Making Room for Critical Race Theory in International Law: Some Practical Pointers

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In the last two decades, new forms of transformative social action have emerged throughout the world. Popular movements or new social movements either with new political and ideological agendas—sometimes called “postmaterialistic,” such as ecology, peace, antiracism, antisex-

All too often, human rights languages become stratagems of imperialistic foreign policy through military invasions as well as through global economic diplomacy. Superpower diplomacy at the United Nations is not averse to causing untold suffering through sanctions whose manifest aim is to serve the future of human rights. The United States, the solitary superpower at the end of the millennium, has made sanctions for the pro-

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I. Introduction

These two vignettes juxtapose social movements and rights discourse; the one hopeful, the other somewhat skeptical. Both vignettes, by implication, raise the possibilities and limitations of the pursuit of rights as a mode of struggle, as well as their consequences for the transnational embrace of a rights agenda, however defined. In this vein, this paper analyzes how the critique of race in the United States by critical race theorists has some relevance for the international law project, particularly with respect to international human rights. It raises the possibilities of a critical race perspective within a global, legal and economic arrangement, in which people of color overwhelmingly are situated in the poorer, developing countries, and where people of Caucasian ancestry inhabit the affluent, industrialized countries.8

This disparity may be regarded as an over-generalized point with respect to race. In many ways, it no longer makes sense to speak of the United States or Britain as "white countries."4 The mass migrations of the past few decades have rendered such characterizations crude.5 In any

3. See Our Global Neighborhood, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance 18-23 (1995) (contrasting post World War II increase in quality of life in United States and Europe with increase in poverty in Latin America and Africa); see also Stuart Hall, The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power, in Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies 184 (Stuart Hall et al. eds., 1996) (discussing, in depth, the history of development of western world and interaction between Western and Non-western world). It has been noted that:
There are severe, potentially catastrophic economic inequities between the North and the South . . . . In 1960 the richest one-fifth of the world’s population enjoyed thirty times the income of the poorest fifth; by 1989 the richest fifth was receiving sixty times the income of the poorest . . . . The ratio of 20:80 or worse dominates our world today . . . . The 80% majority of humanity in the South gets the 20% or less scraps from the tables of the affluent . . . . Among them, some 1.2 billion now live in absolute poverty, or the very margins of survival itself . . . .
event, it could be argued that the situation of Japan renders such characterizations inaccurate. 6

Despite these contradictions and nuances of demography, the concentration of economic and political power, even in countries such as the United States and Britain, with huge ethnic minorities, remains in the hands of whites and is reinforced by an ideology which normalizes such power. 7 This reality informs much of critical race theory, including the attempts of critical race scholars to infuse an understanding of the persistence of the structures of racism, and the law’s methodological limitations in erasing such structures. 8

In addition to assessing the pertinence of critical race theory in unmasking international law’s colonial, racist and patriarchal underpinnings, this paper attempts to suggest practical ways in which a critical race theory approach can enrich the international legal system, by giving a voice to the voiceless and by addressing the conditions of marginality in which much of the developing world 9 is trapped.

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7. See Cheryl Harris, Whiteness as Property, 106 HARV. L. REV. 1707, 1714 (1993) (arguing that property rights are “contingent upon, intertwined with, and conflated with race”).


9. I will use the terms “developing world,” “underdeveloped world,” “the South” and “Third World” interchangeably, recognizing the dialectical tensions around these terms. See, e.g., ROBERT A. MORTIMER, THE THIRD WORLD COALITION IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS 1, 1 (1984) (arguing that concept “Third World” merely highlights political coalition of countries similarly situated economically); see also Dianne Otto, Subalternity and International Law: The Problems of Global Community and the Incommensurability of Difference, 5 SOC. & LEGAL STUD. 337, 337 (1996) (challenging concept of unanimous non-European identity in world politics). I am using the term, merely as a descriptive one, to indicate the marginalization of the majority of the world’s population. As Julius Nyerere, the late former President of Tanzania, has noted:

[T]he Third World consists of the victims and the powerless in the international economy . . . . Together we constitute a majority of the world’s population, and possess the largest part of certain important raw materials; but we have no control and hardly any influence over the manner in which the nations of the world arrange their economic affairs. In international rule-making we are recipients not participants.

This paper will do three things. First, it will peruse the contemporary global situation with respect to international law and human rights. Second, it will assess the contribution of critical race theory in advancing an understanding of, and solution to, America’s predicament of race. Third, it will suggest ways in which these approaches may engage with contemporary attempts to deal with the human rights endeavor globally.

Other contributors to this volume will be focussing on the epistemological questions of critical race theory and international law. Thus, my paper will be purposely practical.

II. SNAPSHOTS OF GLOBALIZATION, INTERNATIONAL LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

International law had ceased to be a European law only to become a law of the great powers, thanks to the policy of the exclusive clubs both within and without the international organizations. While it may in principle no longer have been serving political colonization, it did not cease for all that to be a means of economic domination and an excuse for it. In actual fact, it modified only the form, not the substance of domination. The latter has been more subtly introduced into the legal rules governing the economic relations between developed and developing countries.10

At this particular, historic moment, international law has been subjected to fairly vigorous critiques.11 Although these critiques emanate from different sources, they share certain goals. The most significant of these goals are to unmask the veneer of equality and neutrality of international law and to expose international law’s colonial trappings.12 In other

10. MOHAMMED BEDJAoui, TOWARDS A NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER 59-60 (Holmes & Meier, 1979).


12. See, for example, Antony Anghie, Finding The Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law, 40 HARV. INT’L L.J. 1, 7 (1999), which states:

My argument is that what passes now as the defining dilemma of the discipline, the problem of order among states, is a problem that has been peculiar, from the time of its origin, to the specificities of European history. Additionally, the extension and universalization of the European experience, which is achieved by transmuting it into the major theoretical problem of the discipline, has the effect of suppressing and subordinating other histories of international law and the people to whom it has applied. Within the axiomatic framework of positivism, which decrees that European states are sovereign while non-European states are not,
words, they have attempted to point to the dominance of the first (read Western) world in global politics and, therefore, the practice of its handmaidens, international lawyers.13 These critiques have also exposed the patriarchal institutions and values embedded in international law, which serve to continue the marginalization of women, both in the substance of the law, as well as in its procedures and implementation.14 Some scholars have examined the whole project of international law, and particularly its relationship to, and implications in, international relations and global politics.15

These thoughtful critiques have enriched the intellectual landscape for international lawyers, legal scholars and policy makers;16 their practi-

there is only one means of relating the history of the non-European world, and this the positivists proceed to do: it is a history of the civilizing mission, the process by which peoples of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific were finally assimilated into European international law.

See also, A. Riles, The View from the International Plane: Perspective and Scale in the Architecture of the Colonial Encounter, 6 LAW & CRITIQUE 39, 39-54 (1995), which analyzes the international legal strategy of the colonial era. Similarly, Shelley Wright, an Australian feminist, stridently asserts:

Any claim that human rights are "universal and indivisible" must be prepared to answer the assertion of many Third World, non-white and/or feminist international scholars that human rights have a very specific history... They are a direct outgrowth of the capitalist, colonialist history of post-medieval Europe and that they are part of the export of oppressive and, in some cases, genocidal policies of European colonists.


