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ERASURE OF (POST) COLONIAL POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN MALAWI'S HISTORY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The History curriculum in Malawi has experienced reforms due to the various political periods that have dictated its direction. The agency for a revised curriculum first appeared upon independence when the country adopted a colonial education system. The paper argues that such a process was hijacked by the then liberation movement that had emerged victorious against white colonial rule – the Malawi Congress Party. This meant erasing narratives that would otherwise challenge the government's legitimacy and incumbency. Through a review of the current History syllabi which evolved from a 2013 curriculum review and a close reading of the recommended history textbooks, the paper argues that the erasure of such counter-narratives remains intact to this day, basically for the same reasons they were excluded from the initial post-independence curriculum – opposition to political hegemony. It, therefore, argues for the re-inclusion of these multiple histories to create complete narratives that have otherwise been fragmented by revisionism.

I. INTRODUCTION

History education in Africa became crucial at independence, serving as a vehicle through which Africans, after decades of colonial subjugation, had the agency to reimagine and redefine their past. Postcolonial governments found themselves with the need to spearhead reforms that would lead to an ultimate valorization of Africa's heritage and recognition of the role various individuals played in the development of the nations that were freshly emerging from the shadows of colonialism. It also became incumbent upon independent Africa to produce narratives antedating the European periodization of the continent's history (Chimee, 2018) and rejecting colonial notions of an Africa devoid of its history before the colonial experience. Just as Eastern Europe would later reimagine its past through History education after the fall of communism (Karostelina, 2011), "Africa witnessed a new era of state-produced nationalist history" (Ranger, 2009, p. 62). As Ogot (1976) cited in Okuro (2008) explains, with colonialism defeated, it became clear that political independence could only have meaning if it was accompanied by historical independence. Nasibi (2015) shares this assertion by contending that "the process of reinterpretation of African history was accelerated after independence when the newly created African states set out to decolonize African historiographical enterprise in the late 1950s and 1960s" (p. 641).

The desire to get rid of colonial imprints in African historiography gave birth to the rise of nationalist historiography. However, most postcolonial leaders felt threatened and used their incumbent political power to emasculate narratives they perceived as adversary to their legitimacy. These leaders were benefiting from the postulation that "textbooks embody the selective tradition – it is always someone's selection, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group's cultural capital disenfranchises another's" (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 4). Nationalist history was skewed towards promoting the agenda of the new governments that had evolved out of liberation movements. The History curriculum was therefore largely revisionist as to reflect endeavours of – mostly – the only liberators who were in power. Thus, politicians abused the new African narratives for their political mileage and the historical accounts that appeared to counter the preferred narratives were relegated to impertinence.

Post-independence Malawi found itself in a similar situation, its history bent on exalting one party to the liberation struggle while obliterating histories of activists that, as disillusionment crept in by and by, became increasingly critical of the regime. Malawi holds a deep colonial and postcolonial history often encountered through oral narratives and various fiction and nonfiction books authored by both Malawian and non-Malawian writers. This deep history is in part represented in the curriculum of History as a subject that is taught in secondary schools. Through the school context lens, one encounters, for example, the country's pre-colonial history although it

is shallow when treated in comparison with detail that characterizes other world histories. The pre-colonial history contains feats and exploits of the Maravi and Tumbuka-Nkhamanga kingdoms, the various tribal movements into Malawi: the Chewa from the Congo, the Ngoni from South Africa, the Yao and Lomwe from Mozambique, early Malawian settlers as well as other African empires and kingdoms of the past. The curriculum also contains narratives concerning the 400 years of the brutal and barbaric slave trade which on the continent mostly involved Whites, Arabs, and some local kings/tribal chiefs and middlemen, and its transcendence into colonialism – itself a subtle form of slavery in the colonies. The inclusion of the pre-colonial history – a distant past in Malawi's temporal existence as a nation – emanates from the realization that the school History curriculum is associated with the political trajectories of nation-states as the mode of transmission of the imagined national past (Clark, 2010).

