*Editorial*

# Dismantling the Master's House: An introduction to our first issue

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**Abstract** This article introduces the Stolen Tools journal. It begins by telling the story of how the journal was founded and the literature that we were inspired by. I focus on Audre Lorde's essay 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House'. The article then describes how Stolen Tools works, exploring the positives and negatives of our mentoring model, author submission procedure, decolonial ambitions and organising structure. I end by introducing the seven articles that form our first issue, and explain how they fit under the issue's theme: what does anti-racist knowledge look like?

**CRediT:**
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**Figure 1:** "London BLM March" by Jai Toor, 2020 Systemic racism cuts deep like a knife

## 1 Our Stolen Tools heritage

Stolen Tools was inspired by a reflective practice group on racism facilitated by young academics working on health inequalities at King's College London. In these sessions, people from racialised minorities would discuss and educate White colleagues, as well as each other, on anti-racism. In the context of academia, anti-racism can be about disrupting who has power in universities, decentring

whiteness from the curriculum, centring and valuing academics with lived experience, and creating space for the academic expression of racialised minorities. This work was stimulating and essential. Yet it ended, partly because of the unmanageable, unpaid and emotional labour carried out by the group's organisers. One of the readings in the reflective practice group was Audre Lorde's 'Your Silence Will Not Protect You' (2017) and her famous essay 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House'. In it, Lorde states that though the master's tools may enable us to 'temporarily beat him at his own game... they will never enable us to bring about genuine change' (p91). This text came from a speech Audre Lorde gave at a feminist conference. Here, Audre lamented the lack of representation and acknowledgement of the experiences of Black feminists and lesbians. Though the conference was ostensibly anti-patriarchal, it had replicated the master's structures of racial and sexual exclusion. There is something incredible in the simultaneous eloquence and bluntness of Audre Lorde's speech. She shapes the exclusionary conference theatre into an unapologetic critique of her academic peers. It is partly with Audre Lorde's theory and practice in mind that we have created Stolen Tools. Like Audre Lorde, this journal also draws on personal racialised experiences in education and academia. Multiple people in our group (who speak English as a first or only language) had been asked by reviewers, for instance, to ensure a native English speaker reviews our writing. Most of us, at one point in our education, have had our ideas dismissed because they centred on anti-racism or incorporated non-White knowledge(s). Several of our group had encountered paternalistic and patronising attitudes from ethics committees when submitting applications to work with our own communities. More than anything, everyone had suffered under the exploitative, often unpaid, labour demanded of academics. While Stolen Tools was founded through admiration and love, it would be a lie to say that it wasn't fuelled by anger and frustration too.

Stolen Tools needs to be a space of relief and imagination. Where, in the face of an exclusionary education system, people can swim to the surface and breathe. In this breath, we hope that they will see how endless the ocean really is and the many things that academia can be. Our vision is to encourage a knowledge system that is accessible and open to people from racialised minorities, and expressed in a way that everyone can understand. In our vision, knowledge from cultural practice, artistic expression and intuition is treasured and explored. In our future world, the people producing knowledge are varied in their heritage and life-script. They are transparent and vulnerable about why they do their research.

This journal, therefore, arises out of a solidarity and shared vision between people of racialised minorities submerged in white educational spaces. It is a solidarity that we invite you to take part in as an artist, author, mentor, reader and critic. It is a solidarity we hope to expand beyond national and educational borders to schools, charities and campaigning groups across the world. In trying to work in solidarity and achieve our journal's vision, we will need to create, or perhaps steal, knowledge production tools. We ask, is it possible to reclaim, steal, and repatriate the Master's tools and use them to dismantle the Master's house?

## 2 How Stolen Tools works

Our journal tackles knowledge, power and race in health. This encompasses how knowledge is produced and taught, as well as platforming knowledge on health inequities that may be ignored due to structural racism. First and foremost, our journal is for and by those who identify as coming from a racialised minority background. This begins with the organising team but goes through to the advisory board, mentors, authors and artists. We believe this is crucial to creating spaces that value and prioritise knowledge and practice stemming from marginalised groups and non-Western cultures. We recognise, however, that this structure is not a panacea to race-based power inequalities and there are many embedded and intersectional oppressions that we must continually address.

We are keen to highlight voices that might be marginalised in the education system. We aim to select all our writers through an open application process on our website. In this process, contributors are asked to provide details on their positionality, motivation to submit, and why their idea needs to be heard. This process has been difficult to enact in our first issue, where the trust and reach of our journal remains limited. We have, therefore, drawn some contributors from academic, activist and charity connections, as well as members of our organising group. This journal is an active process of learning and engagement, and we hope to move exclusively to the open application process in future issues.

Accepted applicants are paired with a mentor. Mentors work with writers to develop their submission, nurture their autonomy and creativity, and build their skills and confidence in anti-racism work. Mentors supplant the role of editors and supervisors, providing educational, pastoral and peer support, as well as topic expertise. This includes engaging in thinking about emotional and creative expressions as racialised minorities. For example, self-censorship in publishing – where we mute ourselves and why. Mentors and writers collaboratively agree on the context of their engagement through the submission process and how frequently they will meet.