15. See David Kennedy, The Disciplines of International Law and Politics, 12 Leiden J. INT'L. L. 9, 9 (1999) (exploring "the idea that the professional and intellectual disciplines which have developed in the United States to advance insight into international affairs also have characteristic blind spots and biases which leave professionals and intellectuals working within them more sanguine about the status quo than they might otherwise be"); see also Michael Byers, Custom, Power and the Power of Rules: International Relations and Customary International Law 3-52 (1999) (discussing power in international law and interaction of law and politics).

16. One only has to examine the program and proceedings of the annual meeting of the American Society of International Law in the last two years to ascertain a sense of this rich body of scholarship. See American Society of Interna-
cal effects, however, have been difficult to quantify. Without engaging in simplistic and superficial cause and effect analysis, a survey of international legal scholarship in the last few years suggests a rigorous dialectic about the field of international law, its structures, purposes, rules and implementation. These influences in scholarly debate are tangible results, easily measured. In contrast, however, no such easy conclusion arises with respect to international law in practice. In other words, it is difficult to measure the impact of these critiques in such areas as international rules regarding the environment, international copyright law, or the law of the seas.

Nonetheless, one area of international law has burgeoned, both rhetorically and substantively: international human rights law. One only has to peruse the proliferation of human rights instruments in the last two decades to sense the vigor with which certain human rights principles and values have been incorporated in international human rights legal instruments. The universality of these princi-


18. Maybe these are immeasurable ruminations incapable of specificity. In other words, without an articulation of particular, practical rules or measures, the influence of this critical scholarship cannot be ascertained. See IAN BROWNLIE, THE RULE OF LAW IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS: INTERNATIONAL LAW AT THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS 162-78 (1998) (discussing maritime delimitation); THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS: THEORY AND PRACTICE 659 (David G. Victor et al. eds., 1998) (analyzing wide variety of international environmental regimes and implementation experiences).


20. See generally THE UNITED NATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS: A COMPILATION OF INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS (1997); UNESCO, HUMAN RIGHTS, MAJOR INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS (1999). In this light, Upen德拉 Baxi, an Indian scholar, has commented:

No preceding century of human history has been privileged to witness a profusion of human rights enunciation on a global scale. Never before have the languages of human rights sought to supplant all other ethical languages. No preceding century has witnessed the proliferation of human rights norms and standards as a core aspect of what may be called the politics of intergovernmental desire. Never before has this been a discourse so varied and diverse that it becomes necessary to publish and update regularly, through the unique discursive instrumentality of the United Nations system, in ever exploding volumes of fine print, the various texts of instruments relating to human rights.

Baxi, supra note 2, at 125.
ple,21 as well as their implementation and efficacy in reducing human
debate.

Whatever our opinions on these matters, there is no doubt about the
primacy of human rights as "the language of progressive politics,"23
confidently providing an "emancipatory script"24 for those engaging in
struggles in the pursuit of human rights. A prominent Indian legal scholar has
referred to the discourse of human rights seeking to "supplant all other
ethical languages."25

The passage of these various human rights instruments undergird the
role of the state in promoting and protecting human rights, and punishing
those who transgress human rights principles.26 The state, therefore,
assumes the role of chief protector of human rights principles and is the
principal conduit through which human rights principles are conveyed,
channeled and challenged.27 In furtherance of their roles, states devise

21. See Jack Donnelly, Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights, 6 Hum.
Rts. Q. 400, 419 (1984) (arguing that there should be fundamental universality of
basic human rights, tempered by recognition of possible need for limited cultural
variations); see also Dianne Otto, Rethinking the "Universality" of Human Rights Law,
nations-states about universality and cultural relativity); Michael J. Perry, Are Human
Rights Universal? The Relativist Challenge and Related Matters, 19 Hum. Rts. Q. 461,

22. See M. O. Chibundu, Making Customary International Law Through Municipal
efficacy of international law litigation in domestic courts in United States); Christo-
pher C. Joyner, The United Nations and Democracy, 5 Global Governance 333, 333
(1999) (discussing how effectively United Nations promotes democracy
worldwide).

23. See Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Toward a Multicultural Conception of
Human Rights, 1 Zeitschrift Fur Rechtssozologie 1, 1 (1997) (using "language
of progressive politics" to refer to human rights issues in international law).

24. Id.

25. Baxi, supra note 2, at 125.

26. For an explanation of the principle of state responsibility, see Rosalyn
Higgins, Problems and Process: International Law and How We Use It 39-46
Rights Law to Change Religious and Customary Laws, in Human Rights of Women
167-88 (Rebecca Cook ed., 1994), discussing the implementation of obligations to
"respect and protect particular human rights" and to "change domestic laws" in
countries where religious practices and customary laws are "most likely to violate
the international human rights of women," and Philip Alston & Gerard Quinn, The
Nature and Scope of States Parties' Obligations Under the International Covenant on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 9 Hum. Rts. Q. 156, 229 (1987), analyzing the
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights drafted by the Commission on

27. See Robert McCormquodale & Richard Fairbrother, Globalization and Human
Rights, 21 Hum. Rts. Q. 735, 740 (1999) (stating that "[e]very single state has rati-
fied at least one treaty containing legal obligations to protect human rights". See
generally Alston & Quinn, supra note 26, at 156-222 (examining "the nature
and scope of the obligations of state parties under Parts I, II and III of the Covenant
on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights") (clarification added)).
the appropriate mechanisms to satisfy their obligations under the relevant human rights instruments.\textsuperscript{28}

The shortcomings of this model, the statist approach to human rights implementation, have been articulated.\textsuperscript{29} One such shortcoming has been the discrepancy between the nature of procedural and substantive violations, and their private counterparts. Public violations of human rights, that is, those violations committed by state actors, are ordinarily subjected to appropriate punitive measures.\textsuperscript{30} However, those committed by private actors in the private realm, are shielded from state intervention.\textsuperscript{31}

A further deficiency of the statist model can be seen in the growing recognition of the limitations of the state either in promoting human rights values, or in preventing their violation.\textsuperscript{32} This limitation can be explained, in part, by the particular global economic configuration of this historic moment: a dominant economic paradigm of the free market unfettered by significant governmental restraint.\textsuperscript{33} These developments have sorely tested the traditional role and capability of the state.\textsuperscript{34} It has been noted that:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{28} See generally Oscar Schachter, \textit{International Law in Theory and in Practice} (1991) (detailing vast area of international legal rules and principles, their political context and implementation).

\textsuperscript{29} See Nigel Purvis, \textit{Critical Legal Studies in Public International Law}, 32 HARY. INT’L L.J. 81, 110 (1991) (criticizing limits of sovereign-centered approach to international law); see also Karen Knop, \textit{Why Rethinking the Sovereign State Is Important for Women’s International Human Rights Law, in Human Rights of Women, supra note 26, at 153 (arguing for re-examination of contemporary emphasis on state sovereignty under international law, particularly with respect to involvement of women in pursuing international human rights law).

