I enjoyed reading David Christian’s clear elucidation of the need for a universal pursuit of the knowledge of the origins or metaphysics of beings and things on Earth—and beyond, including the stars and the planets. No knowledge is a waste, and space exploration has benefited humanity by innovating satellite communications technologies that have bridged time and space to make the world a global village.

In this opening essay, Christian argued that Big History may help us to gain better perspectives on how little human history is compared to natural history so that we may overcome the race, class, and gender divisions that still plague the world. This hint suggests that Big History, and any history for that matter, will need to grapple with the problem of racist imperialist patriarchy in order for the world to overcome what is usually called the “Anthropocene” and the anthropogenic global warming that is its hallmark. But such a generalized treatment of humanity risks blaming the victims. Indeed, other authors have identified the real causes to be the “imperialismocene,” given that indigenous peoples went for millennia without wrecking the earth until Western modernity came with greed and authoritarian cruelty.¹

In *Black Reconstruction in America*, W.E.B. Du Bois challenged the ideological uses of History by writers who harped on failures while ignoring successes, especially in the winning of the demand for public funds to be used to fund public schools for all.² In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, prominent indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith warns that history has remained a tool for colonization.³ Big History, by ignoring the struggles to decolonize the methodologies of historiography, risks doing so as well. Indigenous peoples tell the same stories but without the greed for power to control the entire world and its resources, kill original
inhabitants and steal their land, and enslave millions of Africans to work the land for hundreds of years, before colonizing the rest, and continuing to control everyone through financial power or imperialism against the resistance in the ongoing struggles for decolonization. How come such a huge story is not part of Big History? Echoing Angela Davis’s call, building on Du Bois, for “Abolition Democracy,” we urgently need a “Decolonization Democracy.”

Edward Said challenged Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas on this question by inquiring why they never addressed colonial power and the resistance to it in their work. Foucault responded indirectly by stating that he was concerned with the history of modern Europe and not history with a big “H.” Said retorted that there is no way anyone could write the history of modern Europe and omit the huge impacts of Europeans on the rest of the world and vice versa. According to Said, Frantz Fanon is a better historian for paying attention to the big history of white supremacy and imperialism from the perspective of those struggling to decolonize the world and regain their independence.

Big History will be an escapist pastime if the huge history of the devastation of the lives of millions of people is swept under the carpet by Western historians who are eager to study the history of stars and galaxies while evading the urgent demand by indigenous peoples for reparative justice in recognition of the historical crimes and harms caused by European imperialism, racism, and sexism. Big History is in need of decolonization, just like every academic discipline and every area of life today.

Endnotes


About the Author

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