organized action and reflection helps explain why its theological principles do not remain cloistered in the academy and church but have been taken up to transform secular fields concerned with social justice, namely global health equity.

All theologies are contextual. Though the theologies developed in wealthy, dominant countries in the modern era are often presented as though from an objective and neutral position, each is formulated in a specific time and place by people in particular social locations. Attention to the concrete social and historical conditions in which theologies develop is a vital—though sometimes overlooked—aspect of the work of theology. Because Latin American liberation theology is as much a social movement as a theological system, its particular historical and social setting cannot be neglected. Latin American liberation theology's emphasis on context is not, however, simply reflective of its identity as a social movement. It is also a theological claim about the nature of God whose presence is manifest in concrete time and place. As Gustavo Gutiérrez writes, "Faith is always given in concrete gestures and precise conditions. 'To have faith' is precisely to live in the tents God has pitched in the midst of history."[175] Theology does not properly understand God's nature and action if theology does not reflect on its specific time and place in history, which is how God chooses to be present in the world.

Latin American liberation theology does not stand in for liberation theology generally nor is it the progenitor of all liberation theologies.[176] Contrary to persistent prevailing assumptions, Black liberation theology for example emerges at the same time as and independently of Latin American liberation theology.[177] James Cone and other Black liberation theologians in the United States address the distinct concrete oppression they experience as the result of the construction of race in the United States. Cone

[173] Luiza Beth Fernandes, "Basic Ecclesiastic Communities in Brazil," *Harvard Educational Review* 55, no. 1 (April 1, 1985): 79.
[174] Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987), 10.
[175] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 37.
[176] De La Torre, *Introducing Liberative Theologies*, xiii.
[177] De La Torre, 8.

publishes *A Black Theology of Liberation* in 1970, a year before Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation* is published in Peru (*Teología de la liberación, Perspectivas*, 1971), and addresses the theme of liberation in *Black Theology and Black Power*, published in 1969. Because all liberation theologies share the conviction that God is on the side of the oppressed in a stratified world order that exploits and denigrates people at the bottom to enrich people at the top, they respond to common global movements and shifts but always from the perspective of how these forces impact actual people in specific situations and contexts.

Long before theologians began formulating explicit theologies of liberation, communities on the underside of dominant power have always articulated their perspective on God's love, justice, and reign—from the Israelites' stories of exodus and psalms of exile, to John's apocalyptic vision for the healing of the nations dreamed while Christians suffered Roman oppression. As theoethicist Miguel De La Torre notes, "[i]f we claim that liberation theology is rooted in how the oppressed theologically reflect on the liberative actions in which they are engaged, then a liberative movement has always existed among the disenfranchised."[178] Gustavo Gutiérrez, often credited as one of the founders of Latin American liberation theology, does not cling tightly to his formulation of liberation theology but points to the Spirit that animates it: "While all theologies are born to die, a theological voice from the margins will always exist."[179] Latin American liberation theology is first formulated with theological voices from the margins at a particular time and in a particular place. It is to that context I now turn.

4.2 Church and Society from 1492 to 1968

I take the designation Latin American to include countries in North, Central, and South America where Spanish, Portuguese or French is the dominant language (socially dominant, if not the language spoken by the greatest number of people) including Caribbean nations such as Cuba and Haiti but not including French-speaking Canada.[180] These lands and the majority of the people who call them home—descendants of people

[178] De La Torre, xiii.
[179] De La Torre, xiii.
[180] Catherine Soanes, "Latin America," in *Oxford Dictionary Plus Society and Culture* (Online: Oxford University, 2016).

native to the region, of enslaved people brought there by force, and of European arrivals—have had to contend with European and United States conquest, colonization and coercion since 1492, when Christopher Columbus established in Haiti the first settlement of what Europeans called the New World.[181] Most Latin American countries —with Cuba as one notable exception, whose powerful sugar planters resisted revolution in the early nineteenth century only to come under United States' control following the Spanish-American war in 1898[182]—waged and won their political independence from European colonial powers by the middle of the nineteenth century, beginning with Haiti's independence from France in 1804.[183] Social misery, exploitation and oppression, however, continued for the masses even after national independence. Europe, Britain, and the United States continued to exercise economic coercion—sometimes enforced militarily—to benefit dominant foreign industrial powers and the local landholding elites at the expense of the majority of the people in Latin America.[184] This shift from direct colonial administration to locally controlled economic exploitation that nevertheless continues to serve the interests of dominant foreign nations comes to be called neocolonialism.[185] Neocolonial rule by local elites is enforced with as much brutality and violence against the poor as foreign conquest and colonialism were.

At its highest levels, the Roman Catholic Church supported and facilitated the conquest and colonization of Latin America. A succession of fifteenth-century popes issued a series of encyclicals encouraging the Catholic monarchs of Spain and Portugal to explore and take possession of any and all land west of Europe in order to convert the people to Christianity and expand the church's reach. In return, the rulers of Spain and Portugal could take all of this land and its riches for themselves and their heirs forever.[186] This intertwined relationship between the church hierarchy and colonial power continued in Latin America through the periods of conquest and colonization.[187] Bishops were sent

[181] David Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2003), 6.
[182] Tombs, 32.
[183] Alexandre Mendes Cunha and Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak, *The Political Economy of Latin American Independence* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 10.
[184] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 26–27.
[185] Tombs, 26.
[186] Hollis Micheal Tarver and Emily Slape, eds., *The Spanish Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016), 221; Ato Quayson, ed., *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012), 81–82.
[187] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 18.

from Europe to oversee the church in Latin America, whose interests were closely aligned with the colonial elite. At the dawn of the century of Latin American revolutions the crown and the church were, respectively, the two largest landholders in Latin America.[188]

Though institutionally the church was allied with and benefitted from European exploitation of Latin America, there has always been a counter movement of clergy who took the side of the oppressed in opposition to the institutional church and colonial powers.[189] The most well-known example from the colonial period is Bartholomé de las Casas, a priest born in Spain who initially had no compunction about owning land and local people as laborers when he came to serve as a priest on the island of Hispanola in 1509. He underwent a conversion, however, and by 1514 actively opposed the prevailing legal codes, theological positions, and narratives of conquest that cast indigenous people as subhuman. De las Casas set up alternative settlements where indigenous people had more economic and political self-determination.[190] He wrote impassioned critiques of Spanish colonial exploitation of indigenous people and urged the church to separate itself from oppressive state power for the sake of the Gospel in *History of the Indies* (1522), *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1540), and *Defence of the Indians* (1550-1551).[191] During the revolutionary period, many priests—most of whom by then were from Latin America—supported and even led struggles for independence.[192] The institutional church, however, remained aligned with colonial powers and did not recognize the independent Latin American nations until the mid-nineteenth century, many decades after most had become sovereign states. With Vatican recognition, the church in Latin America could begin to name its own bishops. Episcopal authorities were no longer sent from Europe.[193]

Political independence in Latin America did not fundamentally shift the relationship between the church and the state. The church hierarchy in Latin America still tended to align

[188] Tombs, 40.
[189] Tombs, 20.
[190] De La Torre, *Introducing Liberative Theologies*, 7.
[191] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 21–22.
[192] Tombs, 40.
[193] Tombs, 42.

with the local elite[194] who enriched themselves and maintained their grip on power by exploiting poor people's labor to harvest and extract raw materials to export to wealthy industrial nations that backed the neocolonial Latin American governments.[195] Though written about workers in industrialized nations, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) marks a shift in the church's posture towards the state that contradicts the institutional church's coziness with neocolonial governments in Latin America.[196] The state, Leo XIII argues, has the responsibility to protect laborers at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy who do not have the social or economic capital to protect themselves from exploitation.[197] Leo XIII opposes state control of economic production—which he calls socialism—and wholeheartedly supports private property.[198] Nevertheless, he denounces the structural imbalances of power that give economic control to an elite minority: "the hiring of labor and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself."[199] The church at every level has the responsibility—which Leo XIII exercises and models in his encyclical—to call out the exploitation of the poor and to call on the state to protect people who are vulnerable in the economic world order.

The institutional church articulated an even more radical break with exploitative neocolonial power in the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), called by Pope John XXIII in 1959. Before the Council convened, John XXIII set the tone for the Council's posture toward pressing socio-economic issues: "Where the underdeveloped countries are concerned, the Church presents herself as she is, and wishes to be regarded as the Church for all, and especially as the Church of the poor."[200] John XXIII was responding to the political changes taking place across the globe following World War II: people in African and Asian countries fighting for independence from colonial rule; people in Western European countries just regaining their economic and social stability; and people all over the world facing the United States' and the Soviet Union's intervention in their internal politics as the Cold War was fought by proxy. With

[194] Tombs, 41.
[195] Tombs, 38.
[196] Tombs, 44–46.
[197] Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1891), para. 37, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.
[198] Leo XIII, paras. 4, 8, 9.
[199] Leo XIII, para. 3.
[200] Cited in Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 77–78.

political independence across most of the globe, the focus turned to economic development for all nations which—as the experience of Latin America showed—did not automatically follow from political independence. John XXIII unambiguously aligns the church with people on the underside of global development. This commitment is theological as well as social. Vatican II not only envisions an inversion of the church's position in the pyramid of social power but also upends the church's trickle-down hierarchy of faith to affirm God's presence first among the lay people at the bottom.[201] This theological claim about God's presence among the faithful represents a radical shift from what Pope Pius X articulated in his encyclical *E supremi* (1903): "as a general rule the faithful will be such as are those whom you call to the priesthood."[202] One concrete manifestation of Vatican II's radical theological shift is the change in the language of the liturgy from Latin to the local vernacular, demonstrating the church's desire to be "'a church of the people' rather than a church of power."[203]

In Latin America, Vatican II influenced the church at both the grass roots and institutional levels. At the grass roots, CEBs started forming in Latin America in northeast Brazil in 1960,[204] the year following the announcement of the Second Vatican Council. It must be noted, however, that organized lay movements existed long before Vatican II. For example, in response to the rise of liberalism that sought to check the church's influence in public life, Popes Pius X (1903-1914) and Pius XI (1922-1939) encouraged lay people to organize and provide social and community services under what came to be called Catholic Action. The institutional church in Latin America embraced and promoted Catholic Action in the 1920s and 1930s.[205] Catholic Action always took place under the close supervision of clergy, reinforcing the church's top-down hierarchy and its prevailing conservatism. Indeed, Catholic Action groups often reproduced a dominant hierarchy among lay people: "the movement was defined as the participation of the laity in the apostolic work of the hierarchy. Thus imagined, Catholic activists built through this apostolate a parallel hierarchy of the laity. Just as bishops held the highest rank in the Catholic hierarchy, urban, Hispanicized lay elites held the most power in the Catholic

[201] Henri Madelin, "Vatican II," in *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, ed. Joel Krieger et al. (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 886–87.
[202] Stephen J. C. Andes and Julia G. Young, eds., *Local Church, Global Church* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2016), 17.
[203] De La Torre, *Introducing Liberative Theologies*, 10.
[204] Peterson and Vasquez, *Latin American Religions*, 221.
[205] Andes and Young, *Local Church, Global Church*, 18–19.

Action movement."[206] Liberative pedagogue Paulo Freire was briefly involved with the Catholic Action Movement in Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century, but left because of the movement's perpetuation of the oppressive status quo. Freire later became involved in Basic Ecclesiastic Communities,[207] which challenged the dominant social order. Thus— though there was certainly organized lay activity in the Latin American church before Vatican II—the reforms made at the Second Vatican Council were a radical revision. Rather than organized lay people supporting the aims of the institutional church, the institutional church was called to serve and support the critical reflection and action of the people.

Two of the founding figures of Latin American liberation theology, Brazilian theologians Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, agree that Vatican II created an opening in the church at the institutional level that Latin American theologians and bishops embraced: "The Second Vatican Council produced a theological atmosphere characterized by great freedom and creativity. This gave Latin American theologians the courage to think for themselves about pastoral problems affecting their countries."[208] After the Second Vatican Council was announced but before it began, progressive bishops Dom Hélder Câmara of Brazil and Manuel Larraín of Chile took advantage of the renewal Vatican II promised and convened meetings with the theologians who would become the founding figures of liberation theology—namely Gustavo Gutiérrez from Peru and Juan Luis Segundo from Uruguay—to discuss the social context in Latin America and pastoral responses to it.[209] While Vatican II was underway, Gutiérrez, Segundo, and other theologians continued to meet and developed a fuller theological articulation of their position that the church must act on the social demands of the Gospel, taking the social context of the popular majority as the starting point for all theological reflection and pastoral action.[210] Following the Second Vatican Council, the Conference of Latin American Bishops (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano or CELAM) announced that they would convene in Medellín, Columbia, in 1968, to make plans for the implementation of Vatican II in Latin America.[211] The

[206] Andes and Young, 145.
[207] Peter Roberts, *Education, Literacy, and Humanization: Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2000), 4.
[208] Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 69.
[209] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 81.
[210] Tombs, 83–84.
[211] Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 8.

progressive Latin American theologians who had met while Vatican II was going on continued to meet throughout the region to prepare for Medellín.[212]

While the global church embraced progress and change in the early-to-mid 1960s, secular world powers tightened their grip to preserve a status quo shaped by domination. The United States backed the military regime in Brazil following the 1964 coup, and invaded the Dominican Republic in 1965 [213] in order to strengthen the local military's control there.[214] Popular resistance to oppression continued to mount in Latin America and across the globe, led by movements of students and workers that reached their peak in 1968, a momentous year. In Mexico City, student protests in 1968 over police violence against the working and middle classes as well as over the war in Vietnam catalyzed into a larger movement against state-sponsored violence in Mexico.[215] In Brazil, student protests in March 1968 over declining conditions and support for education elicited a violent response from the military dictatorship. This burst of deadly state violence against high school students brought to national consciousness the brutality of the military regime and inaugurated decades of resistance to the dictatorship, a movement which in 1985 restored democracy to Brazil.[216] In 1968, student and worker protests also erupted in Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay.[217] Living in exile, Paulo Freire published *Education: The Practice of Freedom* in 1967, and in 1968 wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.[218]

These 1968 protests against neocolonial domination in Latin America took place in the context of resistance to oppression taking place around the world. Dramatic social, political, and economic changes occurred in the two decades following World War II, including decolonial struggles in Africa and Asia; the civil rights and black consciousness movements in the United States; and resistance to Soviet authoritarianism in the Eastern bloc. Additionally, outrage over the Vietnam War was a common thread in protests around the world in 1968, including for

[212] Boff and Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, 69.
[213] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 87.
[214] Bruce J. Calder, "Dominican Invasion of 1965," in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*, ed. Suzanne Oboler and Deena J. González (New York: Oxford University, 2005), 519–20.
[215] Elaine Carey, "Mexico's 1968 Olympic Dream," in *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, ed. Elaine Carey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), 92, 100.
[216] Victoria Langland, *Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2013), 7, 242.
[217] Jeffrey L. Gould, "Solidarity under Siege: The Latin American Left, 1968," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 348.
[218] Robert Mackie, ed., *Literacy and Revolution: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire* (London: Pluto, 1980), 6.