\textsuperscript{30} See Alston & Quinn, \textit{supra note 26, at 206-09 (discussing Article 5 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which provides safeguards against abuses)); Higgins, \textit{supra note 26, at 146-68 (outlining policies and procedures in enforcing international law).}

\textsuperscript{31} See Celina Romany, \textit{State Responsibility Goes Private: A Feminist Critique of the Public/Private Distinction in International Human Rights Law, in Human Rights of Women, supra note 26, at 85 (condemning “human rights framework that construes the civil and political rights of individuals as belonging to public life while neglecting to protect the infringements of those rights in the private sphere of familial relationships”).}


\textsuperscript{33} See Santos, \textit{supra note 23, at 1 (questioning whether globalization is new phenomenon, or whether it is just imperialism or modernization with new label).}

\textsuperscript{34} See generally Dennis Altman, \textit{Globalization, the State and Identity Politics, 7 PACIFICA REV. 69 (1995) (analyzing forces that characterize modern era and “help explain the apparent crisis of all state institutions”).}
\end{quote}
Three forces seem to characterise the modern era which together help explain the apparent crisis of all state institutions: a growing strengthening of international capitalist structures which override the ability of elected national governments to control the economy; a retreat from seeing the public sphere as one which can provide essential services and its replacement by a growing emphasis on privatised (i.e. money making) ventures; and an upsurge of particularist identities, which threaten the social cohesion of national states (and in some cases their very continuance).  

In the developed world, this global free market paradigm has led to affluence for some and a very optimistic picture by all indicators. Most of the so-called third-world, however, experiences this free market paradigm through weakened state institutions resulting from the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund ("IMF"), as well as "crushing indebtedness.

35. *Id.* at 69. For a further discussion of how outside actors influence the power of a state to control human rights concerns, see Jochnick, *supra* note 33, at 69.

36. For a comprehensive treatment of the affluence of and disparities between, the wealthy and poor countries, see Bedjaoui, *supra* note 10. Bedjaoui cites the following example:

Production of dog foods in the United States represented in 1967 about the equivalent of the average income per man in India for each dog in America . . . . The amount of food wasted by the Americans in one year, and thrown into their dustbins, would be sufficient to feed all the countries of the immense African continent for a month. Bedjaoui, *supra* note 10, at 31. But see Pierre Sauvée, *Open Markets Matter*, 21 World Competition 57, 57 (1998) (stating that countries today experience great anxiety in developing policies to alleviate obstacles to free trade and investment).

37. See Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (1999) (outlining need for integrated analysis of economic, social and political activities and relevant organizations, and interconnectedness of economic, political and social freedoms); see also Susan George, *The Debt Boomerang, in 50 Years Is Enough: The Case Against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund* 29-34 (Kevin Danaher ed., 1994) ("The economic policies imposed on debtors by the major multilateral agencies [i.e., the World Bank and IMF] and packaged as 'structural adjustment' have . . . caused untold human suffering and widespread environmental destruction, emptying debtor countries of their resources and rendering them less able each year to service their debts . . . ." (clarification added)); Kathleen Mahoney, *Theoretical Perspectives on Women's Human Rights and Strategies for Their Implementation*, 21 Brook. J. Int’l. L. 837, 856 (1996) (discussing women’s rights in international law); Bharati Sadasivam, *The Impact of Structural Adjustment on Women: A Governance and Human Rights Agenda*, 19 Hum. Rts. Q. 650, 634 (1997) (examining "the disparate impact of SAPs [Structural Adjustment Programs] on women and the resulting unacceptable feminization of poverty in many countries with economies in transition" (clarification added)). Mahoney states:

Structural adjustment programs imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank . . . have caused disproportionate disadvantage to women because their theories, strategies and solutions for development, growth and underdevelopment tend to ignore women and the role they fulfill in their societies.
ness," namely, huge debts resulting from excessive loans.

These structural adjustment initiatives, dependent upon an ideological and financial framework, create the "global space" for international capital. They embrace the imperatives for governments to reduce regulatory controls, for example, lower labor standards, and to reduce or remove state intervention in the provision of basic foodstuffs and services. In short, structural adjustment programs demand a less interventionist state with respect to welfare and rights, but not necessarily to facilitate the requirements of capital mobility.

Loan conditionalities force national governments to dismantle regulatory controls, restrict subsidies to tax holidays for investors, and build appropriate transport and communications infrastructure. The efforts made to facilitate the movement of capital along transnational global circuits are matched only by less successful efforts to restrain the movement of labor through migration.

Accompanying this paradigm is the liberal legal framework with its trappings of constitutionalism. This liberal legal paradigm, both within nation states and as part of the international legal order, has been subjected to thoughtful critiques by feminist, post-colonial and other critical scholars. These critiques all question the judicialization of politics,

Mahoney, supra, at 852-53.

38. See Bedjaoiu, supra note 10, at 41 (using "crushing indebtedness" to refer to "desperate" and "intolerable" situation that Third World countries are in as result of enormous national debt).

39. See James H. Mittelman & Mustapha Kamal Pasha, Out from Underdevelopment Revisited: Changing Global Structures and the Remaking of the Third World 26 (1997), stating that:

[T]he mature capitalist countries have lent the underdeveloped world over half a trillion dollars. Debt service of all third world countries increased from 13.3% of exports or goods and services in 1970 to 20.4% in 1990. The greater the burden of debt service, the more the capacity to repay diminishes.

Prof. Chantal Thomas covers these issues in greater detail in this volume.


41. See Zillah Eisenstein, Stop Stomping on the Rest of Us: Retrieving Publicness from the Privatization of the Globe, 4 Ind. J. Global Legal Stud. 59, 60 (1996) (noting that "[s]ome 800 million people are starving across the globe, while women represent about sixty percent of the billion or so people earning $1.00 or less a day").

42. See Clark, supra note 40, at 47 (arguing for recognition of diversity of women's position within global system, as well as diversity of feminist struggle).

43. Id.


namely the idea that legal institutions are the primary venues for securing rights. These critical scholars have also questioned the proliferation of programs around the world dedicated to open governance and the rule of law. It has been noted that,

[a]lthough numbers are hard to find, it appears spending on ‘rule of law’ injection projects around the world now rivals food aid, refugee assistance, humanitarian aid of all sorts. Military assistance has itself turned increasingly to providing legal assistance, the need for good discipline and clear rules of engagement merging, in a post-CNN world, into compliance with international humanitarian norms. Indeed, the United States military may now provide more training in international law and human rights than all the world’s non-governmental organizations put together.

Despite its importance in strengthening state institutions, legal formalism plays a powerful ideological role in channeling political aspirations and immobilizing grassroots political struggle.

Much of critical race theory concerns itself with the limitations of law’s methodology, process and implementation. Implicit in much of


47. *See* Kennedy, *supra* note 15, at 106 (noting that more attention is paid to maintaining “the law of a New World Order” than nutritional concerns or any type of humanitarian aid).

48. *Id.* at 106-07.


the critique is the law’s failure to translate formal legal rights into substantive socio-economic rights. In this critique of the international legal order, critical race scholars may have some impact.

III. CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW: THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST PROJECT: HOW DOES CRT GO OFFSHORE?

Poverty finally risks dividing the world into two blocs, that of the powerful minority and that of the immiserated majority. The sentiment of injustice that it creates and maintains will become more and more deep-rooted, such that it is at least wise to fear an explosion.

In looking at the way forward, the so-called “Reconstructionist Project,” and examining the issues, I am making the following assumptions: that free market liberalism will remain dominant for the foreseeable future; that the United States will be the dominant superpower for the next decade or so; that the resources of the United Nations, the World Bank and other international organizations will be increasingly affected and controlled by human rights criteria (albeit unevenly imposed); that

52. See Bell, supra note 51, at 395-97 (discussing contemporary irrelevance of once-inspiring landmark legal gains for Blacks).

