Introduction

The idea of this special issue originated from the 2015 annual conference of the US Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) that was held in Washington, DC, under the theme of “uBuntu! Imagining a Humanist Education Globally” (https://convention2.allacademic.com/one/cies/cies15/). Professor N’Dri Assié-Lumumba organized this conference in her capacity as the incoming President of CIES, working in close collaboration with Dr. Joan Osiave, who was a visiting scholar at Cornell University and served as the conference planning chair. One of the innovative features of the conference was the invitation made to several CIES members to respond to the theme from regional or thematic perspectives which were included in the program and contributed to elicit more interest before, during and since the conference. Invited to be a keynote speaker at the Conference, Professor Samir Amin delivered by teleconference his address titled “The Question of Education, Science and Technology in the Contemporary Time: On the Theory of Cognitive Capitalism.” As a global icon, his presentation electrified the audience. On the whole, the conference stirred considerable interest and enthusiasm. It was attended by more than 3300 participants from more than 100 countries.

Professor Assié-Lumumba and Dr. Oviawe, along with several other colleagues, discussed the importance of producing post-conference publications in various outlets to continue the insightful deliberations on the uBuntu paradigm. This special issue is one of such publications, some of which came out in 2017 and 2018. It is the result of Professor Assié-Lumumba’s enthusiastic response to the invitation of Dr. Pak Nung Wong, Editor-in-Chief of Bandung: Journal of the Global South, to produce a special issue titled “uBuntu, World Epistemologies, and Humanist Education.” She asked Dr. Joan Oviawe, Professor Martial Dembélé, and Professor Samir Amin to join her as Co-Guest Editors and they agreed.
Although Professor Amin had been exceptionally prolific with a uniquely long publication record, he took a keen interest in publishing in this journal. As a graduate student at the age of 24, he attended the historic Afro-Asian Bandung Conference of April 1955. The resolve of the conveners and participants to eliminate inequality, exploitation and marginalization and promote social progress on the global scale by their engagement, left an indelible mark on Professor Amin. He became an indefatigable fighter for equality globally, in part inspired by the spirit of Bandung. Therefore, he was happy that a journal in remembrance and projection of the Bandung spirit was created. This issue is dedicated to his life and what he stood for.

The issue was delayed for various reasons and, unfortunately, Professor Amin passed away in 2018. However, he is included posthumously, as author of an article and Co-Guest Editor. Ironically, as this issue is finalized in the context of the 2020 Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact globally, the theme and the articles included are timelier than ever.

The articles included in the issue are organized from Samir Amin’s own voice to engaging some of his prolific and sharp intellectual to try give meaning to some of the ongoing social processes in the current moment amidst the Coronavirus/COVID-19 and the global movements for racial and total justice for all, recognizing the universal common humanity.

In order to meet the Journal’s requirement of publishing a maximum of six articles per issue, the following two articles were published in Volume 8 Number 2 (2021), as Part I of the Special Issue on uBuntu: (1) “China’s humanistic Zhong-Yong approach to educational partnerships for international development in Post-Covid-19: Confucian and Ubuntu perspectives on Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in Africa” by Jun Li, and (2) “The Paulo Freire System” by Carlos Alberto Torres. The six articles contained in this issue are presented next.

Samir Amin’s article “The Right to Education and the Spirit of Bandung: Critical Reflection” is an extension of his 2015 CIES aforementioned keynote address “The Question of Education, Science and Technology in the Contemporary Time: On the Theory of Cognitive Capitalism.” He recalled the unprecedented historical moment of the Bandung conference of 1955. This article is a reflection on the social processes that had taken place sixty years after the 1955 historical meeting organized by the nations and peoples of Africa and Asia to declare their right to reclaim their independence, which subsequently took place over several decades until the 1990s. But Bandung claimed more than regaining political independence to the extent that this had to be complemented by the reconstruction of the concerned societies,
economically, socially and culturally. The right to education is a fundamental human right, which is inseparable from economic development and people's aspirations to a full and a wholly authentic democracy. Even in the real existing world governed by capitalism, development must be holistic as economic progress must mean progress of society and individuals, and access to, and the effective exercise of, all individual and collective rights, and in all domains of social existence, including education.