Martin Luther King, Jr., who was assassinated in 1968.[219] Black college and university students across the U.S. went on strike in 1968 to demand the creation of Black Studies departments and the restructuring of administrations' decision-making power.[220] At the Université de Dakar in Senegal, students initiated protests in 1968, demanding a less Eurocentric faculty, curriculum, and administrative structure. The police responded with extreme violence to remove the students, which spurred people from across Dakar's social classes to join the protest. In the end, the government agreed to an increase in the minimum wage and university reforms were implemented slowly over the following three years.[221] In Paris, students and working-class laborers took to the streets together in 1968 to demand equity and justice in education and working conditions. Black student and worker activists from France's overseas departments like Martinique and Guadeloupe protested alongside their white French compatriots and also protested the institutional racism that treated them as second-class citizens.[222] In Eastern Europe, student demonstrations in 1968 over particular injustices and exclusions sparked movements in which people took to the streets in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia to protest Soviet oppression in the Eastern bloc.[223]

It is in this context of popular resistance to dominant power that the Latin American bishops met in Medellín. They reflected on Vatican II and took as their starting point the actual socio-economic and political conditions of Latin America. They engaged John XXIII's vision for a Church of the poor by criticizing the dehumanizing forces that created material poverty for the majority of people in Latin America: neocolonial economic models that extract and export natural resources to enrich foreign nations and the Latin American elite while exploiting laborers and leading to underdevelopment and dependence for their countries as a whole[224]; militarism that enforces the oppressive status quo[225]; poverty that denies people access to education and

[219] Gould, "Solidarity under Siege," 351, 354.
[220] Félix Germain, "Student Protests in the Black Atlanta of May 1968," in *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, ed. Elaine Carey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), 47–52; Elaine Carey, "Introduction: Student Protests in the United States and Beyond in 1968," in *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, ed. Elaine Carey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), xxiii–xxvi.
[221] Germain, "Student Protests in the Black Atlanta of May 1968," 45–46.
[222] Germain, 40–41.
[223] Mauricio Borrero, "Spring Thaw, Summer Frost: Eastern Europe in 1968," in *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, ed. Elaine Carey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016), 61–90.
[224] Alfred T. Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 107, 96.
[225] Michael Colonnesse, ed., *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council, Vol. 1* (Bogotá: General Secretariat of CELAM, 1970), 103.

health care; and social marginalization that prevents people from exercising their role as decision-makers for the common good.[226] The bishops called out the moral selfishness and greed that dehumanize the individuals in the ruling class while creating material misery for the masses.[227] The bishops urged all members of the church to take part in the transformation of this situation through conscientization, which they define as "social education…integrated into joint pastoral action."[228] They underlined that "love for Christ and for our brothers and sisters" demands an inextricable link between "temporal tasks" and "the work of sanctification."[229] The expression of this love, they believe, "will not only be the great force liberating us from injustice and oppression, but also the inspiration for social justice, understood as a whole of life and as an impulse toward the integral growth of our countries."[230] Further underlining the link between the spiritual and the material, the Medellín documents argue that "salvation is complete liberation, the overcoming of all adversity, redemption from sin and its consequences (hunger, misery, sickness, ignorance)."[231]

Gutiérrez was a theological advisor to Medellín and first outlined an explicit "theology of liberation" in Latin America in a paper delivered in Peru a month before Medellín.[232] While he had hoped that the bishops at Medellín would make liberation the foundation of their reflection, Gutierréz nevertheless credits Medellín with catalyzing the growth and adoption of liberation theology throughout Latin America and with solidifying its inseparable unity of "discourse about God" and "the historical process of liberation."[233] In his introduction to *A Theology of Liberation,* Gutiérrez singles out a key passage from the Medellín documents regarding liberation:

> Latin America is obviously under the sign of transformation and development; a transformation that, besides taking place with extraordinary speed, has come to touch and influence every level of human activity, from the economic to the religious…a time full of zeal for full emancipation, of liberation from every form of servitude, of personal maturity, and of collective integration.[234]

---

[226] Hennelly, *Liberation Theology*, 90.
[227] Hennelly, 96.
[228] Hennelly, 103.
[229] Hennelly, 99.
[230] Hennelly, 99.
[231] Colonnesse, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council, Vol. 1,* 121.
[232] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics*, 8.
[233] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), xviii.
[234] Gutiérrez, xvii.

In their assessment of the times, the Medellín documents point to the movement from discourse about development to discourse about liberation, to which I will now turn.

4.3 From Development to Dependency to Liberation

Most of the priest-theologians who are founding figures of Latin American liberation theology spent time studying in Europe in the 1950s,[235] where they would have encountered critical theory as it was articulated by the members of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany ("the Frankfurt School"), beginning in the 1920s.[236] The Frankfurt School influenced liberation theology in many ways, including its attention to the writing of Karl Marx. [237] Latin American liberation theologians get criticized for their embrace of Marx's economic project, which in many cases and at particular times and in specific ways they did do. It was not principally Marx's economic project, however, that made him significant to their work. For Latin American liberation theologians influenced by critical theory, Marx was first and foremost an epistemological revolutionary[238] who insisted that knowledge is neither pure speculation nor solely empirical observation.[239] Knowledge is critical reflection on the concrete conditions of the external world in order to change them.[240] As Gutiérrez puts it: "For Marx, to know was something indissolubly linked to the transformation of the world through work."[241] Critical theorists in the Frankfurt School wed philosophy with a social science like economics or sociology[242] in order to produce a kind of knowledge or consciousness that promotes human emancipation from social deception and oppression.[243] In a similar vein, Latin American liberation theologians sought the synthesis of theology and social sciences to generate a

[235] Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 45.
[236] Claudio Corradetti, "The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, accessed October 3, 2017, http://www.iep.utm.edu/frankfur/.
[237] Enrique D. Dussel, "Theology of Liberation and Marxism," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, trans. Robert Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 88.
[238] Dussel, 98.
[239] Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (New York: Cambridge University, 1981), 1.
[240] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 19.
[241] Gutiérrez, 19.
[242] James Bohman, "Critical Theory," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016 (Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/critical-theory/.
[243] Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 2; Corradetti, "The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory."

new kind of theological knowledge that engaged reflection and action in order to liberate the majority of people in Latin America from the oppression that dominated their lives in the 1960s.[244] As Gutiérrez writes, "Medellín marks the beginning of a new relationship between theological and pastoral language on the one hand and the social sciences which seek to interpret this reality on the other."[245]

It must be noted that Latin American liberation theologians were not the first Christian theologians, pastors and ethicists to turn to sociology and economics for a complex analysis of the reality that causes human misery. The social gospel movement that began in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century emerged at the same as the discipline of sociology, [246] and for a few decades they shared concerns for ethics and social reform.[247] Walter Rauschenbusch—arguably the best known social gospeler whose experience as a pastor to German immigrants in the tenements of Hell's Kitchen in New York City from 1886-1891 served as the impetus for his conception of the social gospel—famously turned to sociology and economics to formulate a theology which responded to human misery that ran along "well defined grooves, reducible to certain laws" created by iniquitous social structures.[248] In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, however, the social sciences broke with the value claims of theology and moral philosophy to position themselves as objective, empirical sciences of society.[249] A generation later, Max Weber pushed back against the rigid positivism that overtook sociology in order to formulate an interpretive study of social action that did not prescribe certain moral values but did consider the meaning and values that guide people's behavior which shapes social structures.[250] Nevertheless when the Frankfurt School sought a synthesis of moral philosophy and the social sciences, these were distinctly separate disciplines and their intertwining marked a fresh perspective which the Latin American liberation theologians embraced for their theological method. When Latin

[244] McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics*, 31.
[245] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 74.
[246] Gary Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting an American Tradition* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 1.
[247] Dorrien, 32.
[248] C. Melissa Snarr, *Social Selves and Political Reforms: Five Visions in Contemporary Christian Ethics* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), 3–5.
[249] Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making*, 16, 32.
[250] Sung Ho Kim, "Max Weber," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/weber/.

American liberation theologians turned to the social sciences, what they found most useful was economic dependency theory.[251]

Dependency theory emerged in Latin America as a response to developmentalism. Developmentalism grew to prominence in the aftermath of World War II. Western countries created The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)—today, part of the World Bank—to finance the rebuilding of Europe.[252] This project of development and the institutions built to promote it soon turned to the global south—poor countries in Latin America and newly-independent nations in Africa and Asia—to continue its work. The idea was that countries in the global south, with support from wealthy capitalist democracies, could follow the industrialized nations' path to free-market capitalist economic development. This would benefit the nations in the global south and also benefit the wealthy capitalist donor democracies by stopping the spread of communism. Global institutions like the IBRD and wealthy capitalist democracies like the United States reached out to offer loans to countries in the global south to build industrial infrastructure, which the countries gladly took.[253] Economic development, however, did not follow as promised or expected.

The problems with developmentalism were many. As with other manifestations of neocolonial capitalism, the primary benefits of developmentalism went to the wealthy elite in the global south. This created political unrest, which is not good for economic development. To protect their interests and investments, the U.S. and other wealthy western countries intervened to prop up authoritarian regimes that violently repressed resistance.[254] In this way, developmentalism forced the global south to prioritize unfettered capitalism over and against democratic governance. Western capitalist democracies, by contrast, were for the most part able to work out internally without extreme foreign interference the tensions and conflicts that arose between capitalist and democratic interests on the bumpy path to industrial development.

Developmentalism pushed a neoliberal agenda that favored free markets not only over self-determination, but also over social protection. The wealthy countries that had made the loans felt entitled to dictate how the money should be spent, and forced structural adjustment policies

[251] Phillips, *Political Theology*, 45.
[252] "International Bank for Reconstruction and Development."
[253] Claude Ake, "Development and Underdevelopment," in *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, ed. Joel Krieger et al., Second (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 218–21.
[254] Mendes Cunha and Suprinyak, *The Political Economy of Latin American Independence*, 18.

in recipient nations that restricted government spending on social services like healthcare and education in favor of military and industrial expenditures. Furthermore, the donor nations pressured countries in the global south to drop any tariffs that protected their local industries and agriculture in order to make it easier for wealthy nations to extract raw materials from them, and export finished consumer goods and processed agricultural products back to them. Wealthy countries could protect their agricultural and other industries through government subsidies. Poorer countries were not able to afford to do this and were not allowed to use the one mechanism they had available to them, namely tariffs. Yet again the rhetoric of developmentalism promised countries in the global south a path to the same economic development wealthy countries enjoyed, but the self-determination that had allowed for that development was denied them.

Another problem with developmentalism was the dominant social imaginary that underpinned it. Developmentalism—and modernization theory out of which it grew—took for granted that all societies begin as underdeveloped and then mature to achieve industrial development. This mythology posits the trajectory of northern capitalist democracies as normative and ideal. Poor countries are thus assumed to be backward and deficient in a fundamental way that can be remedied only by the spread of the ethics, ideals, expertise and ingenuity of Europe, Britain and the United States.[255] "Developed" thus joined the list of attributes like "Christian" or "civilized" that wealthy northern countries used to make their conquest and colonization of the global south seem natural, inevitable and downright benevolent.

Latin American social scientists criticized this theory of development. They argued that underdevelopment was not the original, natural state of affairs for any country. Rather, underdevelopment is produced by and is a necessary condition for the development of wealthy, dominant industrialized nations. A more apt description for this global dynamic was dependency. In the global economic order, countries on the economic periphery could not survive if they exercised self-determination that defied the interests of the countries at the center of economic power. They were in a dependent position vis-à-vis Europe, Britain and the United States. Furthermore, in order for the dominant countries to maintain the system that they could control to further their interests, they were dependent upon the poverty of the global south. The oppressive world order needed countries on the economic periphery. For this reason, the rhetoric

[255] Ivan Petrella, *Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto* (London: SCM, 2006), 70.

of development for poor countries was misleading and worked to get them to comply willingly with a status quo that would always keep them under foreign domination. In the mid-1960s, Brazilian sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Chilean historian Enzo Faletto, among others, advanced this line of thinking which came to be known as dependency theory, though its founding figures viewed it as a "methodology of analysis of concrete situations of underdevelopment" [256] and not as a totalizing theory, perhaps after seeing the harmful effects of the myth of development which had been posited as a theory.

Even if it were more method of critique than theory, the work on dependency created knowledge that could drive the transformation of the world. The analysis of dependency demonstrated that Latin American did not need to—and indeed in the current world order could not—pursue development. Rather, it needed to strive to be free of the oppressive control from centers of dominant global economic power. Liberation, not development, was the goal.[257] The first-generation founding figures of Latin American liberation theology—Gutiérrez, the Boffs, Segundo, Jon Sobrino, Enrique Dussel, and Ignacio Ellacuría—used the social scientific analysis of dependency that pointed to liberation to do theological work that truly broke new ground.[258] In Latin American liberation theology they generated a critical theological praxis that integrated social reflection and action to transform the world.

In 1971, Gustavo Gutiérrez published *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,* the first full-length, comprehensive treatment of Latin American liberation theology. Latin American liberation theology continued to grow, deepen, and expand through the 1970s. In 1979, the Latin American bishop's conference (CELAM) convened another meeting, this time in Puebla, Mexico. The secretary general of CELAM at the time was Alfonso López Trujillo, a conservative bishop from Columbia. López Trujillo hoped to reverse the liberationist positions CELAM had endorsed at Medellín. He tightly controlled the Puebla conference attendees, and explicitly excluded Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians who had been theological advisors to Medellín.[259] While the Puebla conclusions "offered a more cautious perspective than those at Medellín," they nevertheless endorsed Medellín: "With renewed hope in the vivifying power of

[256] Peter B. Evans, "Dependency," in *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World,* ed. Joel Krieger et al. (New York: Oxford University, 2001), 213.
[257] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 92.
[258] Tombs, 8–9, 106; Petrella, *Future of Liberation Theology*, 83.
[259] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 195.

the Spirit, we are going to take up once again the position of the Second General Conference of the Latin American episcopate in Medellín, which adopted a clear and prophetic option expressing preference for, and solidarity with, the poor."[260] Using the language "a preferential option for the poor," which by 1979 had become a central tenet of liberation theology, Puebla called on the institutional Church to expand its commitment to the poor: "We affirm the need for conversion on the part of the whole Church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation."[261] Puebla also specified a wider range of people to whom the church needs to show solidarity because they are socially or economically marginalized: "our indigenous peoples, peasants, manual laborers, marginalized urban dwellers and, in particular, the women of these social groups. The women are doubly oppressed and marginalized."[262]

Puebla continued to hold together in inseparable unity spiritual and social transformation: "We realize that structural transformation is the outward expression of inner conversion."[263] In the years between Medellín and Puebla, the institutional church in Latin America clearly moved away from the development framework for human flourishing to embrace liberation as the goal of human life, both spiritually and concretely. Puebla praises the "sincere effort to integrate faith and life, human history and salvation history, the human condition and revealed doctrine, so that human beings may achieve their true liberation."[264] By contrast, one of the only mentions of development in the final Puebla documents is the unenthusiastic observation that "we must note that since the decade of the fifties, and despite certain achievements, the ample hopes for development have come to nothing. The marginalization of the vast majority and the exploitation of the poor has increased."[265] The institutional church in Latin America—a region which remained on the periphery of global economic development through the 1980s[266]— was able to challenge the dominant perspective that took development for granted as the way to human flourishing. Yet the majority of institutions and organizations that make up the development industry—most of which are located in countries at the global economic center—have not yet gained this perspective on the assumption at the heart of their work. The humanitarian aid

[260] Cited in Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 196.
[261] Cited in Tombs, 196.
[262] Cited in Tombs, 197.
[263] John Eagleson, ed., *Puebla and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980), 274.
[264] Eagleson, 247.
[265] Eagleson, 279.
[266] Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 203–4.

industry is guided by the aims of global development,[267] which makes Latin American liberation theology a relevant lens through which to critique humanitarian power. But first, I will outline the critiques of Latin American liberation theology that are salient to my analysis of how it is picked up by PIH. If Latin American liberation theology can transform Western hegemonic power in the humanitarian sphere, then why has it not had a greater impact on the shape of the world?

4.4 Critiques of Latin American Liberation Theology

Theologians Alistair Kee and Marcella Althaus-Reid critique Latin American liberation theology for failing to go far enough in its challenge to the status quo. For Kee, the first generation of Latin American liberation theologians do not embrace fully Marx's critique of religion. For Althaus-Reid, Latin American liberation theology takes for granted dominant constructions of sex and gender, failing to subject them to the same critical analysis it gave to challenging the Church's acceptance of the brutal socio-economic status quo. I trace the salient points of Kee's and then Althaus-Reid's argument below. I share with them the belief that Latin American liberation theology has not lived up to the promise of structural change equal to the thrill its vision inspired from its first articulations. I conclude that while Kee and Althaus-Reid both raise important questions about the effect (or to be more precise, the lack thereof) that Latin American liberation theology has had in terms of actually changing the status quo, neither Kee nor Althaus-Reid provides a prescription for understanding Latin American liberation theology that I think will adequately address the diagnoses they make. And I still hold--as Kee and Althaus-Reid do--that Latin American liberation theology has much to contribute to the transformation of the world.[268] My project intervenes at this point in the academic discourse about Latin American liberation theology. I draw on the praxis of PIH to argue

[267] Valerie Ramet, "Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development: Towards More Effective Aid" (Belgium: European Union, 2012), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2012/491435/EXPO-DEVE_SP(2012)491435_EN.pdf.
[268] Alistair Kee, "Liberation Theology," *Grace Ministry Myanmar* (blog), November 23, 2016, https://graceministrymyanmar.blogspot.com/2016/11/liberation-theology-by-alistair-kee.html; Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

that Latin American liberation theology played a necessary (if not totally sufficient) role in concretely changing the lives of people dispossessed by the death-dealing status quo.

Kee accuses Latin American liberation theology of failing the poor by, as theological ethicist Victor Anderson puts it, "having become establishmentarian and conservative."[269] Kee faults Latin American liberation theologians for not embracing Marx's thought thoroughly enough. They engage Marx's social critique, but do not fully explore the possibilities contained in Marx's critique of religion.[270] In an extended analysis of Gutiérrez's work, Kee argues that Gutiérrez responds to Marx's first and third critiques of religion. In the first, Gutiérrez acknowledges that religion has been guilty of cooperation (what Marx calls reconciliation) with evil that oppresses and exploits people, and that a theology of liberation intentionally breaks with this posture. In taking the perspective of people on the underside of history, Latin American liberation theology "will neither legitimate the evil order of a fallen world, nor will it encourage the victims of oppression to accept their lot in this word for the sake of supposed rewards in the world to come."[271] In the third, Gutiérrez accepts that religion can and has been pressed to serve an ideological function, which a theology of liberation must resist whether from the right or from the left.[272] But nowhere, Kee argues, does Gutiérrez respond to Marx's second critique of religion. This second critique concerns the social construction of reality. Marx characterizes religion as a reversal of reality. Religion does not reflect on ultimate reality as it purports to do. Rather, religion creates the reality that shapes human life: "Man unconsciously projects aspects of his being into objectivity. These human predicates then take on objective and independent existence. Finally they become the subject, acting back upon man."[273] Kee contends that because Gutiérrez was not willing to entertain orthodox Christianity's role in creating reality, his Latin American liberation theology could not ultimately transform reality.