While the mentoring process created links and solidarity between mentors and mentees, it has also provoked the question of who is qualified to be a mentor. Typically, we paired someone with more academic experience with someone with less academic experience. Yet, in doing so, we undercut our practice of valuing diverse forms of knowledge. The loaded term of 'mentor' also creates a hierarchy that may replicate the supervisory role it aims to replace. Future issues will connect mentees to a wider range of mentors and give both parties a choice in choosing their counterparts. In addition, we'll consider framing the relationship around mutual learning and transformation.

In creating knowledge, we ask 'who are we thinking with?' We aspire to build intellectual communities and accessible knowledge with other racialised people. In this spirit, every article is open access, and we are encouraging applications from non-university researchers. We have also opened the journal up to a variety of submissions types including but not limited to: research-based and theoretical articles (understandable to non-academics); recollections and archive essays (reflective essays on experiences in education settings); creative outputs (poetry, fiction prose, music, artwork); critical interviews (on power dynamics in education settings); disruptive methods (that challenge established instruments and are rooted in indigenous practice) and campaign features (highlighting anti-racist resistance).

Our journal aims to be a meaningfully decolonial one. Our concept of decolonising academia is rooted not only in valuing non-Western knowledge and increasing access, but also in recompense and taking action to resist colonisation. Stolen Tools explores these elements of decolonisation through our mentoring model and by paying everyone involved for their labour. This includes the organising team, reviewers, mentors and contributors. We aim to undermine university systems that are tied up with casualisation and overwork.

The process of publishing our first issue made clear that payment and mentoring are simply the first steps in decolonising academia. Recompense, for instance, also requires job security and progression, mental health care, and institutional recognition. Moreover, in the context of decolonisation, it needs to expand across borders and languages. These crucial factors can be difficult to ensure when faced with the practical task of creating and publishing a journal. Eventually, however, we hope to use our example to change university and knowledge production structures.

## 3 What does anti-racist knowledge look like?

Setting out to create an anti-racist health journal is one thing, but actively creating and imagining what this looks like is another. Our first issue begins to answer this by thinking about what anti-racist health knowledge could be and feel like.

We start with Ricardo Twumasi recasting authorship and ownership in academic work. He encourages us to use the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) where the different contributions of authors are recognised and distinguished. He also draws on the film industry for inspiration. The overall goal is to build a fairer, more transparent approach to knowledge production. It is a system that we've employed throughout our journal.

Next, Mama D Ujuaje provides the theoretical foundations and motivations for Ricardo's CRediT. She weaves a rich paper on how acknowledgement is essential to knowledge and decolonisation. She argues that acknowledgement must go beyond platitudes and performances to a meaningful, mutual and reparative re-cognition. Genuine acknowledgement involves opening our minds and bodies to the multiple knowledges in multiple forms. It has the potential to repair all colonial parties from the oppressed to the oppressors.

Like Mama D, Michelle Udoh argues that there are many ways of knowing and producing knowledge. She draws on Nigeria's feminist history to retell the story of the Abeokuta Ladies Club in Nigeria, founded in 1932. The Ladies' Club evolved into a site of education, and eventually, an anti-colonial tax revolt. Michelle talks about the value of knowledge in everyday conversations and spaces and contrasts this with the field of Global Health. A subject that grew out of colonial conquest.

Jimena Pardo discusses her experiences setting up and running Bordando por la Memoria, a textile and memory project for Chilean exiles. Here, the everyday product and process of crafting textiles is a fountain of knowledge. Jimena eloquently describes how the textiles she helps produce hold the tragic knowledge of events that happened around the Chilean dictatorship. These textiles allow this difficult knowledge to be shared and interrogated, and help Chilean exiles process difficult memories. This piece is partly narrated through Jimena's images of textile testimonies, her embroidery workshops and her family history.

Our next contributor in this issue, Beauty Dhlamini, turns to very practical issues in health research. She speaks of the inadequacies, limits and prejudices of current health data. How the knowledge we produce isn't on the health of Black British people is vague and inaccurate, reduces complex and emotional experiences to

numbers, and fails to address the everyday political realities people live through. She presents a picture of what anti-racist health data might look like, thinking about how researchers can engage more directly with structural and institutional racism.

Aida Hasan provides some of the theoretical underpinnings for Beauty's criticism of the knowledge health academics are interested in and currently producing. She interrogates what we mean by the term 'academic' and uses this to critique the monopoly universities hold on knowledge production. She uses Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to look at how academia produces a West-centric imagination of the world and how this imagination affects global policies. Aida ends by thinking about her place in this pale academic landscape and how she can make change.

We finish with Trevor Brooks, in conversation with Ricardo Twumasi. Here, Trevor discusses inequality between academics and those working in professional university services. Trevor highlights the essential but underappreciated knowledge people in professional services hold, and explores how to build solidarity between the two groups. He uses the powerful analogy of a house slave and a field slave to highlight our shared oppression. This call for solidarity through acknowledgement provides the perfect ending for our first issue. It set the scene for how structural change around university knowledge production can be achieved.

## 4   Conclusion

We are excited to present to you our first issue and include you at the start of our journey. Like any starting point, it is an imperfect and privileged place. We don't expect to get everything right and have more ideas than time. However, as an organising group and journal, we are committed to educating ourselves and getting better. That is what we are asking of ourselves and that is what we are demanding of academia.

## References

Lorde, A. (2017). *Your silence will not protect you*. Silver Press.