53. For a discussion of the global applicability of CRT, see infra notes 67-81 and accompanying text.


57. See BAMIDELE A. OJO, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER 57 (1997) (describing United States as “top dog” in post Cold War politics); see also Lea Brilmayer, Transforming International Politics: An American Role for the Post Cold War World, 64 U. CIN. L. REV. 119, 123 (1995) (exploring conflict between United States assuming role of “private individual” over that of “public citizen” in relation to international affairs and moral and ethical obligations attendant to United States’ role as dominant superpower); Henry J. Richardson III, The Gulf Crisis and African-American Interests Under International Law, 87 Am. J. Int’l L. 42, 42 (raising questions about United States as dominant superpower without resources either to maintain that power or to care for its own citizenry).

international human rights activists—principally from the United States, Western Europe and Australia (to a lesser extent)—will largely determine the human rights agenda of these bodies and will be the prime determinants of their execution;\(^5^9\) that these human rights criteria will increasingly have a large impact on the domestic programs of developing nations;\(^6^0\) and that nations in Africa and other nations of color—with a few exceptions, mostly in Asia\(^6^1\)—will lack power in economic, political and military terms to offset these extraterritorial influences—some of which will be good, some bad, and some untimely.\(^6^2\) Moreover, the “interface” of globalization and the North-South economic divide will lead to “aberrant and intolerant circumstances.”\(^6^3\) Consequently, scholars argue that:

With the end of the Cold War, market imperatives rather than political calculation will increasingly determine the flow of funds between North and South, exacerbating social and economic inequalities and abandoning large parts of the world (most of Africa; parts of southern and central Asia; much of Central America) to continued marginality and poverty . . . .\(^6^4\)

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human rights abuses); see also, e.g., Patricia Armstrong, Human Rights and Multilateral Development Banks: Governance Concerns in Decision Making, 88 Am. Soc’y Int’l L. Proc. 277, 280-81 (1994) (outlining distinctions between “good” and “bad” governance).


60. See Mertus, supra note 59, at 1369 (noting great influence of rights norms dissemination on state agendas); see also Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua, International Human Rights and Developments NGO’s in Africa: In Pursuit of a Global Order or Global Governance?, 13 INT’L INSIGHTS 65, 65-70 (1997) (calling for non-governmental organizations involved in human rights on one hand, and development, on other, to bridge their artificial distinctions).

61. See Ghai, supra note 50, at 6 (discussing economic, military and political power of Asian countries in context of human rights influences); see also F. Žaharia, Culture Is Destiny—A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew, 73 FOREIGN AFF. 109, 122 (Mar./Apr. 1994) (including China and Japan with United States and Western Europe on list of “great powers”).

62. See Michelson, supra note 54, at 397-417 (investigating possibilities of “third world approach” to international law).

63. Altman, supra note 54, at 69.

64. Id.
South Africa will most likely be an exception to this pattern. That is, in part, because of the large presence of persons of European ancestry and the dominant role they play in the economy there.65

In this context, we must think about the issues of marginality and poverty and the global relevance of critical race theory. In this context, we must look at critical race theory and the issues of race globally. In other words, because the experience with race in the United States looms large,66 what does that signify for the application of critical race theory globally?

At its most simplistic level, the experience of race in the United States, that is, the institutionalization of racism, has generated three different models to challenge the racist status quo: the primary one concerns the civil rights struggle, another concerns the human rights movement and the last concerns critical race theory. All of these different67 approaches and their interplay with race may provide guidance for the application of critical race theory globally.

IV. RACE AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT68

The following discussion assumes that most international human rights activists in the United States either became involved in human rights work through their participation in the civil rights struggle or were largely influenced by the Civil Rights Movement. In other words, buoyed by the possibilities and the successes (albeit limited) of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, many activists could turn their attention to international concerns. And particularly since the 1980s, all kinds of global injustices and catastrophes have captured the imagination of


67. Arguably, these are not really “different” approaches or models; they all have some connection with the Civil Rights Movement—either as sources of inspiration (as with the human rights movement) or as a focus of critique (as with critical race theorists). In other words, what the Civil Rights Movement accomplished, or failed to accomplish, serves as a reference point.

68. Because I see some practical value in the gains made by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, gains that may be useful for marginalized communities globally, I will focus on that discussion later in this paper.
human rights activists in the West, who have utilized emotional and other resources to pursue rights beyond their borders.

The anti-apartheid struggle is one pronounced case in point. It is now recognized that even though South Africans inside South Africa fought long and hard to overthrow apartheid there, the global efforts by a plethora of groups outside the country were very important.69 The 1980s represented the heady days of the anti-apartheid struggle in the United States. In the mid-1980s, an impressive coalition of community activists, non-governmental organizations, church groups, the Congressional Black Caucus and sympathetic legislators passed the comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act,70 a package of sanctions that played no small part in the demise of the minority white government.71

But the international human rights movement in the United States also reflects a disenchantment of civil rights groups and individuals with the local civil rights agenda or lack of it. In the last few decades, local civil rights activists have witnessed a slow erosion of many of the gains accrued during the civil rights struggle.72 Arguably, much of the energy of the civil rights community has been expended in defending attacks on welfare rights, women’s rights (especially the right to abortion), labor rights and rights to education.73 All of these rights affect people of color to some degree. The most vociferous battles, however, have emanated from the programs and policies of affirmative action.74 Challenges to affirmative


72. See Christopher Edley, Jr., Not All Black and White: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, RACE, AND AMERICAN VALUES 52-73 (1996) (highlighting Supreme Court decisions increasing scrutiny of affirmative action programs). For a thoughtful analysis of the racial divisions in American society, see generally Andrew Hacker, Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal (1992), examining the role that race does or does not play in education, crime and politics.

73. See, e.g., Jonathan Kozol, DEEPENING SEGREGATION IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (1997) (analyzing increasing disparities between poor and wealthy school districts); see also, e.g., Susan Faludi, Backlash (1991) (examining societal backlash against panoply of rights won by women); Richard Delgado, Reply Essay: Pep Talks for the Poor: A Reply and Remonstrance on the Evils of Scapegoating, 71 B.U. L. Rev. 525 (1991) (surveying suggested community responses to United States Supreme Court increasing restrictions on rights of poor and marginalized minorities).

74. See generally Edley, supra note 72 (outlining increased constitutional scrutiny of affirmative action programs); Gerturde Ezorsky, Racism and Justice: The Case for Affirmative Action (1991) (reviving arguments for affirmative action in
action have been among the most successful,\textsuperscript{75} and have generated the most debilitating for civil rights activists.\textsuperscript{76} Consequently, much of the organizational efforts around the pursuit of global human rights reflects a disillusionment of local civil rights activists with the domestic civil rights agenda, or in the perceived failure to sustain the limited gains of the Civil Rights Movement.\textsuperscript{77}

Despite its laudable global efforts, the human rights movement remains problematic, not in terms of the principles and values it promotes, but in terms of the relative absence of people of color in the dominant circles of the movement in the United States and the North generally.\textsuperscript{78} This has been occasioned perhaps by the split of liberals in the United States between human rights groups and civil rights groups, and the perhaps understandable tendency of human rights groups in the West to give

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\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{76} See, e.g., Sharon Elizabeth Rush, \textit{Sharing Space: Why Racial Goodwill Is Not Enough}, 32 CONN. L. REV. 1, 68-69 (1999) (exhorting whites to assume privileges attendant to their race, and to be more assertive about fighting racism).