Kee's major contribution to the understanding of Latin American liberation theology for my project is his unrelenting determination throughout the years to hold

[269] Victor Anderson, "Foreword," in *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology*, by Alistair Kee (London: SCM, 2008), viii.
[270] Alistair Kee, *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology* (Philadelphia: SCM, 1990), 265.
[271] Kee, 168.
[272] Kee, 180.
[273] Kee, 49.

Latin American liberation theology to its goal, as Victor Anderson names it, "to defend the cause of the wretched of the earth whose lives and deaths are entangled in the non-self-correcting machinery of a global economic capitalism devoid of any moral directives for the maximising of the economic fulfilment of the world's poorest populations."[274] I am not convinced, however, that the problem of Latin American liberation theology's conservative establishmentarianism turns on the extent to which it fails to embrace one aspect of Marx's critique of religion. Latin American liberation theology is able to interrogate knowledge production and the social construction of reality, which indicates to me that it has the tools to interrogate socially produced knowledge and norms that are taken for granted. The question Kee raises is: can Latin American liberation theology turn that critical lens back onto orthodox religious formulations of reality? Kee proposes the engagement of Marx's critique of religion as one way Latin American liberation theology could engage critical reflection on the construction of the theological knowledge and norms it takes for granted. But I think there are other ways, too. I now turn to the work of Latin American liberation theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid, who is concerned with precisely this task: turning the liberation theological lens back on its own assumptions, particularly on the taken for granted knowledge about who counts as the poor in Latin American liberation theology's preferential option.

Marcella Althaus-Reid was an Argentinian theologian who, like Alistair Kee, taught at the University of Edinburgh. She considered herself a liberation theologian and in her most well-known book *Indecent Theology*, Althaus-Reid uses the tools of Latin American liberation theology—namely doing theology with people on the underside of power reflecting critically on their everyday, material lives—to move liberation theology past its establishmentarian conservatism. Althaus-Reid saw her project as one of "both a continuation of Liberation Theology and a disruption of it,"[275] to call it back to "a process of doing a contextual theology without exclusions."[276]

One of the main exclusions Althaus-Reid saw in Latin American liberation theology concerned sex and gender. Latin American liberation theology took for granted "normative

[274] Anderson, "Foreword," ix.
[275] Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 5.
[276] Althaus-Reid, 4.

theological views of sexuality and gender"[277] which exploited and oppressed people on the underside of dominant racial, economic and social power by defining, regulating, and controlling their sexuality. Althaus-Reid recalls that growing up in a poor section of Buenos Aires, she saw no difference between the transvestites and prostitutes who worked in the streets and the women who lined up for day labor outside the factory gates and would often exchange sex for money.[278] She knew both groups as people from her neighborhood in a socially constructed world where economic conditions shaped sexuality and sexual practices, linking sex and survival. Gender and sex were deployed as mechanisms for exclusion, dehumanization and abuse in the dominant political economy inherited from the western European and white northern American project of genocide, conquest, and colonization.[279] Yet Latin American liberation theology did not engage gendered and sexed oppression linked to the life-and-death struggle of people who are poor. The question for Althaus-Reid becomes why a theological project like Latin American liberation theology which sought new ways of being human and had as its starting point a preferential option for people on the margins of society did not reflect critically on the dehumanizing social and religious constructions of sex and gender, but took them as natural and normative.

The first generation of Latin American liberation theologians engaged critical reflection and action by the dispossessed in order to trouble the social construction of the human and transform what they deemed every dimension of human life: political, economic and social. But they ignored the social constructions of sex and gender that contribute to oppression. Althaus-Reid uses the figure of Mary to show how Latin American liberation theology took for granted the dominant and dominating social and religious norms about sex and sexuality and left this vital dimension of life untouched by critical reflection on reality: "The passion for idealism and the constant use of ideology as a method has never been so blatant as in the case of Latin American Mariological Theology. Articles and chapters in books repeat almost the same thing, the theme of 'Mary and the poor' without any serious materialist attempt to analyse Marian false consciousness in Latin America."[280] Jesus could teach men how to transcend false

[277] Althaus-Reid, 6.
[278] Althaus-Reid, 66.
[279] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1995).
[280] Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 40.

consciousness of the human in order to become aware of their oppression and to engage critical reflection and action to transform this world. Mary, by contrast, stayed on her pedestal with robes covering her breasts, her labia, and her vulva, teaching women to conform to sex, gender and sexual identities that were shaped by an oppressive status quo and functioned to keep it in place.

To counter this failure of Latin American liberation theology, Althaus-Reid engages Latin American liberation theology's method of starting with reflection on the concrete, everyday life conditions of actual people living in a certain place at a certain time. She begins with the lemon vendors of Buenos Aires, women who come from indigenous communities, who have had to leave their rural villages to make a livelihood in the city. These women have been subject to shifting social and religious worlds shaped by conquest, colonization and globalization. Althaus-Reid emphasizes the importance of material analysis (so central to Latin American liberation theology) by drawing attention to the odors of the lemons the women sell mingled with the pungent odors of their bodies, particularly "odours of their sex"[281]—all the more pungent because these women lemon vendors do not wear underwear—to show that gender, sex, and embodiment cannot be excluded from theological reflection with the poor and the marginalized that takes seriously social, economic, and political dimensions of life.

Althaus-Reid's project is to pick up Latin American liberation theology's own tools of "re-contextualization" and "serious doubting"[282] to expand liberation theology, which she sees as a vital resource for social transformation. The re-contextualization and serious doubting involve more than simply adding new perspectives to theological reflection—the perspectives of sexed and gendered "others"—which can serve to strengthen the identity of the dominant norm that defines itself over and against its exotic others, and can be coopted or ignored to suit the interests of dominant power and to maintain the status quo. Rather, for Althaus-Reid, re-contextualization and serious doubting involve turning the direction of inquiry back onto Latin American liberation theology and ask why it could not perceive these perspectives in the first place:

> a materialist theology such as Liberation Theology has been walking in the streets without noticing the life of the rebellious poor urban women who do not

[281] Althaus-Reid, 2.
[282] Althaus-Reid, 5.

> use underwear, and the richness of the metaphors of God, based on the interface between their sexuality and poverty. This challenges us not only to ask different questions but also to undertake a different way of doing contextual theology. This is a concrete materialist theology which understands that the dislocation of sexual constructions goes hand in hand with strategies for the dislocation of hegemonic political and economic agendas.[283]

Althaus-Reid aims to advance Latin American liberation theology not by starting with orthodox theological positions—or the orthodox sexual positions with which they are closely linked—whose social construction by and complicity with oppressive, exclusionary, hierarchical power has not been critically interrogated. Rather, she seeks the experiences of actual people as the starting point for critical action and reflection that liberates. Swiveling the gaze to ask how the first generation of Latin American liberation theologians engaged a political materialism but a sexual idealism gleans insight into how hegemony works. [284]

In the spirit of ongoing critical reflection the gaze must be swiveled back on Althaus-Reid, too. As Emilie Townes notes in her critique of *Indecent Theology*, Althaus-Reid objectifies the lemon vendors for the sake of her academic work, suggesting an exploitation and dismemberment similar to that which French anthropologists subjected Saartjie Baartman.[285] The lemon vendors are a jumping off point for Althaus-Reid. Their only significant act is not to wear underwear, which becomes resistance to the status quo only once it is described as such by a professional academic based in western Europe. Althaus-Reid does not mention how the lemon vendors themselves understand their body odor as resistance to the white western patriarchal professional-class hegemonic order. The women's body odor becomes an object for elite reflection. *Indecent Theology* does not amplify or heed the women's self-determined interior lives, critical insights, or liberative actions to change the social and economic order that oppresses them. We never learn their names. In this way, the lemon vendors are unlike Saartjie Baartman. Also unlike Baartman, their bodies are exploited in the name of liberation from the colonial hierarchy of being that Baartman's body was used to prove.

---

[283] Althaus-Reid, 6.
[284] Althaus-Reid, 22.
[285] Emilie M. Townes, "Panel Response to Marcella Althaus-Reid's Indecent Theology," *Feminist Theology* 11, no. 2 (2003): 167–73.

The legacy of Latin American liberation theology is complex. As Townes' critique of Althaus-Reid shows, it is hard to advance Latin American liberation theology confined to the academy. As social theorist and liberation theologian Ivan Petrella argues, the future of Latin American liberation theology might lie outside of theology: "the liberation theologian must operate undercover as an economist or legal theorist and work from within to transform the discipline's presuppositions."[286] In the Coda to *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic,* Petrella briefly names Paul Farmer and the work of PIH as an example of this contention that "[t]o work in liberation theology today could mean to work outside of it, by finding ways the epistemological and practical-moral elements can infiltrate, subvert, and transform other bodies of knowledge."[287] I turn in the next chapter to offer an insider's view of how PIH heeded the insights and experiences of actual people—not the dominant socio-medical imaginary of them—as the starting point for action and reflection that moved the status quo in global health toward justice. My aim is to demonstrate that Latin American liberation theology can be used to "infiltrate, subvert, and transform" the coloniality of humanitarian being, power, and knowledge.

[286] Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM, 2013), 148.
[287] Petrella, 150.

CHAPTER 5

Partners In Health and the praxis of becoming human beyond the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power

This chapter offers a case study of one NGO's embrace of Latin American liberation theology—Partners In Health (PIH), a global health organization that drew its founding mission "to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care" explicitly from Latin American liberation theology—and the resulting seismic change it helped usher in for the field of global health equity. The argument I have outlined and developed in the previous chapters culminates and concludes with this case study. I began in chapter one with the working definition of humanitarians as people who cross one or more lines to relieve suffering, which includes people on the underside of dominant power who participate in action and reflection that the hegemonic order ascribes to Western(ized) professional elites. My questions were: can humanitarians from the Western or Westernized professional class cross lines of social power to relieve suffering without reproducing dynamics of dominance? If so, how? The case study that follows draws out two significant conclusions from my investigation: one, that it is indeed possible for professional class Western(ized) humanitarians to cross lines of social power to relieve suffering without reinscribing the oppressive power circuits; and two, that realizing this possibility requires transgressing the roles (not merely crossing the lines of power) created by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power. By "transgressing roles" I mean challenging, disregarding, and disobeying the authority of hierarchical social positions to circumscribe who can think and act. My conclusion, in short, is that reordering humanitarian power to create a new world is possible, and it occurs when everyone transgresses the humanitarian roles mapped by the hegemonic order, a praxis which troubles the Western humanitarian "we" and thereby unsettles the coloniality of human being on which it is based.

I begin this chapter by revisiting Sylvia Wynter. I articulate why her analysis of the invention of Man and her anticolonial prescriptions for unsettling the coloniality of human being, knowledge, and power provide an apt template for my argument that PIH's embrace of Latin American liberation theology can reorder humanitarian power. I then describe Wynter's formulation of the "gaze from below" that intentionally aims local activism and globally critical

reflection at unsettling the oppressive order of being, knowledge, and power. Wynter's gaze from below helps account for why PIH's embrace of "a preferential option for the poor" is a praxis that can reorder humanitarian power when it is lived as a mandate to take seriously the critical insights and local action of people who have been dispossessed in the current order. Wynter's conception of the gaze from below also provides a way to account for how professional class humanitarians can contribute to the reordering of top-down humanitarian power without reproducing the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power in which salient analysis and effective action accrue to Westernized professional experts.

I then narrate PIH's origins in the remote squatter settlement of Cange, Haiti. I recount two significant inflection points in the history of PIH: the critical reflection and action PIH engaged when three patients being treated for TB died in PIH's care; and PIH's decision to provide antiretroviral treatment (ART) to people in Cange living with AIDS when the global health experts said it was a bad idea. Both decisions demonstrate the Latin American liberation theological commitment to the poor as "the protagonists of their own liberation."[288] I turn to examine how PIH takes up Latin American liberation theology's commitment to an unflinching analysis of the structural causes of suffering, which contributes to transformation only insofar as it incorporates the insights of people who are oppressed. I cite Farmer's account of how Latin American liberation theology prepared him to do the kind of structural analysis that allows him to participate in the disruption of the status quo in global health care delivery in ways that his training in medicine and anthropology did not, demonstrating the unique capacity of Latin American liberation theology to reorder humanitarian power. Farmer argues that insights from Latin American liberation theology's analysis of dependency theory provide a critique of the hegemony of technical expert knowledge in humanitarianism, and that the Latin American liberation theological praxis of accompaniment is a way to disrupt it. Finally I describe the experience of a PIH clinician working in Chiapas, Mexico, who embraced PIH's mission but whose understanding of "a preferential option for the poor" did not include the poor as protagonists in their own liberation. The failures that result illustrate—painfully—that a preferential option for the poor in health care can reorder humanitarian power, but only when the action and reflection it engenders transgress the lines of power defined by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power. Action and reflection that circulate outside the limits of the roles

[288] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 67.

mapped to the Western humanitarian "we" create new kinds of humanitarian agency and agents that shape a new world.

5.1 Wynter's Decolonial Gaze for a Liberation Theological Analysis

What is today called global health shape-shifted from colonial medicine to tropical medicine to missionary medicine to international health to global health, all while directed by Western or Westernized technical experts in the name of "development."[289] Global health is thus an apt field to sound the potential of Latin American liberation theology—with its birth in a critique of developmentalism—to disrupt the coloniality of humanitarian being, knowledge, and power. Sylvia Wynter provides a template for my analysis of how Latin American liberation theology taken up by global health activists and scholars can reorder the coloniality of humanitarian power. Wynter's explication of the invention of Man by Renaissance humanist intellectuals who challenged the theocentric order of being, knowledge, and power takes into account the potential for disciplines with a peripheral epistemological status to unsettle the ruling hegemonic order by revealing the contradictions, gaps, and weaknesses in the dominant legitimating story. At first glance it may seem odd to use Wynter's account of secular humanism's disruption of a theocentric order to understand theology's potential to activate an epistemological rupture that unsettles the coloniality of humanitarian being and power. Wynter's argument, however, is not against theology per se, but against any knowledge that establishes a singular and absolutizing conception of the human in its image.

Wynter's account of how white Western bourgeois Man became isomorphic with being human begins with the epistemological rupture that secular intellectuals in medieval Latin-Christian Europe activated against the "hegemonic and theologically absolute Scholastic order of knowledge."[290] In that age, the very act of knowledge production by secular intellectuals belied the strict epistemological hierarchy of a theocentric order in which the power to generate and judge the value of knowledge accrued to the clerics whose identity and power were secured by the theocentric order over which they presided. Wynter's argument unfolds to show how the new epistemological order ushered in by the secular humanists became its own singular and absolutizing schema of the human: "we are stuck," Wynter says, "committed to our now secular,

[289] Paul Farmer et al., *Reimagining Global Health: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California, 2013), 61.
[290] McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 15.

no longer theocentric but no less absolute biocentric premise."[291] The medieval theocentric epistemological order ruled by male clerics becomes the biocentric epistemological order over which white Westernized secular educated professionals preside. Theology in general has the potential to disrupt the current of order of being, knowledge, and power because the order of the day is no longer ruled by theologians and their theologic. It is important to note that in Wynter's analytic frame, theocentrism is not isomorphic with Christian theology. The theocentric logic that the humanists of the European Renaissance overturned precedes Christianity. It circumscribed pre-Christian pagan Greek astronomy: the heavens are ontologically distinct from and rule over the human.[292] Christian theology just happened to be the hegemonic theologic that reigned when the humanist intellectuals began their epistemological revolution in which all matter could be investigated and judged according to standards observable to and set by the self-ruling human.