“Samir Amin the African, Global Giant, and Epitome of uBuntu in Tireless Pursuit of the ‘Highest Level of Human Civilization’” by N'Dri Thérèse Assié-Lumumba is the English version of a presentation delivered at the international symposium that was held on February 10–12, 2020 in Dakar (Senegal) in honor and memory of Professor Samir Amin. In what could be read as an autoethnography of more than four decades of an intellectual journey that is similar to that of many Africans from the status of students to adult academics with critical perspectives shaped by the uBuntu-inspired life vision of Samir Amin, who evolved with extraordinary consistency from childhood questioning social inequality to the global arena as the ultimate advocate of the marginalized everywhere. His unwavering commitment to the struggle to create a new world of equality and respect of our common humanity to achieve the highest level of human civilization.

In “uMuntu nguMuntu ngaBantu: Toward an Epistemology of Global Humanness for Education and Beyond”, Jose Cossa argues for a deep reflection on the concept, philosophical underpinnings, and practical implications of uBuntu everyday life of communities. He tackles the core question whether uBuntu and Humanism can simultaneously inform a pursuit of a new global epistemology and, consequently, a global philosophy of education. He articulates the point that uBuntu and humanism are not compatible at the very core of their ontological, axiological, and epistemological nature; thus, might present an epistemological challenge to any attempt to develop a global philosophy of education. He discusses the broad etymological definition of philosophy as the ‘love of wisdom’ and that wisdom is a manifestation in uBuntu world. He focuses on works of classical Western and African thinkers.

In “On the educational potential of uBuntu” Yusef Waghid argues that the literature on uBuntu is prolific and diverse. As a scholar who has been increasingly addressing its relation of uBuntu to African education, he contends that the concept of uBuntu is an African notion for education, in the same way that some Europeans describe bildung as education, and ta'dib, for some Muslims, means education. He analyses the relationship between the concept of uBuntu and at least three meanings of education, namely, interdependent human
action, deliberative inquiry, and socially responsive action and also makes the case for uBuntu as a cosmopolitan practice.

In “uBuntu: Applying a Southern Theoretical Paradigm to Counter Youth Radicalization” Ratna Ghosh argues that worldviews influence the school culture and therefore, the teaching content and methods, all of which have an impact on student well-being. She considers the African worldview of uBuntu as a framework for schooling and education that can be utilized to combat the alienation and discrimination faced by many students in the schools in Western countries which are pushing neo-liberal objectives that lead some students to violence and increasingly, to radicalization. She further argues that the spirit of mutual respect and recognition of the humanity of others in uBuntu has the capacity to promote transformative change in Western schools where values of care and compassion have been replaced by training in skills needed for employment. She deplores the exclusive focus on cognitive skills in mathematics, science and reading and the exclusion of the affective domain, leading to feeling of alienation among some students who fall pray to extremist groups that offer false narratives of community. The author suggests education as a soft approach and a proactive method in preventing the push and pull towards radicalization through an uBuntu world view of humanistic education.

In his conceptual, historical and prospective article “The Racialized Global Capitalist Economy: Reading Samir Amin in 2022”, Bjorn H. Nordtveit uses Samir Amin’s theories of worldwide value and historical materialism, to critically engage capitalism as inherently racist, at least since the Trans-Atlantic enslavement, with its proponents actively perpetuating racism in widening economic divides and destroying solidarity between workers. The global health crisis of Covid-19 has tragically illustrated the racist and exploitative structure of the global system where a Center continues to extract rent from the Periphery where political power and “corruptionists” connive. Movements such as Black Lives Matter can be shaped and contained through manipulation of media. To change the Base, he puts forward Samir Amin’s idea of “delinking” of the Periphery from the monopoly economy, and the rehabilitation of Marxism through creation of a new global organization emulating the vision of Bandung. The 2022 invasion of Ukraine exposes some contradictions in strengthening the monopoly economy worldwide but has the potential of contributing to actualize the demise of the autocratic-capitalist system in Russia, with international repercussions.

In memory of Professor Amin, we wish to thank Dr. Wong and all the contributors for their patience and understanding. The essentially unequal and destructive system that prevails today is neither natural nor inevitable. We
hope some of the ideas and arguments in these articles will stir further debates and actions to contribute to creating a new uBuntu-inspired global world.

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