\textsuperscript{77} See Edley, supra note 72, at 52-73 (highlighting Supreme Court decisions increasing scrutiny of affirmative action programs). I recognize that this is a rather generalized point dependent more on anecdote and innuendo than hard statistical data. Despite this, the statistical data reveal a proliferation of non-governmental organizations, both in the United States and abroad, pursuing the goals of international human rights. \textit{See Mertus, supra} note 59, at 1336 (noting increased participation by non-governmental organizations in human rights agendas); see also Maria Luisa Bartolomei, \textit{The Globalization Process of Human Rights in Latin America Versus Economic, Social and Cultural Diversity}, 25 INT'L J. LEGAL INFO. 156, 166 (1997) (listing Argentinian families and Roman Catholic Church among notable groups active in human rights struggles).

\textsuperscript{78} Of all the major non-governmental organizations in the United States that focus on the pursuit of international human rights, only one is headed by a person of color, namely, the International Human Rights Law Group, which is headed by Gay McDougall. \textit{See International Human Rights Law Group: Overview} (visited Sept. 5, 2000), <http://www.hrlawgroup.org/site/overview.html> (listing McDougall as Executive Director). Outside of the United States, Adama Dieng, a West African lawyer, headed the International Commission of Jurists. He was one of the few people of color to lead a major international non-governmental organization. He stepped down in May of 2000. I am excluding from my observations the major U.N. bodies and organizations such as TransAfrica, whose major purpose is lobbying. \textit{See} Aaron Myers, \textit{TransAfrica} (visited Sept. 5, 2000) <http://www.africana.com/tt_431.htm> (describing organization as "lobby that focuses on U.S. policy toward Africa and the Caribbean").
lower priority to the other needs of people in the developing world when weighing these needs against those of human rights. 79

This latter problem is perhaps all the worse because the human rights movement in the West is built upon a developed economic and political model, which did not, for example, come into being before the end of racial segregation, slavery, denial of the rights of women to vote, or even before the Supreme Court started applying provisions of the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment, to the states. 80 Moreover, it is arguable that human rights activists in the United States are not accountable to any constituency—unlike the situation of local civil rights activists, who have at least modest claims to the representation of local constituencies. 81

V. RACE AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

To explore the relevance of critical race theory to an analysis of international human rights law, it may be apposite here to consider its relevance and influence in the United States. Critical race theory took root among some legal scholars of color in the late 1980s. 82 Their theory incorporated "an experientially grounded, oppositionally expressed, and transformatively aspirational concern with race and other socially constructed hierarchies." 83 In addition, much of critical race theory is "marked by deep discontent with liberalism, a system of civil rights litigation and activism, faith in the legal system, and hope for progress." 84

Despite their scholarship being assigned a theoretical label and the confluence of their concerns about the interplay of race and law, the single labeling under the rubric "critical race theory" conceals the richness


and diversity of the body of work that the label incorporates.85 A leading critical race scholar has thus elucidated:

Critical race theory is not uni-perspectival; there is no single consensus of a characterization of the theory. Certainly the name "critical race theory" suggests some connection to critical legal theory, yet its name derives more directly from the name "critical theory" by which some refer to the tenets of the Frankfurt School of Philosophy of Habermas and Marcuse. The contributors to critical race theory have resisted defining themselves.86

In summary, therefore, although the works of many scholars are encapsulated in the body of work designated as critical race theory, there are significant variations, methodologies and perspectives.87 The unifying theme is a concern with the legacy of racial subordination in the United States and its reflection in law's edifice.88

85. See id. (incorporating major critical race theory writings); see also Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement (Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. eds., 1995) (same); Critical Race Feminism: A Reader (Adrien Wing ed., 1997) (same).


87. I have outlined the diversity of the works by many scholars who have been labeled as critical race theorists. For further examples, see supra note 85. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this discussion, I will sweep with a broad theoretical brush and refer to critical race theory as a body of work that reflects greater convergences than differences among its scholars.


The Critical Race Project has also been initiated in Canada, where scholars have utilized critical race theory in their attempts to analyze racial subordination in Canada. See generally Carol A. Aylward, Canadian Critical Race Theory
With respect to critical race theory, it is not clear how to define it either in international terms or even in terms of its meaning in the United States. Critical race scholars have subjected the American legal system, including its vast array of civil rights laws and its claims to equality, to thoughtful and vigorous critique.\(^9\) These critical race scholars have unmasked the many unquestioned assumptions inherent in American law. Perhaps two of critical race theory's dominant features are the narratives of individuals\(^9\) and, to date, its lack of programs.\(^9\) The first is positive and the second is negative.

With respect to the first, it is clear that many in the West, and especially in the United States, respond less to statistics and more to the plight of the individual, that is, the individual sufferer. Critical race theory has made the narrative center stage, although in some cases the narrative has focused more on the experiences of the narrator than of some individual who has suffered in some particularly exceptional way.\(^9\) Fortunately, this

\(^{(1999)}\) (exploring racial subordination in Canada under critical race theory model).

\(^9\) See generally Critical Race Theory, supra note 85 (analyzing United States law in context of critical race theory); Critical Race Feminism, supra note 85 (collecting works on critical race theory).


91. Two things have led me to this conclusion: first, my research assistant conducted a search of federal case law across the country, including the United States Supreme Court, to locate decisions that mentioned critical race theory. This search proved fruitless. This, however, may just indicate that judges do not explicitly mention critical race theory, but may in fact cite the work of an individual scholar who identifies as a critical race theorist. In addition, the search did not include state courts. Second, I had a series of conversations with civil rights lawyers who commented that they do not find much of critical race theory useful in their endeavors in the courts. Of course, the latter point is obvious, based on the skepticism of many critical race theorists of the utility of civil rights litigation.

92. I am making a distinction between extraordinary and ordinary victims of racial subordination or discrimination. I am not suggesting that "minor" infringements or dignity ought to be seen as any less than "major" ones, especially with respect to the individual affected. However, the panoply of pain and humiliation to which individuals are subjected based on race or ethnicity range from slight infractions to gross violations of human rights. For a disturbing account of the parade of indignity and offense that many "successful" African-Americans are constantly subjected to, see Ellis Cose, The Race of the Black Middle Class (1995), which explores African American experiences with racism. Institutionalized systems of racial oppression carry with them a certain banality, so that particular forms of expression become accepted practice (although highly offensive for the recipients). These forms I distinguish from gross violations of human rights, which carry with them a level of opprobrium, even from individuals who are not traditionally at the receiving end of racism. For a related discussion on the distinction between extraordinary and ordinary victims of apartheid in South Africa, see David Dyezenhaus, Judging the Judges: Judging Ourselves (1998), which discusses victimization during South African apartheid epidemic.
also corresponds with the tendency of the media in recent years to report the news in terms of what happened to one or two individuals. Even in the case of the large exodus of refugees from Kosovo, the American media often reported the story in terms of the life of one or two individual refugees. This is a lesson that people of color should perhaps learn to apply.93

As for the lack of programs, this is a serious defect. Beyond sophisticated critique, lawyers need to engage the law in a very constructive way.94 They need to be able to draft regulations and law. They need to anticipate the impact of different laws; they need to be able to act as judges who appropriately develop the law as well as interpret it. Lawyers need to operate in the private sector to find creative ways to advance both the public and private sectors. At the dawn of South Africa’s democracy, these were the skills needed; they played no small part in the political transition there.95

VI. RACE AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

For some practical ideas, it may be worth looking at the Civil Rights Movement, where a minority was confronted with pursuing equality in the face of resistance from a hostile majority.96 This was done in many ways. One particularly effective method was to promote procedural safeguards when it was impossible to obtain substantive rights.97 For example, in many areas such as higher education or welfare or employment, disclosure

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93. A recent example to highlight the point surfaced during particularly horrendous floods in Mozambique that devastated the country. The American media was slow to pick up the story, but coverage was improved when a Mozambican woman who had been stranded in a tree for a few days gave birth just before she was rescued by helicopters. See As Aid Is Delivered in Mozambique, Some Question Delay, N.Y. Times, Mar. 7, 2000, at 6 (commenting on aid to flood victims).