Another reason Wynter is an apt thinker for my investigation is because she embraces emancipatory praxis as the goal which her theoretical work serves. Wynter develops her account of the invention of Man and the concomitant global system set up for Man's ongoing benefit in order to understand critically the mechanisms and forces that brought into being today's iniquitous order marked by "damned archipelagoes of the Poor"[293] so that local action can be taken to transform the iniquitous shape of the world. Wynter's diagnosis of how we got here is a necessary piece of the world-changing work she champions. "I want the West to recognize the dimensions of what it has brought into the world—this with respect to our now purely naturalized modes or genres of humanness," she writes. "Because the West did change the world, totally. And I want to suggest that it is that change that has now made our own proposed far-reaching changes now as imperative as they are inevitable."[294] Wynter argues that the secular humanists of Europe's Renaissance set into motion a radical change in the world order, and thus by the West's own example such a revolution is possible—as well as necessary, in light of the oppression, degradation, and destruction of human beings and the planet on which the current

[291] McKittrick, 18.
[292] McKittrick, 15.
[293] Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom," 317.
[294] McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 18.

global order relies. Wynter calls for "creative and world constitutive activities" that include "a rewriting of our present now globally institutionalized order of knowledge."[295]

To avoid the pitfalls of substituting one hegemonic absolutizing order of knowledge for another (as when Europe's Renaissance secular humanists put in motion the overthrow of a totalizing theocentric order and replaced it with what has become a totalizing biocentric order), Wynter argues that the "rewriting of knowledge as we know it" must be undertaken collectively and figure on a conception of the human as hybrid.[296] No one kind of knowledge generated by a single kind of person can take the measure of the human being without constraining the fullness and freedom of the human. "If humans are conceptualized as hybrid beings," Wynter argues, "you can no longer classify human individuals, as well as human groups, as naturally selected (i.e., eugenic) and naturally dysselected (i.e., dysgenic) beings. This goes away. It is no longer meaningful."[297] Wynter draws on the work of Frantz Fanon to argue that a redefinition of the human as an inextricable hybrid of the natural (what Fanon calls "Skin" and Wynter calls *bios*) and the culturally-created (what Fanon calls "Masks" and Wynter calls *mythoi*) can generate new ways of being human (what Fanon calls "a new humanism" and Wynter calls *being human as praxis*) beyond the current biocentric epistemological regime of Man.[298]

Wynter's collective and hybrid redefinition of being human as praxis comprises another key dynamic: the gaze from below. In the case study of Partners In Health that follows, I draw on Wynter's formulation of the "gaze from below" to help explain what made PIH's work able to change the status quo in global health care delivery. The way PIH lived out Latin American liberation theology's "preferential option for the poor in health care" comprises, I argue, the gaze from below Wynter describes. Action and reflection from the underside reveal the social construction of the world that the reigning order casts as stable, natural, and inevitable. Knowledge produced from below troubles this stability and creates spaces and momentum to invent a new world order. Wynter identifies this as "the gaze from below."[299] Wynter uses Augustine to illustrate it, calling it "the Augustinian turn," which she defines as "the taking and

[295] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle* (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota, 2006), 122; McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 18.
[296] McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 11, 16–18, 25–37, 63–75.
[297] McKittrick, 17.
[298] McKittrick, 22–23; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2008), xi; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004), 178.
[299] McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter*, 11.

revising of an existing system of knowledge, in order to create that which is imperatively emancipatorily new."[300] Augustine, Wynter explains, propagated the logic of the hegemonic world order as a professor of rhetoric in Roman imperial schools. Following his conversion to Christianity, however, Augustine used his training in imperial rhetoric to reveal the pretensions, illegitimacy, and instability of "cities of Man" like Rome which tried to position themselves as ultimate, but paled in comparison to the possibilities for true power and glory that Augustine envisioned in the City of God.[301]

For Wynter, the gaze from below embodied in the Augustinian turn comprises global critical reflection for the sake of local action in order to create a new world free from the oppression that comes from trying to impose and maintain limited and thus false constructions of human being, knowledge, and power. Wynter names the common characteristics she identifies in the work of Frantz Fanon, W.E.B. DuBois, and of twentieth-century Black liberation movements to generate her conception of the gaze from below as globally critical, locally activist, and intentionally creative of new ways of being human that create a new world order. Wynter writes that Fanon's "uniquely ecumenically human model" was born from his "gaze from below" that was an "activist […] antibourgeois, anticolonial, anti-imperial perspective."[302] She observes that the twentieth-century Black liberation movements in the British West Indies and in the United States were "anticolonial and antiapartheid uprisings […that] had at a fundamental level been directed overall, by means of their respective gaze-from-below uprising acts."[303] Concerning DuBois and the gaze from below, Wynter notes

> This meant, for DuBois, that in order for his own wished-for truer self to be made possible, the objectively institutionalized Problem of the color line would itself have to be concomitantly solved—and solved by means of a multiplicity of local, small-scale anticolonial, antisettler apartheid, and overall anti-imperial "gaze from below" perspectives and struggles that were as global in their reach as that of the color line itself. The outcome of his wished-for solution was to be this: for the rest of his very long life, DuBois was to be politically and theoretically as actively engaged in the global, world-systemic series of "gaze from below" anti–color line, therefore anticolonial cum antiapartheid struggles, as he was to be in his own "local" U.S. one—a position Fanon would similarly adopt.[304]

[300] McKittrick, 21.
[301] McKittrick, 21.
[302] McKittrick, 22.
[303] McKittrick, 41.
[304] McKittrick, 51–52.

Wynter's gaze from below is locally activist, globally critical, and aimed at creating a new world through the invention of new ways of being human brought about by transgressing the roles socially-determined by the hegemonic order of who can think, act, and judge in the name of the human.[305] In this way, Wynter serves my case study of PIH that aims to raise concrete examples of how humanitarians on both sides of the Western-centric humanitarian "we" can cross lines of social power to relieve suffering in ways that do not reproduce colonial power arrangements but instead make a new world.

Wynter's account of the gaze from below informs my examination of how Latin American liberation theology made a way for Partners In Health to change the status quo in global health. "A preferential option for the poor in health care" unsettles Western-centric humanitarian power when it is seen as a gaze from below: local critical reflection and action that transgress the globally accepted norms of whose expertise matters for effective global health interventions. Western(ized) professional class health experts transgress their place in the world order by heeding the insights of people whose community these outside global experts have come to save. Members of the local communities transcend their role as "objects to be fixed" when they assume authority in the design and delivery of the global health interventions aimed at saving their lives.

Wynter's gaze from below is particularly helpful because Wynter accounts for the role of Western or Westernized professionals in work to trouble the status quo. In Wynter's account, elite training in the reigning order does not preclude Augustine, DuBois, and Fanon from contributing to a revolutionary reordering of being, knowledge, and power because they embrace the gaze from below. Western(ized) professionals can participate in the transformation of the status quo *if* they use their training to transgress and disrupt the very order of knowledge and power in which they were trained. *If* they put all of the resources at their disposal in active service of the struggle for liberation—which must include engaging the perspective and honoring the epistemological authority of people whom the empire has not accredited and indeed works to oppress—then Western(ized) professionals can participate in a revolution in the status quo even as they occupy elite expert positions in the current system, as Wynter herself did as a professor at Stanford University. The comfort and security that come with expert positions in elite Western institutions —whether academic or humanitarian— may make it more difficult for Western(ized)

[305] McKittrick, 33–34.

professionals to sustain thought and action that takes unapologetic and effective aim at the status quo. Wynter's articulation of the "gaze from below" shows, however, that it is possible. Her "gaze from below" informs my analysis of how a "preferential option for the poor" allows Latin American liberation theology to retain a world-shaping power in the field of global health even as it has arguably surrendered much of its edge to secure a seat in the Western academy.

Positionality alone does not determine "the gaze from below" or "the preferential option for the poor." Indeed, the current hegemonic regime of being, knowledge, and power traffics in positionality to designate who is human and to what degree by relative deviation from the position delineated as Man. Positionality in the current order is mapped by Man, and the positions made available by/in the reigning order are mapped to Man. To disregard these positions' power to delimit human action and thought is to expose, destabilize, and challenge the hegemonic system that invented and maintains the boundaries of these positions; and it asserts the possibility of being human outside of them. Wynter names explicitly that transgressing the roles assigned by oppressive hierarchies of being, knowledge, and power has the potential to create new ways of being human beyond the currency of Man:

> So here you have the idea that with being human everything is praxis. For we are not purely biological beings! As far as the eusocial insects like bees are concerned, their roles are genetically preprescribed for them. Ours are not, even though the biocentric meritocratic IQ bourgeois ideologues, such as the authors of *The Bell Curve*, try to tell us that they/we are. So the question is: What are the mechanisms, what are the technologies, what are the strategies by which we prescribe our own roles?[306]

Transgressing the roles assigned by the reigning order of being, knowledge, and power is the praxis of being human that troubles a status quo ordered around the dehumanizing logic of domination.

I pose Wynter's question in the humanitarian sphere: "what are the strategies by which we prescribe our own [humanitarian] roles?" Wynter's "we" levels the exclusive, Western-centric humanitarian "we" that I laid out in chapter two. Wynter's "we" is expansive. Her call to reinvent the human includes everyone on any side of any socially determined line of power and being. No role is "genetically preprescribed." All roles are socially constructed and can be razed and rewritten. Carrying Wynter's thought into the humanitarian field, I argue that a new humanitarian identity (and with it a new circulation of humanitarian power) can be born when

[306] McKittrick, 33–34.

people on both sides of the Western professional humanitarian we/them line transgress the roles prescribed for them in the current order of knowledge, being, and power. I use PIH as a case study to argue that one of the strategies to prescribe a new humanitarian role —a humanitarian identity that transgresses and does not reproduce the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power— is through an embrace of Latin American liberation theology as praxis.

Wynter's gaze from below helps me reckon with the problem of Paul Farmer in my case study of PIH. One of the founders of PIH, Farmer is a white physician and anthropologist from the United States, educated at Duke University and trained at Harvard Medical School, where he now holds an endowed university faculty chair. Farmer's is by far the most prominent and predominant figure who writes explicitly about how and why PIH draws on Latin American liberation theology. I therefore draw heavily on Farmer's writing, which poses a problem to my investigation. A key aspect of my argument for a new humanitarian identity is that the critical thought and action of people on the underside of the coloniality of being make new channels for knowledge and power, which creates a new humanitarian agent. Is my analysis legitimate and sound if the primary voice on which I draw is an elite Western global health expert, who trained and now teaches at Harvard University? While I still want to acknowledge and hold this tension going forward, Wynter's "gaze from below" helps me nuance the problem. Position in the current global hierarchy of being, knowledge, and power does not automatically confer or deny the ability to challenge the status quo. Western(ized) professional experts like Farmer can place their elite training in service of the transformation of an oppressive status quo. To do so they must embrace a gaze from below that heeds local activism and globally critical analysis in order to subvert the roles that channel power to create and sustain the social world along the reigning hierarchy of being and knowledge.

Though a liminal position vis-à-vis the hegemonic order of being, knowledge, and power does not automatically mean that a person engages the praxis of being human with the gaze from below, it is significant that Farmer's identity does not map precisely to all of the coordinates of Man. Farmer grew up poor in the United States. The Farmer family— two parents and six children —lived in a double decker-ish bus (originally outfitted by the public health department, it had a turret jutting out of the roof to accommodate an X-ray machine for TB screening, which later served as the three Farmer boys' bedroom) parked at a campground, and then in a boat

beside a bayou in Florida's central gulf coast. The Farmer family did not have running water.[307] Farmer's father was employed in various social service roles teaching at the public school and working with people with disabilities. Farmer's mother worked as a supermarket cashier (and later in life earned a bachelor's degree from Smith College as an Ada Comstock scholar, graduating the same spring Farmer graduated from Harvard Medical School).[308] Farmer received scholarships to Duke University and Harvard Medical School. Currently a university professor at Harvard, Farmer transcended the humble social position of his childhood.

The working class poverty of Farmer's youth, however, is not the sole or even primary reason I read him as an example of Wynter's gaze from below. Moving between positions determined by the hegemonic social order is not the same as transgressing these positions and challenging the system that institutes them. Farmer did not pursue a change in his social position for the sake of the wealth, comfort, and power that comes with upward mobility in the iniquitous status quo. Farmer did not rest in his position as an elite professional expert and turn occasionally to provide health care to people who were poor and sick as a way of giving back. Instead, Farmer transgressed his new social position to place his elite training in service of disrupting a status quo that distributed resources unequally based on the dominant assumption that "the only health care possible in rural Haiti was poor-quality health care."[309] Farmer's biographer Tracy Kidder describes how Farmer transgressed the status of his elite expert role, and how Farmer's action and critical reflection changed what Kidder takes for granted about the shape of the world:

> [Farmer] had graduated from Harvard Medical School and also had a Ph.D. in anthropology from Harvard. He worked in Boston four months of the year, living in a church rectory in a poor neighborhood. The rest of the year he worked without pay in Haiti, mainly doctoring peasants who had lost their land to a hydroelectric dam. […] Obviously, a young man with his advantages could have been doing good works as a doctor while commuting between Boston and a pleasant suburb — not between a room in what I imagined must be a grubby church rectory and the wasteland of central Haiti. The way he talked, it seemed he actually enjoyed living among Haitian peasant farmers. […] I felt as though, in Farmer, I'd been offered another way of thinking about a place like Haiti.[310]

[307] Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, 47–48, 54.
[308] Kidder, 49, 51.
[309] Paul Farmer, *To Repair the World: Paul Farmer Speaks to the Next Generation*, ed. Jonathan Weigel (Berkeley: University of California, 2013), 59.
[310] Kidder, 7–8.

I read Farmer's commitment to placing his elite Western education in service of local action and global critical reflection that can change the iniquitous status quo as an example of Wynter's gaze from below.

Farmer's writing gestures significantly at challenging the coloniality of knowledge production in his field for the sake of transforming the iniquitous shape of the world. Farmer aims to contribute to "a critical anthropology of structural violence" in contrast to conventional anthropology's "'diverted gaze'—diverted, of course, from structural violence."[311] Farmer's critique of the status quo in medicine and anthropology holds together the critical global analysis and the local activism that Wynter characterizes as the gaze from below. Farmer frames one of his first books, *The Uses of Haiti* published in 1994, as

> a close examination of the exploitation of the Haitian poor. Such an exercise calls for two complementary investigations. One examines the "large-scale" forces that have determined, to no small extent, the nature of the current crisis. These forces are chiefly economic and political and have evolved over time; this is thus necessarily a historical investigation […]. The second part of this exercise seeks to discern these same large-scale forces at work in the experiences of individual Haitians I have known.[312]

Farmer's devotes much space in his books for the people on the underside of dominant power to tell their stories and analyze the structural violence that targets them most grievously. Yolande Jean, for example, gets the first word of critical reflection in *The Uses of Haiti*. She directs the book's examination of the long history of the United States' exploitative and extractive relationship with Haiti from her perspective as a refugee who qualified for political asylum in the United States because of the torture she endured under Haiti's military regime, but who was detained at the Guantanamo military base and prevented from entering the United States because she was HIV-positive:

> Everyone in Haiti was always criticizing the American government, and I'd say "You're not there, so how do you know they really wish us harm?" They'd say, "but look what they did to us in 1915," and I'd respond, "But that was a long time ago; things have changed." And yet I've come to see that there hasn't really been any change. My experience on Guantanamo allowed me to discover that it was true — these things are their doing. I have no idea what we are to them — their bêtes noires, or perhaps devils. We're not human to them, but I don't know what we are. It's as if they see us as a part of the world born to serve as American lackeys. And that's just what's come to pass. They use us as they see fit.[313]

[311] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 28, 12.
[312] Farmer, *The Uses of Haiti*, 43–44.
[313] Farmer, 10.

Jean's critique is remarkable because too often structural violence limits the transmission of critical analysis by people on the underside of hegemonic power. "Haitian friends have commented on parts of this text," Farmer writes, "but all, with the exception of Yolande Jean, have asked to remain anonymous."[314] Structural violence denies people on the underside of power public authorship of their own stories and critical frames. Farmer and his Haitian friends resist in the best way they can, having Farmer tell their stories under pseudonyms.

Farmer's writing does not use the stories of local people to justify Western humanitarian relief. Rather, he shares the stories of individual people (with their permission) to indict the Western hegemonic global system that causes their local misery. Farmer makes a similar move in his latest book, *Fevers, Feuds, and Diamonds: Ebola and the Ravages of History*, as noted in Barbara King's review of the book for NPR:

> In this grim tale, it's a relief to read about the West African survivors of Ebola who work to help others rebuild their lives. The stories of Ibrahim Kamara and Yabom Koroma, Sierra Leoneans who endured sorrowful family losses as well as terrible illness, Farmer conveys partly in their own words. It makes for two gripping chapters.[315]

In the dominant Western-centric humanitarian sphere, Yolande Jean, Ibrahim Kamara, and Yabom Koroma are not viewed as humanitarians or even—Jean makes plain—as human. In Farmer's writing, however, they are the actors whose critical reflection and action address most effectively the major humanitarian crises of the day: political asylees crossing oceans in rafts; HIV; Ebola. They are the humanitarians reshaping humanitarian power. Farmer does not use the stories of Jean, Kamara, and Koroma as "local knowledge" for a Western-centric humanitarian agenda. Rather, I argue, Farmer includes Jean, Kamara, and Koroma telling their own stories to place his public writing in service of the gaze from below that unsettles the Western-centric status quo of humanitarian power. Farmer transgresses his preprescribed humanitarian role by making noticeable if imperfect gestures at including Jean's, Kamara's, and Koroma's critical action and reflection in his analysis of current humanitarian interventions. He disrupts the dominant Western-centric construction of the humanitarian as singular technical expert. Together, Farmer's, Jean's, Kamara's, and Koroma's praxis of being humanitarian outside of their preprescribed roles help shape a new humanitarian identity that contributes to liberation and

[314] Farmer, 8.
[315] King, Barbara J., "In 'Fevers, Feuds And Diamonds,' Paul Farmer Breaks Down Assumptions About Ebola," NPR.Org, accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2020/11/17/935337735/in-fevers-feuds-and-diamonds-paul-farmer-breaks-down-assumptions-about-ebola.

the creation of a new world beyond the current coloniality of being, knowledge, and power. This embrace of the gaze from below is, in my view, an example of Marcia Rigg's mediating ethic (which I introduced in chapter one) that advances liberation praxis through the impasse of a moral dilemma: not hearing Jean's, Kamara's, and Koroma's voices in the dominant humanitarian discourse; versus publishing pieces of their stories in widely-read books written by Farmer that circulate in his name.

Farmer's writing embraces the gaze from below not only because it grows out of his local activism and engages global critical analysis in order to challenge the status quo in global health, but also because the people whom PIH seeks to serve endorse Farmer's scholarship. Nerval Dorvil—a young adult born and raised in Cange, the remote village where the work of PIH began—has written an unpublished manuscript about the history of Cange. In his account, Dorvil cites Latin American liberation theologian Leonardo Boff's insight that "no one can express the pain of the oppressed better than they themselves." And yet, Dorvil trusts Farmer to analyze the global structural causes of Cange's poverty: "Paul Farmer is the model anthropologist who has learned how ethnographic and historical data can serve to (re)write the history of a community in a country impoverished by three centuries of French colonization and two centuries of American imperialism" (translation mine).[316] Dorvil's draws heavily on Corine Hewlett's French translation of Farmer's book about Cange, *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame*. I interpret Dorvil's writing about Farmer as an indication that Farmer successfully uses his elite training to advance critical reflection and action that the dispossessed themselves consider emancipatory, which is the praxis that Wynter calls the gaze from below. For better and for worse, Farmer's is the voice on which I draw most heavily for my case study on how PIH unsettles the coloniality of humanitarian being, knowledge, and power by embracing Latin American liberation theology's preferential option for the poor. I take Farmer's scholarly interventions of a Latin American liberation theological critique of Western humanitarian power as a mediating ethic interrupting dominant humanitarian assumptions ever so slightly. This is the same spirit in which I offer the scholarly intervention which is this dissertation: an imperfect start which I undertake because it is necessary to begin somewhere, even while I am certain that much more work remains to be done to advance global critical analysis and local action for the reordering of Western humanitarian power.

[316] Nerval Dorvil, "Entre l'obstacle et la détermination" (Cange, Haiti, September 2014), 19, 18.

5.2 Cange: A Territory Outside the Map and Off the Grid

Partners In Health (PIH) and its sister organization in Haiti, Zanmi Lasante (ZL) is a global health and social justice partnership founded in the mid-1980s that draws its mission to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care explicitly from Latin American liberation theology. PIH-ZL began in a place called Cange, a remote squatter settlement in the desolate, deforested mountains of central Haiti. Cange was not a municipality recognized by the state. You could not find Cange on a map. It was a desolate refuge for displaced people. The people of Cange lost their land along the fertile Artibonite River in the 1950s, when the Péligre hydroelectric dam (Figure 3) was constructed to provide electricity to the capital city Port au Prince. This development project was hatched in Washington DC, financed by a loan from the United States Export-Import Bank, and built by a large U.S. corporation.[317] After their land flooded, the people of Cange scrambled up the dry, uninhabited hills to try to survive on the catastrophic edge of extreme poverty in homes that amounted to little more than lean-tos thatched with banana leaves (Figure 4), without decent land to cultivate, and without access to medical care, education, clean drinking water, or even electricity. The power generated by the dam that cost them their livelihoods only went one way: to the capital city. The first people who came to call Cange home were truly dispossessed, mocked even by their fellow Haitians.

Figure 3: Péligre dam. Photo credit: Alison Lutz

Figure 4: Squatters' home in the Central Plateau, Haiti. Photo credit: Louise Ivers

[317] Paul Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 21.

The founders of PIH-ZL who joined the people of Cange in their struggle were well-educated people from the United States and Haiti, two of whom were profoundly influenced by Latin American liberation theology: Paul Farmer, a physician/anthropologist from the U.S.; and Fritz Lafontant, an Episcopal priest from Haiti. Drawn by his interests in medicine, anthropology, and Latin American liberation theology, Farmer went to Haiti after college and before medical school. Traveling to various clinics throughout the country, Farmer met Lafontant and wanted to join the nascent education and health project the Lafontant family had started in Cange. At the founding of PIH-ZL, the people of Cange said they needed a hospital and a school. They and their children were sick and dying, but could not access care at the public hospitals and clinics in neighboring communities because they could not afford the user fees charged there. They said they needed education, because if their children receive an education then their future will be better. They also stated that if they themselves had known how to read when the dam went in, they would have advocated for their rights. The people of Cange had hope and they had critical insight. They believed the world could be different, and they knew what it would take to make that happen. They connected health care, education, and their human rights. This insight was not something that educated people from the U.S. needed to bring them.[318] PIH-ZL got to work with the community. They opened a free clinic in Cange, initially staffed by volunteer clinicians from the U.S., and soon hired a full-time, permanent Haitian team of doctors, nurses, lab techs, and pharmacists. The clinic grew into a medical center with surgical capacity, a women's health center, an infectious disease pavilion, a pediatric ward, an ophthalmology service, and an oncology suite. All of the care was free for patients. PIH-ZL built a school, homes, and recruited the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina to fund a community water system designed by engineers from Clemson University. The people of Cange helped construct community latrines. After the water project and latrines were completed in 1986, infant diarrheal disease and other water-borne illnesses like typhoid that had taken countless lives in Cange were rarely seen in the village anymore.[319]

[318] Paul Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001), 45; Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 47.
[319] Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 49.

From these early days, PIH-ZL embodied the essence of Latin American liberation theology that Gustavo Gutiérrez describes in the one-page conclusion of *A Theology of Liberation*: "we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society and in the heart of the People of God, when they themselves 'account for the hope,' which they bear, when they are the protagonists of their own liberation."[320] PIH-ZL did not treat people in Cange as unfortunate objects to be fixed. Rather, they engaged the community—especially its poorest members—as protagonists of their own liberation and humanization. PIH-ZL trained and employed the people of Cange to be providers of health care as community health workers, patient navigators, supervisors and managers, and to be builders of homes and community infrastructure. Their children have received elite educations and are now nurses and doctors serving their community. Once a laughing stock, Cange has become a refuge welcoming patients from every corner of Haiti who cannot afford or access the care they need in their own communities.[321] In order to strengthen the health system, PIH-ZL partnered with the Haitian Ministry of Health to expand its work to fifteen hospitals and clinics in Haiti's two poorest departments.[322] Led by its Haitian physicians and always in partnership with the local public sector, PIH now works in eleven countries around the world.[323]

5.3 A Preferential Option for the Poor in Health Care

The resonances with Latin American liberation theology are not incidental or coincidental. Farmer is explicit that the principles of Latin American liberation theology guide the work of PIH-ZL.[324] Farmer's book *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* is his most sustained articulation of Latin American liberation theology's influence on PIH-ZL. Farmer argues in this book that people with dominant power control the discourse on health, human rights, and medical ethics, using words like cost effective, feasible, sustainable, local standard of care, and appropriate technology to legitimate as reasonable and

[320] Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 174.
[321] "RTHC Program Brings Haitian Boy to Boston for Skull Surgery," Partners In Health, accessed February 7, 2021, https://www.pih.org/article/rthc-program-brings-haitian-boy-to-boston-for-skull-surgery.
[322] "Haiti," Partners In Health, accessed January 31, 2021, https://www.pih.org/country/haiti.
[323] "Countries," accessed January 31, 2021, https://www.pih.org/countries.
[324] Paul Farmer and Gustavo Gutiérrez, *In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez*, ed. Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013), 19.

inevitable (if regrettable) the plight of the destitute sick who cannot access care – one of the most glaring human rights abuses and moral atrocities of our time. [325] To change this iniquitous status quo, Farmer argues, people with power must listen to the voices of people on the underside of dominant power and see human rights abuses from their point of view.[326] They do want not charity but a new social order.[327] People at the top of the global socio-economic order must "adopt a moral stance that would seek to expose and prevent the pathologies of power."[328] What is at stake for the dispossessed is life and death, and for the privileged the ability of reasserting their humanity.[329]

Chapter five of *Pathologies of Power* is devoted to the influence Latin American liberation theology has had on the work PIH-ZL: "Health, Healing, and Social Justice: Insights from Liberation Theology." In this chapter Farmer recounts a story that gets at the heart of how PIH-ZL understands the "preferential option for the poor" as an epistemological claim about the knowledge required to change how resources flow to build a new world. In 1988, three people who were HIV negative and were undergoing treatment for tuberculosis (TB) at the PIH-ZL clinic died. TB is curable and patients undergoing treatment should not die. PIH-ZL leadership convened the clinic staff in a series of meetings to pose the circumstances of these patients' death as a problem to the staff. The very fact that PIH-ZL convened this case conference demonstrates the leadership's explicit embrace of the principles of liberating praxis. The leadership could have said, "We are already providing free health care for the poor where other people said it was impossible. What more can we do?" Because liberating praxis is an ongoing cycle of critical reflection and action, PIH-ZL leaders did not ignore the deaths of these three patients. Because of its guiding commitment to engage people who are dispossessed as primary actors in the work to transform the system that oppresses them, PIH-ZL convened not only the professional humanitarians from Haiti's upper and middle classes, but also included the community health workers who are members of the poor communities PIH-ZL serves.

The entire staff together reflected critically on what happened that three TB patients died while in PIH-ZL's care—an outcome that disrupted PIH-ZL's assumptions about the work they

[325] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 209.
[326] Farmer, 176, 17, 212.
[327] Farmer, 139.
[328] Farmer, 21.
[329] Farmer, 176.

were doing. Most of the Haitian doctors and nurses from the professional middle class—who are not heartless, as evidenced by the fact that they serve the poor in a rural squatter settlement—believed the patients died because they did not adhere to their treatment. As soon as the patients started feeling better, the professional-class Haitian clinicians reasoned, these peasant farmers stopped coming to the clinic due to their belief that TB is spread by sorcery. The Haitian community health workers, by contrast, argued that adherence was related to socioeconomic factors: patients stopped coming for treatment once they began to feel better because of the grinding and unyielding work it took to survive as subsistence farmers. They could not afford the time away from tending their crops and caring for their families, or the fees to rent a donkey for the arduous journey to the clinic.

PIH-ZL developed an informal study to test these hypotheses. They provided daily home visits, transportation fees, food, and cash support to patients diagnosed with TB in PIH-ZL's catchment area. "The new program," Farmer writes, "was aggressive and community-based, relying heavily on community health workers for close follow-up. It also responded to patients' appeals for nutritional assistance. The patients argued, often with some vehemence and always with eloquence, that to give medicines without food was tantamount to *lave men, siye ate* (washing one's hands and then wiping them dry in the dirt)."[330] Patients outside of PIH-ZL's catchment area continued to receive free TB treatment, but were not enrolled in the socioeconomic support program. "The difference in the outcomes of the two groups was little short of startling," Farmer reports. All of the patients who received socioeconomic support were cured of TB. In the group from outside the catchment area, only half adhered to their treatment until they were cured.[331] Without the critical insights of people on the underside of the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power, the knowledge and technical tools of the professional-class humanitarian clincians could not cure TB, nevermind change the shape of the world that denied poor people access to health care in the first place.

This transformation in health care delivery for the dispossessed was possible because people on the underside of dominant power were consulted and considered as full agents in this humanitarian project. An expansion of whose knowledge counted as necessary for effective humanitarian intervention changed the circulation of humanitarian power, catalyzing a change in

[330] Farmer, 149.
[331] Farmer, 148–50.

how humanitarian resources flowed, resulting in health outcomes once deemed unattainable for poor people from poor communities. In short, a new world was created because the voices of the oppressed were, as emilie townes calls for in *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* "included into the discourse—not as additive or appendage, but as resource and codeterminer of actions and strategies."[332] Indeed, if the people from the community had not been in the discussion as agents with salient critical insight, the humanitarians from outside of the community would not have understood the situation properly or acted to transform it. They would have blamed the failure on the individual patients, taking poor health outcomes as inevitable. Because PIH-ZL acted on a preferential option for the poor at every stage of health care delivery, the professional-class humanitarians (Haitian and foreign) were stretched to reflect critically beyond their Westernized professional training in medicine, nursing and pharmacology.

A preferential option for the poor also guided PIH-ZL's controversial (at the time) decision to provide antiretroviral therapy (ART) to people with AIDS in Cange in the mid-to-late 1990s, when treatment cost over $10,000 per patient per year. The international health experts said it was a misguided idea because treatment was too costly and too complex for the people and the health system in rural Haiti.[333] These arbiters of global health based in Western centers of power took the weak health care system in Haiti as inevitable and the global price of ART as fixed. They made arrogant racist and classist assumptions about poor people in Haiti, arguing that they could not tell time or be trusted to understand that it was important to remain compliant to their drug regimens. The international authorities could not imagine a world in which standard HIV treatment was affordable and could be delivered in economically disadvantaged settings. PIH-ZL's patients knew the system was not natural. It had been set up to exclude them and could be changed. Speaking about the cost of antiretroviral medications at a PIH-ZL staff meeting, Adeline Merçon—PIH-ZL patient, community health worker, and activist—said: "Science made them, so science will have to find a way to get them to poor people, since we're the ones who have AIDS."[334] Against the advice of the international experts, PIH-ZL heeded the direction of

[332] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 16.
[333] Farmer, *To Repair the World*, xxi.
[334] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, xx.

their patients, who had asked the PIH-ZL clinicians for ART since the news of the miraculous three-drug cocktail hit the international press in 1996.[335]

PIH-ZL followed its patients' belief that treating AIDS in poor settings like Cange was not only possible, but that it would change the world. And it did. PIH-ZL was one organization in a network of actors who challenged the reigning rules and assumptions of the status quo. AIDS activists and the governments of Brazil, South Africa, and other countries hit hard by HIV challenged big pharmaceutical companies and global trade policy to push for generic drug manufacturing and other changes to the system in order to remove the barriers to ART access.[336] Today over eighteen million people around the world receive antiretroviral therapy and it costs less than $100 per patient per year.

This radical change in the global status quo for HIV care demonstrates that the initial failure to treat poor people with AIDS was the result of people with access to humanitarian power and authority taking the shape of the world—and their singular place in it—as fixed. Their humanitarian interventions were geared more toward managing and legitimating inequity than delivering health care. What brought about a radical change the status quo in humanitarian medicine despite their resistance? The insights and actions of people on the underside of power who knew the system was set up to benefit the few and could be reset to include the many. PIH-ZL's patients took a central role in this struggle, publishing the "Cange Declaration" arguing that poor people everywhere deserve as a human right the ART poor patients in Cange received. It is worth quoting in full because it is a powerful instance of people who are dispossessed addressing professional class humanitarians. In the Cange Declaration, people on the underside of dominant power voice the local activism and global critical analysis that constitutes their liberative praxis of being human, transgressing the role to which the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power would confine them:

> We, the patients of Zanmi Lasante (Partners In Health) in Cange, have a declaration we would like to put before all of you. It is we who are sick; it is therefore we who take the responsibility to declare our suffering, our misery, and our pain, as well as our hope. We hear many poignant statements about our circumstances, but we feel compelled to say something more categorical and more resounding than what we have heard.

---

[335] "Dr. Paul Farmer Challenges Profit-Driven Medical System While Bringing Healthcare to Poor Communities Worldwide," *Democracy Now!*, May 28, 2008, http://www.democracynow.org/2008/5/28/dr_paul_farmer_challenges_profit_driven.

[336] Ellen 't Hoen et al., "Driving a Decade of Change: HIV/AIDS, Patents and Access to Medicines for All," *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 14 (March 27, 2011): 15.

We, the patients of Partners In Health, are fortunate to receive medication and health care even if we do not have money. Many of our health problems have been resolved with the medications. Given how bad off we used to be, we have greatly benefited. But while we feel fortunate to receive the medications, we feel sad for others who don't receive the same treatment we do.

In addition to our health problems, we have other tribulations. Even while preoccupied with being sick, we still have the problem of paying for housing. We have trouble finding employment. We remain concerned about sending our children to school, and every day we face the distressful reality that we cannot find the means to support them. Not being able to feed our children is the greatest challenge faced by mothers and fathers all over the nation of Haiti. We have learned that such calamities occur in other countries as well. As we reflect on all these tragedies we must ask: is not every human being a person?