94. The point is not to eschew legal theory, but rather to suggest that if law is going to be used as an instrument to transform people’s lives, then critical race scholars who are engaged in that endeavor are implicated in their outcomes. In other words, their tasks are more than deconstruction, but should include reconstruction. And as law professors, our skills, our methodologies, indeed all our endeavors involve our chosen profession.


96. For an interesting and highly readable account of the Civil Rights Movement, see generally Taylor Branch, Parting The Waters: America in the King Years: 1954-63 (1988). For critiques of the civil struggle and particularly the failures of the Civil Rights Movement in substantially redressing the structural inequalities that plague minorities, especially African-Americans, see Derrick Bell, Race, Racism and American Law (3d ed. 1992), and Derrick Bell, Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism (1992), which provides new goals for the civil rights struggles.

of the impact of ordinary private and public actions was required. In terms of poverty law, this resulted in disclosure statements. In environmental law, this resulted in environmental impact statements. Perhaps, in looking at the workings of international organizations, critical race theorists need to identify areas where procedural safeguards could be obtained even though the substantive claim is unable to be realized.

To peruse some examples: perhaps in the area of refugee assistance, it may be strategic to require the United Nations (U.N.) to make an equity assessment or equality impact statement whenever it undertakes additional assignments. At least, this will force the member nations and the U.N. staff to recognize at the outset whether U.N. resources are being utilized adequately and fairly or whether they are being skewed to the benefit of those who are less needy. Because the global crisis of refugees is one of the most serious, this is not an insignificant concern. With reference to this issue of refugee inequity, discrepancies have been demonstrated of late with respect to the crises in the Balkans, and in Africa, where the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is spending eleven times more on refugees in the Balkans than in Africa. Moreover, international appeals for humanitarian assistance for Africa are often not met with the same eagerness as those for Eastern Europe.


[A] national policy which will encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; [and] to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the nation.

Id. For a discussion of these impact statement requirements, see Frank P. Grad, 4 Treatise On Environmental Law § 9.02 (1998).

100. See Mutua, supra note 19, at 590 (discussing international procedural safeguards). In the U.N., for example, this may be particularly useful where there may be huge differences among member nations about the content of a right. See id. at 590 (noting member nations' inability to agree on scope, content or philosophical bases of human rights).


102. See Christine M. Chinkin, Kosovo: A "Good" or "Bad" War? 93 Am. J. Int'l L. 841, 847 ("[T]he UNHCR is spending about 11 cents a day per refugee in Africa. In the Balkans, the figure is $1.23, more than eleven times greater." (citing T. Christian Miller & Ann M. Simmons, Relief Camps for Africans, Kosovars Worlds Apart, L.A. Times, May 21, 1999, at A1)).

103. See Chinkin, supra note 102, at 847 (noting that Kosovo's appeals have been substantially met while those for Africa have been largely ignored). Chinkin points out:
To raise a further example: it is now clear that developing nations are likely to be the ones subjected to sanctions from the U.N.\textsuperscript{104} Perhaps the U.N. should be required to do impact statements to assess its overall impact on the most vulnerable members of the society, particularly those who do not have the means and/or resources to challenge the targeted government.\textsuperscript{105}

In the case of sanctions, perhaps another procedural benefit would be to have them be in existence for a limited time but capable of being renewed by another vote by members. In addition, there could be a requirement that before each vote, the U.N. would have to make an impact assessment of humanitarian need, equity or other such facts. The point is that, like the civil rights and environmental movements, critical race theorists should perhaps think about both procedural and substantive safeguards, recognizing that both are valuable.

VII. CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE WAY FORWARD

Our discursive debates also need to include our locations as privileged inhabitants of the West, even as part of the Third World in the West, or as part of the South in the North. We need to critically interrogate whether and how domestic United States categories and analyses travel, if at all. For example, "the positioning of 'minorities' and marginal groups within U.S. society at the 'bottom' by critical race theorists would pose different questions regarding accountability if our 'bottom' were perceived by inhabitants of other parts of the world as part of the 'top' in the industrialized North."\textsuperscript{106}

\begin{flushleft}[The U.N.'s] consolidated 
humanitarian appeal for Kosovo is $690 million, of which 58\% has been met, while $2.1 billion has just been pledged for regional construction. A U.N. appeal for $25 million for Sierra Leone met profound international indifference and a mere 32\% of the appeal has been covered.
\end{flushleft}


104. \textit{See} Joy K. Fausey, Comment, \textit{Does the United Nation's Use of Collective Sanctions to Protect Human Rights Violate Its Own Human Rights Standards?}, \textit{10 Conn. J. Int'l L.} 193, 196 (1994-95) (discussing how sanctions impose upon nation's individuals, despite claims that sanctions only affect nations). The most publicized of the U.N. sanctions are those against Iraq. \textit{See id.} (describing restrictions imposed upon Iraq for human rights violations). The effects of the sanctions against the populace, especially children, have been raised. \textit{See id.} (noting social ramifications of U.N. sanctions in Iraq).

105. \textit{See id.} (suggesting that U.N. should consider societal disparities in context of program development). Similarly, the structural adjustment programs of the IMF and the World Bank have wreaked havoc in the developing countries; might it not be too far fetched to consider impact statements to reveal their human impact. \textit{See id.} (discussing objectives and ramifications of impact statements).

This is the context within which an analysis of critical race theory and international law is located. In other words, the hegemony of the United States in global economics, politics and law implicates the manner in which a critical race perspective may enter the global stage on which human rights discourse is increasingly insisting on a less minor role.

As I have mentioned before, the influence of critical race theory in this country has been somewhat limited. It has been of fairly significant theoretical value, but this has largely been confined to a few academics in law faculties. Despite their limited influence, the writings of critical race scholars have generated substantial attention from both liberal and conservative scholars.107

The speakers at this symposium have all indicated the convergences and divergences between international law and critical race theory. For critical race theorists, the challenge is to excavate the spaces and silences in international law that exclude people of color and to fill those spaces and silences, both symbolically and substantively.

At the outset, this paper indicated how international law has been and continues to be subjected to thoughtful critique.108 Critical race theory therefore follows a critical tradition established in international law, following in the footsteps of critical legal studies,109 new approaches to international law,110 international legal feminism,111 new approaches to comparative law,112 and the postcolonial and sexuality project.113

107. See Randall L. Kennedy, Racial Critiques of Legal Academia, 102 HARV. L. REV. 1745, 1745 (1989) (analyzing recent writings on effect racial differences have in scholarly influence and prestige in legal academia); see also RICHARD A. POSNER, OVERCOMING LAW 368-84 (1995) (discussing, through nuance, narrative and empathy, different approaches available under critical race theory); Daniel Subotnik, What’s Wrong with Critical Race Theory?: Reopening the Case for Middle Class Values, 7 CORNELL J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 681, 681-87 (1998) (reaching dramatically different policy judgments than critical race theory advocates after reviewing history of critical race theory); Lloyd R. Cohen, A Different Black Voice in Legal Scholarship, 37 N.Y.L. SCH. L. REV. 301, 301 (1992) (suggesting that difficulty in judging achievements in emerging Black legal scholarship, or critical race legal scholarship, is based on its insulation from outside review and critical appraisal).