Yes, all human beings are people. It is we, the afflicted, who are speaking. We have come together in Cange to expose the difficulties facing the sick. We also have some ideas in our knapsacks that we would like to share with you who are in authority, to see what you can do to resolve the health problems of the poor.

We have a message for all those who are concerned about us and who care about our health: we would like to thank you for the heavy load you carry with us.

When we the sick, who are living with AIDS, speak on the subject of "Health and Human Rights," we are aware of two rights that ought to be indivisible, inalienable. Those who are sick should have the right to health care. We who are already infected believe in prevention too. But prevention will not cure those who are already sick. We need treatment when we are sick, but for the poor there are no clinics, no doctors, no nurses, no health care. Furthermore, the medications that are available are too expensive. For HIV treatment, for example, we see in the newspaper that it should cost less than $600 per year. Although that is what is quoted in the press statements, here in a poor, small country like Haiti, it costs twice as much.

The right to health is the right to life. Everyone has a right to live. That means if we were not living in misery but in poverty, we would not be in this predicament today. Having no resources is a great problem for poor people, especially for women and those with small children. This is what in our abject Haitian reality is recognized as "the very struggle for life which inherently destroys life"; that is, as we scrape for life, we encounter death.

If everyone had a right to food, education, health—the way it ought to be—we would not be in such dire straits today. It is imperative that we resolve the problems of poor or no roads, water, and electricity so that everyone may live like a human being.

Why are they destroying us so? Is it because we are the poorest that they do not take our survival into consideration? Is it because we are the poorest that we are marginalized, that they do not care about us?

We have a message for the people who are here and for those who are able to hear our plea. We are seeking your solidarity. The battle we are engaged in—to find adequate care for those with AIDS, tuberculosis, and other illnesses—is the same as the combat that has been waged by other victimized people over time so everyone can live as a human being.

For those who are listening today, we have another message: this message is for those who manufacture medications. We would like to encourage you to develop and generate medications and to continue doing research. But if you do not lower the prices, we, the abject poor, will not be able to buy the medicines essential to our survival and, inevitably, we will get even sicker. We will continue to die before your very eyes, fully aware that our already insufferable situation grows worse every day.

We are making an appeal to you, Mrs. Titide (Haiti's then first lady, Mildred Aristide, who was in attendance). We, the patients of Cange, take our hats off to you for your pronouncements on our behalf at the United Nations meeting. We know you have the conviction and the will; we know you are fighting for US. Nonetheless, we ask that the government make more of an effort to rally around those of us who are sick by helping to provide us with good doctors, good nurses, good medications. We dispatch this same request to the minister of Health. It would be wise for you who are in authority to do this work quickly, before more of us who are poor die.

We have a message for all those who are concerned about us and who care about our health: we would like to thank you for the heavy load you carry with us. We who are sick love you very much, and we ask you to hang in there, to persevere with us. We recognize that it is not easy to find dedicated people like you. We are speaking specifically about the "accompagnateurs," auxiliaries, nurses, doctors, administrators and everyone all around who attends to us, including all those who cook, wash, and iron for us.

We have a message for you who suffer from the same sickness as we do. We would like to tell you not to get discouraged because you do not have medications. We pledge to remain steadfast in this fight and never to tire of fighting for the right of everyone to have necessary medications and adequate treatment.

We also have a message for the big shots—for those from other countries as well as from Haiti, and from big organizations like the World Bank and USAID. We ask you to take consciousness of all that we continually endure. We too are human beings, we too are people. We entreat you to put aside your egotism and selfishness, and to stop wasting critical funds by buying big cars, constructing big buildings, and amassing huge salaries.

Please also stop lying about the poor. It has been alleged that we don't know how to tell time and that is the reason we are ineligible or unworthy of medications that have to be taken at scheduled intervals. Stop accusing us unjustly and propagating erroneous assumptions about our right to health and our unconditional right to life. We are indeed poor, but just because we are poor does not automatically mean we are also stupid!

It is our ardent wish that this message not be put aside or relegated to the files as just another paper document. As Haitian popular wisdom asserts, "As long as the head is not cut off, the hope of wearing a hat remains." [337]

[337] "Cange Declaration: PIH's First HIV Patients Advocate for Equal Access to Treatment," Partners In Health, accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.pih.org/article/cange-declaration-pihs-first-hiv-patients-advocate-for-equity-in-access-to.

In the Cange Declaration, PIH-ZL's patients who shoulder the dual burdens of poverty and disease put forward an unflinching analysis of the structural causes of their suffering, and their hope in a new way of ordering the world.

Farmer—amplifying insights from his patients and from Latin American liberation theology—takes seriously the importance of a critical analysis of the structural causes of social misery. Farmer's book *Infections and Inequalities* focuses on this central tenet and "examines inequalities in the distribution and outcome of infectious diseases…which are biological in their expression but are largely socially determined."[338] He posits TB as a prime example:

> Take tuberculosis, with its persistence in poor countries and its resurgence among the poor of many industrialized nations. We cannot understand its marked patterned occurrence — in the United States, for example, afflicting those in homeless shelters and in prison — without understanding how social forces, ranging from political violence to racism, come to be embodied as individual pathology.[339]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Farmer put it more simply: "we will attack how social inequalities get into the body and what we can do to get them out."[340] Guided by his desire to relieve the suffering of the poor, Farmer trained formally in medicine and anthropology. He credits Latin American liberation theology, however, with helping him understand the social forces that create the very misery he feels called to relieve.

If people who cross lines of social power in order to relieve suffering want to understand the misery they seek to ease, they must draw near and listen to the experience of people who are most directly affected by it— people who are also usually farthest from the elite institutions where policies get determined and hierarchies of being, knowledge, and power are legitimated. As Farmer puts it: "I would read stuff from scholarly texts and know they were wrong. Living in Haiti, I realized that a minor error in one setting of power and privilege could have an enormous impact on the poor in another."[341] Through his engagement with Latin American liberation theology and its attention to the ways dominant power creates distorted and taken-for-granted assumptions about human life and social reality that serve the interests of the elite, Farmer came to realize that his training in anthropology had led him to interpret structural violence as cultural

[338] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, 4.
[339] Farmer, 13.
[340] Paul Farmer, Abdul El-Sayed, and Ai-Jen Poo, Post Covid-19: Universal Health Care and the Care Economy, interview by Elizabeth Kiss and Evie O'Brien, Webinar, May 6, 2020, https://www.atlanticfellows.org/news/2020/5/12/webinar-series-a-knew-world-reimagined-post-covid-19.
[341] Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, 78.

difference.[342] He became aware that the knowledge generated by people formed in countries at the center of global economic power served the interests of dominant power.[343] Liberation theology gave him the framework to think with people on the periphery about the global dynamics that placed and held them there. It was a framework that provided, in Farmer's words, "a powerful rebuke to the hiding away of poverty."[344] Because of the influence of Latin American liberation theology's preferential option for the poor, Farmer was able to swivel his gaze from that of a foreign physician and anthropologist coming to study and heal the people of Haiti to that of someone who had been converted to the side of the poor and looked back with them on the forces—structural, social, epistemological, economic and political—that made them more vulnerable to disease and also less likely to be treated for it.

In *Reimagining Global Health*, Farmer draws on Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality, which describes the mechanism by which social worlds become both internalized and objectively real, and to show that the creation of another world is possible.[345] Farmer quotes Berger and Luckmann to underline how important it is to heed the viewpoint of agents on the underside of dominant power to counter the failure of imagination in global health: "one must understand the social organization that permits the definers to do their defining. Put a little crudely, it is essential to keep pushing questions about the historically available conceptualizations of reality from the abstract 'What?' to the socially concrete 'Says who?'"[346] Reality takes shape and comes to be taken as inevitable, Berger and Luckmann argue, through the dialectical process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In externalization, human activity produces an agreed-upon social world and knowledge of it. Note that this "agreement" can come through coercion and domination. In objectivation, the externalized social world and knowledge of it become objectively real with concrete, life-and-death implications. And finally though internalization, objectivated reality is taken in as subjectively meaningful, prescribing and circumscribing human activity. The reality that shapes people's lives is made by people. To question what is taken for granted as reality is to question the people who produced it, and it is to know that one can be part of creating a new

[342] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, 95.
[343] Farmer, 8.
[344] Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, 78.
[345] Farmer et al., *Reimagining Global Health*, 18–19.
[346] Farmer et al., 18.

social world. PIH-ZL continues to question the global health rulers and their reigning assumptions about the world, evinced by the team's fight to administer the cholera vaccine in Haiti in 2012 after an outbreak was introduced by UN peacekeeping forces, and to provide IV fluids to all people that PIH treated for Ebola in West Africa in 2015.[347]

Liberation theology's use of dependency theory informs Farmer's diagnosis of the injustice and inequity that beset global health. The underdevelopment in some parts of the world is directly related to the wealth and power in other parts. Farmer notes that countries on the periphery are underdeveloped because they are "tightly bound" to wealthy nations at the center of global economic power.[348] Farmer gives two examples of how this effects global health: one which shows how dependency blocks access to health; and another in which critical reflection on the iniquitous dynamic of dependency spurs critical action on behalf of people living in poverty. The first example comes from Peru, where the government and international health community failed to treat multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDRTB) there:

> The insistence that it is too expensive to treat MDRTB in poor countries is also a failure of social analysis…In fact, the degree of accumulated world wealth is altogether unprecedented. This accumulation has occurred, however, in tandem with growing inequality and the draining of resources away from regions where tuberculosis is most endemic. Simply following the money trail reveals both the degree of available capital and also the degree to which resource flows are transnational. For example, in 1996, Peru made debt payments, largely to U.S. banks and the international financial institutions, of $1.25 billion — over 14 percent of total government expenditures. Projections for 1997 estimated that debt payments would total $1.85 billion, representing 18.7 percent of all government outlays. And is it merely polemical to observe that, even as MDRTB was deemed too costly to treat in Peru, the government spent $350 million for a dozen fighter jets, calling the deal "a terrific bargain"?[349]

The second example comes from PIH-ZL's decision to treat people in Cange with ART, as described above. "We based our policy," Farmer writes, "on a simple premise: these people are sick, we're health care providers, and these medications are part of the same global economy that, after all, created Haiti as a slave colony to provide Europe with sugar, coffee, and other

[347] Farmer, *To Repair the World*, xxii–xxiii; Donald G. McNeil Jr., "Ebola Doctors Are Divided on IV Therapy in Africa," *New York Times*, January 1, 2015, sec. Health, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/02/health/ebola-doctors-are-divided-on-iv-therapy-in-africa.html; Paul Farmer, "The Secret to Curing West Africa from Ebola Is No Secret at All," *Washington Post*, January 16, 2015, sec. Opinions, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/paul-farmer-the-secret-to-curing-west-africa-from-ebola-is-no-secret-at-all/2015/01/16/658a6686-9cb9-11e4-bcfb-059ec7a93ddc_story.html.
[348] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, xiii.
[349] Farmer, 278.

tropical produce."[350] Here, the PIH-ZL "we"—like Wynter's—is not the Western-centric humanitarian "we." The PIH-ZL "we" includes patients and community health workers alongside Harvard physicians as co-determiners of liberative health care praxis.

Like the Latin American liberation theologians, Farmer points out that the development model cannot account for or ameliorate the poverty and social misery of people living in developed countries. The oppression, exploitation and poverty in Haiti and Peru, Farmer contends, cannot be understood apart from the social misery in the United States and Britain.[351] Farmer also raises a critique of the development model voiced to him by the people of Cange. By their own estimation, the people of Cange were pushed to the catastrophic edge of extreme poverty by the hydroelectric dam that flooded their land, which was undertaken in the name of development by the experts in Washington and the elites in Port au Prince.[352]

Without critical analysis of global power arrangements, these socially constructed dynamics of domination go unnoticed: "a lack of systemic and critical analysis," Farmer writes "permits these global ties to be obscured."[353] The current dynamic of dominance was generated by Western European and white North American power and spread across the world through conquest, colonization, enslavement and globalization. If specific manifestations of poverty are not seen as a product of the circuitry of the iniquitous world order, then they are taken as natural and normal. It is thus deemed reasonable and inevitable—even if it is said with a sympathetic shake of the head by Western elites—that people who are poor will not have access to health care. Farmer points out that this social construction of reality hides a moral claim about the relative value of human worth:

> Through analytic chicanery — the claim that the world is composed of discretely bounded nation-states, some rich, some poor — we're asked to swallow what is, ultimately, a story of growing inequality and our willingness to caution it. But careful systemic analysis of pandemic disease leads us to see links, not disjunctives. When these failures of analysis are pointed out, the real reason that MDRTB is treatable in the United States and "untreatable" in Peru or Haiti comes into view. Opposition to the aggressive treatment of MDRTB in developing countries may be justified as "sensible" or "pragmatic," but as a policy it is tantamount to the differential valuation of human life, for those who advocate such a policy, regardless of their nationality, would never accept such a death sentence themselves. It is because MDRTB's victims tend to be poor, and thus less valuable, that such policies appear reasonable.[354]

[350] Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, xviii.
[351] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, 280.
[352] Farmer, *AIDS and Accusation*, 7.
[353] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, 281.
[354] Farmer, 278.

Farmer learns from the Latin American liberation theologians to judge reigning assumptions from the critical perspective of the dispossessed born of their lived experience, quoting Jon Sobrino: "the poor and impoverished of the world, in virtue of their very reality, constitute the most radical question of the truth of this world, as well as the most correct response to this question."[355] Farmer applies this insight to global health: "critical epistemology needs to ask what features of disease emergence are obscured by dominant analytic frameworks."[356] People who are dispossessed experience the dehumanizing oppression required to maintain the status quo and are best positioned to perceive and articulate the ways it is not natural or inevitable. "[T]he destitute sick," Farmer writes, "should be the primary judges of any code of medical ethics."[357]

PIH-ZL heeds its patients' conviction that liberative praxis must include both critical reflection and action to transform the world structured by injustice and inequity. Kidder captures this view in the following anecdote: "when asked 'How could a just God permit great misery [like theirs]?' The Haitian peasants answered with a proverb: 'Bondye konn bay, men li pa konn separe,' in literal translation, 'God gives but doesn't share.' This meant, as Farmer would later explain it, 'God gives us humans everything we need to flourish, but he's not the one who's supposed to divvy up the loot. That charge was laid upon us.'"[358] Farmer carries into the academic circles to which his elite education gives him access this insight about the centrality of liberative action that he learns from his patients. In the book *In the Company of the Poor* which grew out of Farmer's public conversations with Gustavo Gutiérrez at the University of Notre Dame, Farmer writes that "[u]nderstanding poverty as 'structured evil,' and understanding how it is perpetuated is not the same as fighting it."[359] Knowledge that serves only to carve out an elite role in the hegemonic order impedes liberative praxis. Farmer uses this insight to analyze the problem of technical expertise in Western-centric global health:

> [T]hose who formulate health policy in Geneva, Washington, New York, or Paris do not really labor to transform the social conditions of the wretched of the earth. Instead, the actions of technocrats—and what physician is not a technocrat?—are most often tantamount to managing social inequality, to keeping the problem under control.[360]

[355] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 202.
[356] Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*, 5.
[357] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 209.
[358] Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, 79.
[359] Farmer and Gutiérrez, *In the Company of the Poor*, 16.
[360] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 140.

When humanitarian knowledge is severed from local action to transform socially structured suffering, it becomes the property of Western(ized) professional elites, who exercise the power to know to prescribe policies and roles that reinforce the current shape of the world.

A disordered veneration of Western expertise over the lived experience of poor people results in the increase in structural inequity and structural violence, which Farmer (following Gutiérrez and Sobrino, respectively) calls sin.[361] Following the Latin American liberation theologians, Farmer's analysis of sin includes its social dimension: "as science and technology advance," Farmer asserts, "our structural sin deepens."[362] Farmer recalls learning this from Father Lafontant:

> [Farmer] came back to Cange from Harvard and found that Père Lafontant had overseen the construction of thirty fine-looking concrete latrines, scattered through the village. "But," Farmer asked, "are they appropriate technology?" He'd picked up the term in a class at the Harvard School of Public Health. […] "Do you know what appropriate technology means? It means good things for rich people and shit for the poor," the priest growled, and refused to speak to Farmer again for a couple of days.[363]

In the current global order, technological advances go to those who can pay for them, which exacerbates the socially structured difference in value placed on some lives over others, and keeps the power to make these determinations and to legitimate this unequal distribution of resources with Western or Westernized professional technical experts.

PIH-ZL draws on the Latin American liberation theological practice of accompaniment to unsettle the dominating power of technical expertise. The first generation of Latin American liberation theologian priests renounced the model of leading from above in favor of walking alongside the people they were called to serve. To accompany people who are oppressed is to walk alongside them and ease their way on the roads of life that are made perilous or inaccessible by structural barriers, which often means—as the Cange Declaration states—a literal lack of a road in and out of their communities. The Latin root of accompaniment means to share bread on the journey. PIH-ZL embodies the practice of accompaniment through its daily home visits and socio-economic support program for patients being treated for TB or HIV, described previously. When patients cannot return to the clinic or adhere to their treatment, members of the PIH-ZL team go to the patients and provide what they need, to make the way to wellness easier

[361] Farmer and Gutiérrez, *In the Company of the Poor*, 22; Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 300 fn12.
[362] Jennie Weiss Block, *Paul Farmer: Servant to the Poor* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2018), 54.
[363] Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, 89–90.

for them by walking alongside them. As Farmer puts it, "Instead of asking 'why don't patients comply with our treatments?' we began to ask, 'How can we accompany our patients on the road to cure or wellness or a life with less suffering due to disease?'"[364]

In contrast to accompaniment, technical expertise insists on the rightness of its way, plan, or program, and demands that people go along with it as the only possibility, even if it is ineffective, difficult, harmful, inadequate, unjust, or degrading. Technical expertise privileges a single dominant authority shaped by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power. Accompaniment is cooperative; those who are being accompanied are co-determiners of the way forward. As Farmer writes:

> It's easy to be dismissive of accompaniment in a world in which technical expertise is advanced as the answer to every problem. But expertise alone will not solve the difficult problems. This was the long, hard lesson of the earthquake: we all waited to be saved by expertise, and it never came. Accompaniment does not privilege technical prowess above solidarity or compassion or a willingness to tackle what may seem to be insuperable challenges. It requires cooperation, openness, and teamwork.[365]

Accompaniment unsettles the power of the Westernized technical expert. PIH-ZL chose the name Partners In Health to signal its commitment to the model of accompaniment. The primary *partners in health* are the patients themselves. PIH-ZL staff and their patients together comprise Partners In Health. Accompaniment is not hierarchical; it does not privilege professional status, training, or knowledge. While every member of the PIH-ZL team carries out their work with the posture of accompaniment, it is the community health workers from the dispossessed communities themselves who have the title "accompagnateur."

For accompaniment to advance liberative praxis, the Western(ized) professionals and the dispossessed people whom they serve must transgress the roles prescribed for them in the hegemonic order of being, knowledge, and power. A young professional class physician from Mexico who worked with PIH to serve the rural poor in Chiapas, Mexico, in the 2010s describes the painful process by which he learned this truth. Hector Carrasco was at the time a self-identified "newly minted physician from a middle-class family who had been educated at an elite medical school."[366] Carrasco recounts treating a child for pneumonia at the PIH clinic in

---

[364] Paul Farmer, "Sacred Medicine," *Sojourners*, December 11, 2013, https://sojo.net/magazine/january-2014/sacred-medicine.
[365] Farmer, *To Repair the World*, 246.
[366] Héctor Carrasco, Luke Messac, and Seth M. Holmes, "Misrecognition and Critical Consciousness — An 18-Month-Old Boy with Pneumonia and Chronic Malnutrition," *New England Journal of Medicine* 380, no. 25 (June 20, 2019): 2386.

Chiapas. Chronic malnutrition made the child and dozens of other children in the small rural community vulnerable to life-threatening diseases. Wanting to address this root cause of suffering in the community, Carrasco started a class for all of the parents in the community who had children with malnutrition. Of the 50 parents, five saw the two-month program to the end. Carrasco was confused. An elderly woman in the community explained to him: "Doctorcito, the problem isn't lack of education; the problem is lack of food."[367] In response, Carrasco launched an egg incubation project and asked a community health worker to oversee it. Because of power outages, the eggs did not hatch. Carrasco then started a community demonstration garden, soliciting the community's help to dig, plow, plant, and hoe with him. Because of lack of fertilizer and poor soil conditions, a season's worth of effort yielded four carrots and one head of lettuce. Finally, Carrasco called on another humanitarian agency, Heifer International, to implement an animal husbandry project. The community was asked if they wanted pigs, rabbits, or chickens, and they chose chickens. Carrasco wrote prescriptions for each family to receive fifteen chickens and one rooster. The result was disastrous for the community and devastating for Carrasco: the new chickens became ill with a disease that decimated their population and also wiped out the chickens that had been there before the Heifer intervention.[368] Carrasco's efforts left the community worse off.

In analyzing what went wrong, Carrasco draws on Pierre Bourdieu's misrecognition theory and Paulo Freire's concept of critical consciousness to argue that he attempted to bring behavioral and technical changes to a community whose primary problem was the unquestioned power imbalances born of an iniquitous social order with strictly delimited roles. Carrasco identifies the factors that contributed to this ill-fated intervention: "a failure to recognize constructed categories to explain social orders, assumptions, and habits; the misrecognition of structural problems as biological, behavioral, or technical; and a lack of critical consciousness."[369] The roles set by the social order limited people's ability to think and to act. Carrasco engaged the community in *implementing* the projects he proposed, even giving community members choice over which kind of animal they wanted to receive from Heifer International. The roles of Carrasco as professional-class-expert-who-knows-best and

[367] Carrasco, Messac, and Holmes, 2386.
[368] Carrasco, Messac, and Holmes, 2386.
[369] Héctor Carrasco and Stephanie Kang, "Good Intentions, Bad Outcomes in Global Health" (Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Global Health Organization, Nashville, TN, January 18, 2019).

community as recipients-of-the-ideas-and-resources-the-professional-brings, however, were never challenged or breached. As Carrasco put it, "community members embraced the doctor's ideas without question."[370] The local planning and action took place within the confines of the hierarchical roles established by the global system, and therefore even well-intentioned actions reinforced the social misery of the dispossessed that the current world order (re)produces.

This story demonstrates a key condition that determines whether or not PIH's mission to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care will serve to reorder humanitarian power. For PIH's embrace of Latin American liberation theology to change the death dealing status quo in global health care delivery, PIH must explicitly communicate and enact the gaze from below that demands a transgression of roles established by hegemonic power. Carrasco was a person of tremendous passion and goodwill who embraced a preferential option for the poor in health care wholeheartedly. He initially understood a preferential option for the poor as a call for well-educated and well-resourced experts to do everything possible to remove barriers that worked against the health and wellbeing of people who are dispossessed. Doing everything possible included asking about the root causes of his patients' suffering; not giving up in the face of failure; and engaging the community in implementing interventions aimed at helping them. It did not, however, include global critical analysis and local action that challenged the reigning order of knowledge, being, and power that authorized Carrasco's role as the expert who came from a global center of power with analysis and solutions that everyone assumed were superior in any context.

More than two decades after the PIH-ZL team in Cange heeded the insights of patients and community health workers to reorder its TB treatment program to include transportation fees, nutritional support, and income supplementation following the death of three HIV-negative patients, Carrasco had to learn through very difficult and painful praxis that a preferential option for the poor in health care which changes the status quo must take seriously the critical insights and actions of the poor as co-determiners of health interventions from the beginning. I read the story that Carrasco recounts not as a story of a failure of Latin American liberation theology and by extension of the PIH mission. As I have already argued, PIH's embrace of Latin American liberation theology was able to change the status quo in global health care delivery. I interpret Carraso's story as PIH's failure to include the gaze from below in its formation of new teams—

[370] Carrasco and Kang.

including professional staff and patients—as PIH grows. When it flows through the dominant circuits and roles of power established by the coloniality of being and knowledge, "a preferential option for the poor in health care" keeps power in professional-class Western(ized) humanitarian control, and reinforces the iniquitous status quo. Through trial and devastating error, Carrasco had to discover for himself the gaze from below that makes "a preferential option for the poor in health care" emancipatory praxis. For Latin American liberation theology to continue to contribute to the creation of new channels of humanitarian agency and knowledge beyond the current hegemonic order, people on both sides of the current "us/them" construction of Western-centric humanitarian power need to engage its liberative praxis to transgress their prescribed roles, along the ways Wynter suggests in her explication of the decolonial gaze from below.

5.4 Transgressing to Transform

The transformation of the world requires a change in the flow of the circuits of power that make and sustain it. If the top-down dynamics of oppression, exploitation and exclusion by the world's elite created the current global order, then beginning with the bottom-up critical action and reflection of the disinherited has the potential to create a different world. "Liberation theology, in contrast to officialdom," Farmer writes, "argues that genuine change will be most often rooted in small communities of poor people."[371] I have drawn on Sylvia Wynter's concept of the gaze from below to suggest that PIH-ZL's embrace of a preferential option for the poor in health care was able to change the status quo in global health care delivery for the poor only insofar as it engaged a liberative praxis of being human that transgressed the roles set by the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

From this case study of PIH-ZL's embrace of a preferential option for the poor in health care, I argue that reordering humanitarian power is possible. The critical insights and action of people on the underside of the coloniality of being, power, and knowledge create new channels through which power circulates to create new moral agents who can make a new world. Western(ized) professionals can participate in this liberative praxis of being human beyond the roles mapped to Man if these elites transgress their position to place their expertise in service of the gaze from below. By showing how the principles and praxes of Latin American liberation

[371] Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 140.

theology made a way for PIH-ZL to challenge the death-dealing status quo in global health, this chapter has thrown into stark relief the consequence of a humanitarianism that continues to operate along the colonial lines of being, power, and knowledge. What is at stake is what it means to be human. Status quo humanitarianism dehumanizes the poor by casting them as objects of humanitarian intervention without any agency; and it dehumanizes the humanitarian managerial class by limiting their agency to a narrow construction of technical expertise to fulfill their task of legitimating a dehumanizing system. Latin American liberation theology's preferential option for the poor can shift humanitarian power to the people suffering social misery and also transform the praxis of professional-class humanitarians. It provides a way for everyone to claim new forms of agency on the way to building together a new world in which it is easier for everyone to be more fully human beyond the coloniality of being, knowledge, and power.

References

"'15 Minutes to Leave': Denial of the Right to Adequate Housing in Post-Quake Haiti." London: Amnesty International, January 8, 2015. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/document/?indexNumber=AMR36%2f001%2f2015&language=en.

Ackerly, Brooke. "Breakthrough Evaluation: An External Rights-Based Evaluation of Grantmaking for Gender Equality." The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and The Global Fund for Women, February 26, 2012.

Ake, Claude. "Development and Underdevelopment." In *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, edited by Joel Krieger, Margaret E. Crahan, Lawrence R. Jacobs, William A. Joseph, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, and James A. Paul, Second., 218–21. New York: Oxford University, 2001.

Alexander, Michelle. "Let Our People Go." *New York Times*, May 13, 2020, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/opinion/coronavirus-prison-outbreak.html.

Alistair Kee. "Liberation Theology." *Grace Ministry Myanmar* (blog), November 23, 2016. https://graceministrymyanmar.blogspot.com/2016/11/liberation-theology-by-alistair-kee.html.

Althaus-Reid, Marcella. *Indecent Theology*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Amar, Paul. *Global South to the Rescue: Emerging Humanitarian Superpowers and Globalizing Rescue Industries*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

"American Jewish World Service Annual Report 2009." American Jewish World Service, June 2010. https://ajws.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2009_annual_report.pdf.

American Jewish World Service. "Our Story - AJWS." Accessed March 19, 2021. https://ajws.org/who-we-are/our-story/.

Anderson, Bernhard W. *Understanding the Old Testament*. 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986.

Anderson, Victor. "Foreword." In *The Rise and Demise of Black Theology*, by Alistair Kee. London: SCM, 2008.

Andes, Stephen J. C., and Julia G. Young, eds. *Local Church, Global Church*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2016.

Athanasius. *St. Athanasius on the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnatione Verbi Dei*. Translated by A Religious of C.S.M.V. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2002.

Baas, Jorn. “List of Common Acronyms.” The International NGO Safety Organisation. Accessed September 4, 2020. https://ngosafety.org/acronyms.

Barnett, Michael. *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2011.

Belluck, Pam, and Adeel Hassan. “Measles Outbreak Explained: Your Questions Answered.” *The New York Times*, April 25, 2019, sec. Health. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/us/measles-outbreak.html.

Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Open Road Media, 2011.

Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books, 1967.

Block, Jennie Weiss. *Paul Farmer: Servant to the Poor*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2018.

Boff, Leonardo, and Clodovis Boff. *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987.

Bohman, James. “Critical Theory.” In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2016. Stanford University, 2016. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/critical-theory/.

Bornstein, Erica, and Peter Redfield, eds. *Forces of Compassion: Humanitarianism between Ethics and Politics*. Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2011.

Borrero, Mauricio. “Spring Thaw, Summer Frost: Eastern Europe in 1968.” In *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, edited by Elaine Carey, 61–90. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016.

Brada, Betsey. “‘Not Here ’: Making the Spaces and Subjects of ‘Global Health’ in Botswana.” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (2011): 285–312.

Bretherton, Luke. *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination*. Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2003.

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre. “Chevron Lawsuit (Re Nigeria).” Accessed May 28, 2020. https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/chevron-lawsuit-re-nigeria.

Calder, Bruce J. “Dominican Invasion of 1965.” In *Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States*, edited by Suzanne Oboler and Deena J. González, 519–20. New York: Oxford University, 2005.

Campos, Nicole Gastineau, and Paul Farmer. “Partners: Discernment and Humanitarian Efforts in Settings of Violence.” *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 31, no. 4 (2003): 506–15.

Carey, Elaine. “Introduction: Student Protests in the United States and Beyond in 1968.” In *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, edited by Elaine Carey, xiv–xxxii. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016.

———. “Mexico’s 1968 Olympic Dream.” In *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, edited by Elaine Carey, 91–119. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016.

Carrasco, Héctor, and Stephanie Kang. “Good Intentions, Bad Outcomes in Global Health.” Presented at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Global Health Organization, Nashville, TN, January 18, 2019.

Carrasco, Héctor, Luke Messac, and Seth M. Holmes. “Misrecognition and Critical Consciousness — An 18-Month-Old Boy with Pneumonia and Chronic Malnutrition.” *New England Journal of Medicine* 380, no. 25 (June 20, 2019): 2385–89.

Carrigan, Ana, and Juliet Weber. *Monseñor: the Last Journey of Óscar Romero*. Documentary film. United States: First Run Features, 2011.

CDC Global Health. “List of Acronyms - Zimbabwe.” Accessed September 4, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/countries/zimbabwe/annual-report/list-of-acronyms.html#.

Çelik, Semih. “Between History of Humanitarianism and Humanitarianization of History. A Discussion on Ottoman Help for the Victims of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1852.” *Werkstatt Geschichte*, no. 68 (2015): 13–27.

Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. New York: Monthly Review, 2000.

Charles, Jacqueline. “Ten Years after Haiti’s Earthquake: A Decade of Aftershocks and Unkept Promises.” *Miami Herald*, January 8, 2020. https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article238836103.html.

Colonnesse, Michael, ed. *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council, Vol. 1*. Bogotá: General Secretariat of CELAM, 1970.

Cooper, Anna Julia. *A Voice from the South. By a Black Woman from the South*. Xenia, OH: Aldine Printing House, 1892. https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cooper/cooper.html.

———. *L'attitude de La France à l'égard de l'esclavage Pendant La Revolution*. Paris, France: Imprimerie de la Cour d'Appel, 1925.

Corradetti, Claudio. "The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory." In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by James Fieser and Bradley Dowden. Accessed October 3, 2017. http://www.iep.utm.edu/frankfur/.

Danticat, Edwidge. "The Long Legacy of Occupation in Haiti." *New Yorker*, July 28, 2015. https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/haiti-us-occupation-hundred-year-anniversary.

Davidson, Kief, and Pedro Kos. *Bending the Arc*. Documentary. Impact Partners, Scout & Scholar, Urban Landscapes Productions, 2017.

De La Torre, Miguel, ed. *Introducing Liberative Theologies*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015.

Dorrien, Gary. *Social Ethics in the Making: Interpreting an American Tradition*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

"Dr. Paul Farmer Challenges Profit-Driven Medical System While Bringing Healthcare to Poor Communities Worldwide." *Democracy Now!*, May 28, 2008. http://www.democracynow.org/2008/5/28/dr_paul_farmer_challenges_profit_driven.

Dromi, Shai M. *Above the Fray: The Red Cross and the Making of the Humanitarian NGO Sector*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2020.

Dussel, Enrique D. "Theology of Liberation and Marxism." In *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, edited by Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino, translated by Robert Barr, 85–102. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.

Eagleson, John, ed. *Puebla and Beyond*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1980.

Easterly, William. *Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*. Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2014.

Eddins, Crystal. "W.E.B. Du Bois, Haiti, and US Imperialism." African American Intellectual History Society. *Black Perspectives* (blog), January 28, 2020. https://www.aaihs.org/w-e-b-du-bois-haiti-and-us-imperialism/.

Eding, June, ed. *Hope for Africa: Voices from Around the World*. Hobart, NY: Hatherleigh, 2011.