108. For further discussion of critiques of international law, see supra notes 11-54 and accompanying text.

109. See, e.g., Purvis, supra note 29, at 81 (introducing history of recent international legal scholarship); Trimble, supra note 17, at 813 (discussing nations’ need for better comprehension of international law).

110. See Kennedy & Tennant, supra note 17, at 417-18 (presenting collection of new approaches to international law).

111. See Cook, supra note 14, at 857 (discussing published works “on the development, interpretation, and implementation of women’s international human rights”).


113. See Vasuki Nesiah, Toward A Feminist Internationality: A Critique of U.S. Feminist Legal Scholarship, 16 HARV. WOMEN’S L.J. 189, 190 (1993) (arguing that feminist legal scholars, despite providing powerful critical voices, have not challenged global contradictions in their efforts to articulate feminist project); see also Tayyab
All of these approaches have attempted to excavate, debunk and deconstruct the myths of equality and neutrality in international law. These scholars have suggested new methodologies to incorporate the concerns of marginalized groups, and have suggested new approaches to incorporate these concerns in theory and praxis. As mentioned previously, there is vast, innovative literature about these matters. The question, therefore, arises: What can critical race theory offer? Does critical race theory provide a vocabulary for transformation? And more significantly: Of what practical value would these perspectives be? What are the possibilities of critical race theory engaging with local struggles? Implicit in the critique of critical race theory of the American legal system is the law’s neglect of marginalized communities, largely communities of color. It is therefore not too implausible to assume that its focus in international law would be on how communities of color are situated within the global configuration. Its primary focus therefore will be the intersection of global economics and politics with rights and the Third World.

VIII. A Tentative Agenda

We have for over a century been dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot, choked by dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our own helplessness, and overwhelmed by the speed. We agreed to acknowledge that this chariot-drive was progress, and that progress was civilization. If we ever ventured to ask, “progress towards what, and progress for whom,” it was consid-


114. For an exploration and categorization of these different approaches, see Kennedy, supra note 15, at 14-16 (framing disciplines of international law, comparative law and international economic law).

115. See id. (same).

116. For a passionate plea to utilize our resources in a constructive way, see Hom, supra note 106, at 105, supporting “the exploration of a reconstructive agenda,” which she calls “trafficking justice,” in which “the daily choices we make . . . are concrete, site-specific opportunities for ‘doing justice’ in the here and now.”


119. For an explanation of the use of “Third World,” see supra note 10 and accompanying text.
International law is fundamentally a political and a practical enterprise. Although driven by theory and ideology, it is the consequence of hard-nosed political bargaining and compromise. International law is not democratic, despite the formal facade of one vote, one member at the U.N. One only has to look at the make-up of the Security Council, where five members have powers of veto on decisions made by the General Assembly, consisting of one hundred and fifty plus member states.

However, despite these political shortcomings in global governance, political lobbying by non-governmental organizations has at times proven effective in pursuing human rights. They have in fact injected into a system long viewed as bureaucratic, and its processes, cumbersome, an energy and excitement filled with possibilities for marginalized groups and individuals globally. These international non-governmental organizations have, in their activism, demanded that the U.N. live up to its commitments enshrined in the first twentieth century document of international human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Evidence of


121. See Baxi, supra note 2, at 125-28 (discussing proliferation of “Age of Human Rights” in twentieth century on global scale).

122. For a thoughtful discussion of the fallacy of equality in international law, see Maxwell Chibundu, Affirmative Action and International Law, 15 L. CONTEXT 11 (Vol. 2, 1999) (arguing formal, sovereign equality of states under international law belies economic disparities existing among states).

123. See U.N. CHARTER art. 2 (setting forth principles upon which U.N. was founded); see also Otto, supra note 59, at 376 (same).


125. See generally The Conscience of the World, supra note 124 (discussing efforts of NGOs).

the success of their endeavors abound;127 the most visible is the lobbying conducted by non-governmental organizations committed to women's human rights. In the last two decades, global activity in the pursuit of women's human rights has been unprecedented. This is reflected in numerous global conferences arranged under the auspices of the U.N.,128 the number of U.N. documents committed to the pursuit of women's human rights,129 and the amount of literature emanating from the U.N. and its agencies committed to women's human rights.130 Much of the success of these lobbying efforts by women activists through the non-governmental sector was possible because of a concerted, strategic alliance of women activists and feminist scholars, the latter often acting as consultants and "experts."131 This is possibly a lesson that critical race theorists could


131. These alliances have been fraught with difficulty and often much rancor. See generally Isabelle R. Grunning, Arrogant Perception, World-Traveling and Multicultural Feminism: The Case of Female Genital Surgeries, 23 COLUM. HUM. RTS. L. REV. 189 (1991-92) (calling on Western feminists to be more cognizant of their limitations when dealing with "outsider cultures" and suggesting an intellectual mode of engagement that she entities, "World Travelling"); Julie Mertus & Pamela Goldberg, A Perspective on Women and International Human Rights After the Vienna Declaration: The Inside/Outside Construct, 26 N.Y.U. J. INT'L L. & POL. 201 (1994) (recalling difficulties that arose during Vienna Conference when Western and Third World femi-
heed. In this vein, the following are some of the areas of international human rights law to which critical race theorists could make a valuable contribution.\textsuperscript{132}

Critical race theorists could become involved in the continuing efforts by Third World scholars and activists to rescript the hierarchy of rights to ensure that economic and social rights are not continually relegated to a secondary place on the rights stage,\textsuperscript{133} and that human rights in fact are linked to economic development.\textsuperscript{134} Second, critical race theorists could continue to deconstruct those perennial claims of human rights law: universalism, sovereignty and equality, and subject them to the vigorous critique they have accomplished in the United States.\textsuperscript{135} Third, they could focus attention on extra-governmental institutions that continually impact the human rights of individuals, sometimes benignly, as in the case of international non-governmental organizations, and sometimes negatively, as in the case of multinational corporations.\textsuperscript{136} Finally, they could focus their attention on the U.N., and particularly its enforcement bodies and

\textsuperscript{132}nists attempted to strategize around issue of violence against women). A particularly useful perspective is the critique leveled at feminists for their failure to focus on race and class. See Marion Crain, Between Feminism and Unionism: Working Class Women, Sex Equality, and Labor Speech, 82 Geo. L.J. 1903, 1924 (1994) (noting that “both formal equality strategies and affirmative action strategies disproportionately benefit those women at the top of the female hierarchy . . .”).

133. This is in addition to the already impressive contribution by critical race scholars. See, e.g., Ruth E. Gordon, Saving Failed States: Sometimes a Neocolonialist Notion, 12 Am. U. J. Int’l L. & Pol’y 903, 915 (1997) (suggesting that critical race perspective critically assess statehood and sovereignty).

134. See generally Bedjaoui, supra note 10 (discussing “new international economic order, its meaning, its importance and other observations”); see also Thomas, supra note 45, at 2-10 (analyzing areas of international law and policy needing restructuring of discourse); J. Oloka-Onyango, Beyond the Rhetoric: Reinvigorating the Struggle for Economic and Social Rights in Africa, 26 CAL. W. INT’L L. J. 1, 2 (1995) (discussing need to devote more attention to human rights neglected).