Evans, Peter B. "Dependency." In *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, edited by Joel Krieger, Margaret E. Crahan, Lawrence R. Jacobs, William A. Joseph, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, and James A. Paul, 212–13. New York: Oxford University, 2001.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove, 2008.

———. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove, 2004.

Farmer, Paul. *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame*. Berkeley: University of California, 2006.

———. *Haiti After the Earthquake*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2011.

———. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*. Berkeley: University of California, 2001.

———. "On Partnership and Accompaniment: Three Questions, an Example, and Three Suggestions," November 4, 2018.

———. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2003.

———. "Sacred Medicine." *Sojourners*, December 11, 2013. https://sojo.net/magazine/january-2014/sacred-medicine.

———. "The Secret to Curing West Africa from Ebola Is No Secret at All." *Washington Post*, January 16, 2015, sec. Opinions. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/paul-farmer-the-secret-to-curing-west-africa-from-ebola-is-no-secret-at-all/2015/01/16/658a6686-9cb9-11e4-bcfb-059ec7a93ddc_story.html.

———. *The Uses of Haiti*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1994.

———. *To Repair the World: Paul Farmer Speaks to the Next Generation*. Edited by Jonathan Weigel. Berkeley: University of California, 2013.

Farmer, Paul, Abdul El-Sayed, and Ai-Jen Poo. Post Covid-19: Universal Health Care and the Care Economy. Interview by Elizabeth Kiss and Evie O'Brien. Webinar, May 6, 2020. https://www.atlanticfellows.org/news/2020/5/12/webinar-series-a-knew-world-reimagined-post-covid-19.

Farmer, Paul, and Gustavo Gutiérrez. *In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez*. Edited by Michael Griffin and Jennie Weiss Block. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013.

Farmer, Paul, Jim Yong Kim, Arthur Kleinman, and Matthew Basilico. *Reimagining Global Health: An Introduction*. Berkeley: University of California, 2013.

Fassin, Didier. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley: University of California, 2011.

Fassin, Didier, and Mariella Pandolfi. *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*. New York: Zone Books, 2010.

Fernandes, Luiza Beth. "Basic Ecclesiastic Communities in Brazil." *Harvard Educational Review* 55, no. 1 (April 1, 1985): 76–86.

Fischetti, Mark. "Africa Is Way Bigger Than You Think." *Scientific American Blog Network* (blog). Accessed June 21, 2020. https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/africa-is-way-bigger-than-you-think/.

Floyd-Thomas, Stacey M., ed. *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*. New York: New York University, 2006.

Galeano, Eduardo. *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. New York: Monthly Review, 1997.

Gardner, Tom. "Health Woes, Outrage, and Toxins near Ethiopia Gold Mine." *New Humanitarian*, May 27, 2020. https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigation/2020/05/27/Ethiopia-Oromia-Shakiso-gold-mine-health-problems.

Gass, Nick. "Trump: 'The Experts Are Terrible.'" POLITICO. Accessed April 24, 2019. https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/04/donald-trump-foreign-policy-experts-221528.

Gee, Alastair. "San Francisco or Mumbai? UN Envoy Encounters Homeless Life in California." *Guardian*, January 22, 2018, sec. US news. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/22/un-rapporteur-homeless-san-francisco-california.

Germain, Félix. "Student Protests in the Black Atlanta of May 1968." In *Protests in the Streets: 1968 across the Globe*, edited by Elaine Carey, 35–60. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2016.

Geuss, Raymond. *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School*. New York: Cambridge University, 1981.

Global Fund for Women. "Women's Revolution in Sudan: We Stand in Solidarity with Feminist Activists Fighting for Their Freedom," June 20, 2019. https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/sudan-womens-revolution-fighting-for-freedom/.

"Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018." Development Initiatives Ltd, June 19, 2018. http://devinit.org/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2018/.

González, Justo L., and Ondina E. González. *Christianity in Latin America: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007.

Gottschalk, Noah. “URGENT: Act Now to Help Immigrants and Asylum Seekers at Risk of COVID-19,” May 26, 2020.

Gould, Jeffrey L. “Solidarity under Siege: The Latin American Left, 1968.” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 348–75.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Kindle Edition., 2005.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983.

———. *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*. Translated by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010.

“Haiti’s Earthquake Death Toll Revised to at Least 250,000.” *Telegraph*, April 22, 2010, sec. World. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/haiti/7621756/Haitis-earthquake-death-toll-revised-to-at-least-250000.html.

Hallward, Peter. *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide, and the Politics of Containment*. Brooklyn: Verso, 2007.

Hamza, Mohamed. “Sudan’s Female Protesters Leading the pro-Democracy Movement.” *Al Jazeera*, April 23, 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/sudan-women-protesters-leading-pro-democracy-movement-190423134521604.html.

Hatherleigh Press. “About Us.” Accessed March 22, 2021. https://hatherleighcommunity.com/about-us/.

Hennelly, Alfred T., ed. *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990.

Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan, eds. *Participation, from Tyranny to Transformation?: Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development*. London: Zed Books, 2004.

Hoen, Ellen ’t, Jonathan Berger, Alexandra Calmy, and Suerie Moon. “Driving a Decade of Change: HIV/AIDS, Patents and Access to Medicines for All.” *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 14 (March 27, 2011): 15.

Holmes, Seth M., Angela C. Jenks, and Scott Stonington. “Clinical Subjectivation: Anthropologies of Contemporary Biomedical Training.” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (June 1, 2011): 105–12.

Horowitz, Aaron, and Brooke Madubuonwu. “New Model Shows Reducing Jail Population Will Lower COVID-19 Death Toll for All of Us.” American Civil Liberties Union. Accessed

May 26, 2020. https://www.aclu.org/news/smart-justice/new-model-shows-reducing-jail-population-will-lower-covid-19-death-toll-for-all-of-us/.

Hudson, Peter James. *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2017.

"Human Rights Violations and Access to Justice for the Victims of Chevron in Ecuador." CETIM, November 11, 2014. https://www.cetim.ch/human-rights-violations-and-access-to-justice-for-the-victims-of-chevron-in-ecuador/.

"Humanitarian Health Action Acronyms and Abbreviations." World Health Organization. Accessed September 4, 2020. https://www.who.int/hac/techguidance/tools/manuals/who_field_handbook/acronyms_abbreviations/en/.

"Humanitarianism, n." In *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed April 8, 2020. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/272189.

Hussain, Azhar, Syed Ali, Madiha Ahmed, and Sheharyar Hussain. "The Anti-Vaccination Movement: A Regression in Modern Medicine." *Cureus* 10, no. 7 (2018).

"International Bank for Reconstruction and Development." World Bank. Accessed January 14, 2018. http://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are/ibrd.

Joyce, Christopher. "Haiti's Buildings Weren't Fit To Withstand Quakes." *NPR.Org*, January 14, 2010. https://www.npr.org/2010/01/14/122547242/haitis-buildings-werent-fit-to-withstand-quakes.

Katz, Jonathan M. *Big Truck That Went By: How the World Came to Save Haiti and Left Behind a Disaster*. New York: St. Martin's, 2014.

Kee, Alistair. *Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology*. Philadelphia: SCM, 1990.

Kidder, Tracy. "Country Without a Net." *New York Times*, January 13, 2010, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/14/opinion/14kidder.html.

———. *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. New York: Random House, 2004.

Kim, Sung Ho. "Max Weber." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/weber/.

King, Barbara J. "In 'Fevers, Feuds And Diamonds,' Paul Farmer Breaks Down Assumptions About Ebola." *NPR.Org*. Accessed January 27, 2021. https://www.npr.org/2020/11/17/935337735/in-fevers-feuds-and-diamonds-paul-farmer-breaks-down-assumptions-about-ebola.

King, Noel. “As Humanitarian Crises Grow, so Does the Aid Industry.” *Marketplace*, August 11, 2014. http://www.marketplace.org/2014/08/11/world/humanitarian-crises-grow-so-does-aid-industry.

Knox Clarke, Paul. “The State of the Humanitarian System 2018.” London: ALNAP Overseas Development Institute, 2018. https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/SOHS%20Online%20Book%201%20updated.pdf.

Knox, Richard. “5 Years After Haiti’s Earthquake, Where Did The $13.5 Billion Go?” *NPR*, January 12, 2015. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/01/12/376138864/5-years-after-haiti-s-earthquake-why-aren-t-things-better.

———. “Port-Au-Prince: A City Of Millions, With No Sewer System.” *NPR*, April 13, 2012. https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2013/01/29/150501695/port-au-prince-a-city-of-millions-with-no-sewer-system.

Krause, Monika. *Good Project: Humanitarian Relief NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014.

Kweifio-Okai, Carla. “Where Did the Indian Ocean Tsunami Aid Money Go?” *Guardian*, December 25, 2014, sec. Global development. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/dec/25/where-did-indian-ocean-tsunami-aid-money-go.

Labrador, Rocio Cara. “Haiti’s Troubled Path to Development.” Council on Foreign Relations, March 12, 2018. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/haitis-troubled-path-development.

Langland, Victoria. *Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil*. Durham, NC: Duke University, 2013.

Leo XIII. “Rerum Novarum.” Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1891. http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html.

“List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.” United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development, n.d. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7846List%20of%20abbreviations%20and%20acronyms2.pdf.

Lupton, Deborah. “The Cultural Assumptions behind Western Medicine.” *The Conversation*, January 1, 2013. http://theconversation.com/the-cultural-assumptions-behind-western-medicine-7533.

Mackie, Robert, ed. *Literacy and Revolution: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire*. London: Pluto, 1980.

Madelin, Henri. “Vatican II.” In *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, edited by Joel Krieger, Margaret E. Crahan, Lawrence R. Jacobs, William A. Joseph, Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, and James A. Paul, 886–87. New York: Oxford University, 2001.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. “On the Coloniality of Being.” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2/3 (March 2007): 240–70.

Malone, Clare. “America’s Fickle Relationship With Humanitarian Intervention.” *FiveThirtyEight* (blog), April 10, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/americas-fickle-relationship-with-humanitarian-intervention/.

“Maturing U.S. Organic Sector Sees Steady Growth of 6.4 Percent in 2017.” Organic Trade Association, May 18, 2018. https://ota.com/news/press-releases/20236.

McGovern, Arthur F. *Liberation Theology and Its Critics: Toward an Assessment*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle*. Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota, 2006.

———, ed. *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Durham, NC: Duke University, 2015.

McNeil Jr., Donald G. “Ebola Doctors Are Divided on IV Therapy in Africa.” *New York Times*, January 1, 2015, sec. Health. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/02/health/ebola-doctors-are-divided-on-iv-therapy-in-africa.html.

Mendes Cunha, Alexandre, and Carlos Eduardo Suprinyak. *The Political Economy of Latin American Independence*. Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2016.

Mignolo, Walter D. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University, 2012.

Miller, Henry I. “The Organic Industry Is Lying to You.” *Wall Street Journal*. August 6, 2018.

Miller, Stuart Creighton. *Benevolent Assimilation: The American Conquest of the Philippines, 1899-1903*. *Benevolent Assimilation*. New Haven: Yale University, 1984.

Nerval Dorvil. “Entre l’obstacle et la détermination.” Cange, Haiti, September 2014.

Nichols, Tom. “How America Lost Faith in Expertise,” March 20, 2019. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-02-13/how-america-lost-faith-expertise.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999.

O'Connor, Maura R. "Subsidizing Starvation." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed May 31, 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/01/11/subsidizing-starvation/.

O'Grady, Siobhan. "Why This Viral Photo Is Becoming a Symbol of Women's Rights Protests in Sudan." *Washington Post,* April 9, 2019. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2019/04/09/symbolism-behind-viral-photo-protesting-woman-sudan/.

Okereke, Caleb, and Kelsey Nielsen. "The Problem with Predicting Coronavirus Apocalypse in Africa." *Al Jazeera*. May 7, 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/problem-predicting-coronavirus-apocalypse-africa-200505103847843.html.

Oliver, Kelly. *Carceral Humanitarianism: Logics of Refugee Detention*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017.

Pai, Madhukar. "Global Health Needs To Be Global & Diverse." *Forbes*, March 8, 2020. https://www.forbes.com/sites/madhukarpai/2020/03/08/global-health-needs-to-be-global--diverse/.

Partners In Health. "Cange Declaration: PIH's First HIV Patients Advocate for Equal Access to Treatment." Accessed September 8, 2020. https://www.pih.org/article/cange-declaration-pihs-first-hiv-patients-advocate-for-equity-in-access-to.

Partners In Health. "Countries." Accessed January 31, 2021. https://www.pih.org/countries.

Partners In Health. "Haiti." Accessed January 31, 2021. https://www.pih.org/country/haiti.

Partners In Health. "What Drives Us." Accessed March 13, 2021. https://www.pih.org.

Peterson, Anna L., and Manuel A. Vasquez, eds. *Latin American Religions: Histories and Documents in Context*. New York: NYU, 2008.

Petrella, Ivan. *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic*. London: SCM, 2013.

———. *Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto*. London: SCM, 2006.

Phillips, Elizabeth. *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Polman, Linda. *Crisis Caravan: What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?* Translated by Liz Waters. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.

Quayson, Ato, ed. *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*. New York: Cambridge University, 2012.

Ramet, Valerie. “Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development: Towards More Effective Aid.” Belgium: European Union, 2012. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2012/491435/EXPO-DEVE_SP(2012)491435_EN.pdf.

Richardson, Eugene T. “On the Coloniality of Global Public Health.” *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 6, no. 4 (December 16, 2019): 101–18.

Rieff, David. *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002.

Riggs, Marcia. *Awake, Arise, & Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994.

Roberts, Peter. *Education, Literacy, and Humanization: Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2000.

Rubenstein, Jennifer C. *Between Samaritans and States: The Political Ethics of Humanitarian INGOs*. New York: Oxford University, 2015.

Said, Edward. “Representation of the Intellectual: Speaking Truth To Power.” *The Reith Lectures*. BBC, July 21, 1993. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00gxqyb.

———. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures*. New York: Vintage, 1996.

Schenkel, Nora. “I Came to Haiti to Do Good ...” *The New York Times*, May 15, 2013, sec. Opinion. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/16/opinion/global/i-came-to-haiti-to-do-good.html.

“Siha – Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA).” Accessed June 11, 2020. https://sihanet.org/.

Sketch Engine Language Corpus Management and Query System. Accessed May 22, 2020. https://www.sketchengine.eu/.

Snarr, C. Melissa. *All You That Labor: Religion and Ethics in the Living Wage Movement*. New York: New York University, 2011.

———. *Social Selves and Political Reforms: Five Visions in Contemporary Christian Ethics*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Soanes, Catherine. “Latin America.” In *Oxford Dictionary Plus Society and Culture*. Online: Oxford University, 2016.

Social Medicine Consortium. “Campaign Against Racism.” Accessed June 9, 2020. http://www.socialmedicineconsortium.org/campaign-against-racism.

Stamatov, Peter. *Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy*. New York: Cambridge University, 2013.

Stanley-Becker, Isaac. "Who Drew It? Trump Asks of Dire Climate Report, Appearing to Mistrust 91 Scientific Experts." *Washington Post*, October 10, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/10/who-drew-it-trump-asks-of-dire-climate-report-appearing-to-mistrust-91-scientific-experts/.

Stevenson, Angus, and Christine A. Lindberg. "Humanitarian." In *New Oxford American Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University, 2010.

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University, 1995.

Tarver, Hollis Micheal, and Emily Slape, eds. *The Spanish Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016.

Tombs, David. *Latin American Liberation Theology*. Boston: Brill Academic, 2003.

Townes, Emilie M. "Panel Response to Marcella Althaus-Reid's Indecent Theology." *Feminist Theology* 11, no. 2 (2003): 167–73.

———. *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

UN News. "Flint Michigan Crisis 'Not Just about Water,' UN Rights Experts Say Ahead of President Obama's Visit," May 3, 2016. https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/05/528272-flint-michigan-crisis-not-just-about-water-un-rights-experts-say-ahead.

Walzer, Michael. "On Humanitarianism." *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 4 (August 7, 2011): 69.

World Factbook. "Guinea-Bissau." Accessed March 22, 2021. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/guinea-bissau/#economy.

Wynter, Sylvia. "Is 'Development' a Purely Empirical Concept or Also Teleological?: A Perspective from 'We the Underdeveloped.'" In *Prospects for Recovery and Sustainable Development in Africa*, edited by Aguibou Y. Yansané, 297–316. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1996.

———. "No Humans Involved: An Open Letter to My Colleagues." *Forum N.H.I.: Knowledge for the 21st Century*, Knowledge on Trial, 1, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 42–71.

———. "The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism." *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 19–70.

———. "The Pope Must Have Been Drunk, The King of Castile a Madman: Culture as Actuality, and the Caribbean Rethinking Modernity." In *The Reordering of Culture:*

Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada in the Hood, edited by Alvina Ruprecht and Cecilia Taiana, 17–41. Ottawa: Carleton University, 1995.

———. “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument.” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.