136. See generally Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge, supra note 84 (presenting a compilation of excerpted works on critical race theory).
mechanisms, to investigate how a critical race theory perspective may be brought to bear on the institution and its enforcement procedures.137

Critical race theorists could also interrogate local concerns here in the United States that have international implications. For example, even though the death penalty has raised widespread debate because its imposition disproportionately affects African American males, an added concern is its violation of international human rights.158 This is one international human rights issue that has resulted in widespread opprobrium from the international community, particularly this country’s European allies.139

Critical race theorists may have an important contribution in highlighting this issue and shaping the debate.

One significant global event in which critical race theorists may have an immediate opportunity to engage with international human rights law, is the upcoming United Nations Fourth World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in South Africa in the summer of 2001.140 The U.N. General Assembly has directed that the conference be “action oriented,”141 and the conference announcement states its aim as follows:

[T]o focus on practical steps to eradicate racism by considering how to ensure that international standards and instruments are applied in efforts to combat it. It will also formulate recommendations for further action to combat bias and intolerance.142

137. An analogous investigation was undertaken to assess how the U.N. ignores women’s concerns. See Charlesworth et al., supra note 14, at 622 (comparing U.N. structures with those of national states that restrict women to insignificant and subordinate roles).


139. See Suzanne Daley, Europeans Deplore Executions in the U.S., N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 26, 2000, at A8 (describing European sentiment that death penalty should not be revived). There are other examples as well. The debate surrounding immigrants’ rights and the continued exploitation of immigrant workers raises concerns about their international human rights implications. See, e.g., Taunya Lovell Banks, Toward a Global Critical Feminist Vision: Domestic Work and the Nanny Tax Debate, 3 J. Gender, Race & Just. 1, 30-36 (1999) (raising issues that female immigrant workers face daily, which are virtually ignored by feminist and academic migration scholars).


141. See generally South Africa 2001, supra note 139.

142. Id. In addition, the conference announcement outlines the following aims and objectives:

To review progress made against racial discrimination, to re-appraise obstacles to further progress and to devise ways to overcome them;

To consider how to ensure the better application of existing standards to combat racial discrimination;

To increase awareness about racism and its consequences;
The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the centerpiece of the United Nations human rights armory to fight racism, will be the main focus of the event, although the conference also plans to "highlight global efforts to promote the rights of migrants." Of particular interest to critical race theorists, and in line with their innovative scholarship, the conference intends to focus on the intersectionality of race, gender, disability or age.

This conference provides a propinquitous opportunity for critical race theorists to engage with critical scholars and human rights activists from around the globe to interrogate the increasing possibilities of a human rights agenda in the United States in line with global developments. The imperatives of globalism and the organizational space that has been spurred by the increasing network of human rights, non-governmental organizations, provides an exciting entry point for critical race theorists to pursue a global agenda to eradicate racism. The most salient, immediate benefit may be an exploration of possible theoretical and practical strategies to pursue those goals within the United States.

IX. Conclusion

If critical race theory is perceived to, and will in fact be, of any relevance to marginalized peoples both within the United States and globally, then some of the concerns with which it has been most preoccupied will somehow need to shift. Critical race theorists have paid substantial attention to the failure of American law and its legal institutions to live up to the lofty principles set out in the Bill of Rights and have adequately addressed the legacy of colonialism (with respect to America’s indigenous population), slavery (with respect to African-Americans) and subordination and discrimination (with respect to other minorities of color). They have also described the panoply of indignities which members of

To make recommendations on how the activities and mechanisms of the United Nations can be more effective in fighting racism;

To review the political, historical, economic, social, cultural and other factors which have contributed to racism;

To make recommendations with regard to new national, regional and international measures that could be adopted to fight racism; and

To make recommendations concerning how to ensure that the United Nations has sufficient resources to be able to carry out an effective program to combat racism and racial discrimination.

*Id.*


147. For further discussion of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, see *supra* notes 96-105 and accompanying text.
minority groups constantly confront. Critical race theorists have focused on the indignities of being law professors, and of general slurs and slights, which arise from the physical attributes of being a person of color in the United States. Critical race scholars have also interrogated the conditions of criminality and marginality that plague communities of color in the United States. They have, for example, focused their attention on the disproportionate number of African American males in the criminal justice system in the United States. Critical race theorists have also endeavored to expose the stereotype of the Black welfare queen, and the obnoxious racial animus accompanying such stereotyping. They have focused their attention on the conditions of economic marginality and the violence of poverty endemic amongst indigenous communities.

These valuable insights have provided a script for re-imagining and re-configuring rights discourse within the United States. Their application globally, however, is of limited utility, since they preface American historical and contemporary conditions. In other words, these issues and their articulation may not have similar global resonance.


151. See, e.g., Regina Austin, "The Black Community," Its Lawbreakers and Politics of Identification, 65 S. Cal. L. Rev. 1769, 1772 (1992) (arguing that "black criminals are pitied, praised, protected, emulated, or embraced if their behavior has a positive impact on the social, political, and economic well-being of black communal life"). According to Austin, Black criminals are "criticized, ostracized, scorned, abandoned, and betrayed" if their behavior does not positively impact Black communal life. Id.; see Sheri Lynn Johnson, Black Innocence and the White Jury, 83 Mich. L. Rev. 1611, 1611 (1985) (revealing prejudices of criminal juries largely hidden from judicial and critical examination).

152. See Dorothy E. Roberts, The Value of Black Mothers’ Work, in Critical Race Feminism: A Reader, supra note 85, at 312, 313 (discussing lasting social value of Black mother figure).


154. This is particularly the case with respect to the bifurcation of issues as majority versus minority(ies). In most of the developing world, the discourse of race, ethnicity and color (where the discourse exists in these terms) is of a differ-
Critical race theory has engaged only in a limited way in a thorough critique of the economic structures that underpin the American economic system and the role of American economic and foreign policy globally.\(^{155}\) It may be useful for critical race scholars to scrutinize the economic, political and cultural hegemony of the United States at this historic moment, and its global repercussions.\(^{156}\) Thus, in order to have some impact on global issues, critical race theorists will have to shift their focus somewhat, because the conditions of economic marginality are of particular concern to the global community of critical scholars.\(^{157}\) Critical race theorists, therefore, have to engage in the critique of the international economic arrangements that continue to subordinate and subjugate large parts of the globe, particularly in the South.\(^{158}\)

There is ample space both in international human rights discourse, as well as in policy and practice, to incorporate and expand the project of critical race theory. This is, however, contingent upon some reorientation on the part of critical race theorists in line with the comments raised earlier. This will enrich both the international law project and a critical race theory agenda in the United States and abroad.

\(^{155}\) See Ronald Segal, Islam’s Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora (2001) (detailing Islamic slavery in earlier centuries, as well a contemporary slavery in the Sudan and Mauritania).

\(^{156}\) See, e.g., Bell, supra note 8, at 776-77 (stating that “the rhetoric of freedom so freely voiced in this country is no substitute for the economic justice that has been so long denied”); see also, e.g., Elizabeth M. Iglesias, Structures of Subordination: Women of Color at the Intersection of Title VII and the NLRA, Not!, in Critical Race Feminism: A Reader, supra note 85, at 317 (exploring relationship between law and social reality of subordination through concept of “structural violence”).

\(^{157}\) For further discussion, see supra note 57 and accompanying text.

\(^{158}\) For further discussion of suggestions for implementing critical race theory, see supra notes 55-67 and accompanying text.