II. METHODS

The study deployed a qualitative research design. As such, it depended on document analysis. This was done through a careful study of the Malawi secondary school History syllabi. The syllabi are divided into two: Syllabus for History Forms 1 and 2 and Syllabus for History Forms 3 and 4 (the earlier junior secondary History, the latter senior secondary History). The researchers chose the syllabi because they represent the government's philosophy on History education as the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) holds the mandate of regulating curricula development and implementation in the country. Apart from the syllabi, the researchers also analyzed the thematic content of various textbooks that are used in teaching History in secondary schools. These were chosen because they are the resources that teachers rely on in transference of knowledge to learners. These textbooks are not selected at random by the teachers; they are recommended by the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) – a body under the MoEST that is mandated with curricula development. Lastly, the study also relied on secondary sources such as various published materials on History education in Africa in general and Malawi in specific. From the analysis, the researchers were able to code the data and generate patterns and themes that were then discerned basing on the available content and rationale for History education.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historiography and the Post-Independence Curriculum

Even with Malawi's deep and multiple histories, the curriculum for secondary schools falls short of effectively contributing to a construction of an unbiased knowledge base within which Malawians can form correct notions of identity and nationhood based on multiple historical accounts of resistance and courage. It is mostly the pre-colonial history that is non-revisionist and relatively unifying. Moyo (2014) refers to such history (the pre-colonial) as forming nationalist historiography. This is a history that is preoccupied with demonstrating that "Africa had produced organized politics, monarchies, and cities, just like Europe" (Zeleza, 1997, p. 1). By design, however,

the pre-colonial history is not complemented with otherwise comprehensive narratives of both colonial and postcolonial Malawi in which various figures became prominent in struggles for independence and freedom. It is especially the postcolonial period that suffers hugely from this erasure. The history offered in the curriculum remains mostly comprehensive only in the understanding of the ensemble of political, social and economic activities that culminated into a totality of the geographical space that became Malawi at independence. Generally, the nuances in the History textbooks that form part of the country's official narratives are wanting, with crucial chapters in the country's historical timeline missing. This is the paper's argument: the History curriculum was originally designed in alignment with the politics of one-party rule (1964-1994) where the dictatorial regime did not want to present multiple narratives of nationalist heroism and postcolonial resistance for fear of undermining its power. As argued at the onset, most liberation governments tended to emasculate activists who posed threats even from the curriculum.

From the independent African churches' anti-colonial resistance in the early 1900s through the colonial administration's massacre of peaceful protestors in Nkhotakota (1959) to the torture and death of hundreds (even thousands, when counting includes the unknown, the completely erased who disappeared from the footnotes of even the remotest of Malawi's societies) of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's political opponents in post-independence Malawi, the highly one-sided revisionism presented in the official narratives has created hollow spaces in the curriculum of History for Malawian secondary education even today. With the deliberate purpose of trampling on the history of other Malawians who equally contributed to the country's liberation struggle – and continued to fight for social justice even in the post-independence – and Dr. Banda's insatiable taste for Europeanization, at the peak of his reign, the country's History curriculum contained about 85% coverage of European history (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). The Lost History Foundation (2018) argues that, for example, the place of earlier freedom fighters such as John Chilembwe and his compatriots and the organizers and participants of the riots and civil disobedience of 1953 and 1958 have consequently remained largely minimized in official documentation and the school curriculum. From the pre-independence figures whose obliteration has remained subtle, most political activists that stood against the tyranny of Dr. Banda from 1964 to 1994 do not appear in the History curriculum. Those who appear to do so in circumstances where their roles mostly complement those of Dr. Banda – especially before they fell out with the regime.

The erasure of multiple alternative histories that counter official narratives have remained firm throughout the post-independence in Malawi, prompting initiatives such as the Lost History Foundation which try to fill gaps that exist in the country's history in mainstream discourses. Because Malawi's socio-economic and political history was purposefully suppressed and distorted or deleted altogether in the wake of the cabinet crisis of 1964 (Lost History Foundation, 2018), key historical figures in Malawian politics from the anti-colonial struggles through to the post-colonial activism do not have space in the curriculum. Or if they do, it is so tiny that it is largely insignificant.

This is despite these political figures constituting what can be termed as Malawi's modern history – the history that dates back to the few years before independence in 1964. In the thirty years of Dr. Banda's rule, he did not want his legacy as an anti-colonial fighter challenged by narratives of fellow anti-colonialists, some of whom became radically involved in the struggle even before Kamuzu rose to prominence. For instance, the very Malawi Congress Party (MCP) with which he led the country was not founded by him. It was Aleke Banda, Kanyama Chiume and Orton Chirwa who remodelled it from an earlier banned Nyasaland and African Congress, after which they appointed him as the leader (Mweso, 2016).

However, most of the history unsettling the official narratives representative of the revisionism has been preserved over time through individual as well as collective efforts. Such narratives mostly started appearing only after the fall of the one-party regime in 1994. Examples include Sam Mpasu's *Political Prisoner 3/75 of Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda of Malawi (1995)*, Vera Chirwa's *Fearless Fighter: The Life of Vera Chirwa* (2007), Kanyama Chiume's *Autobiography of Kanyama Chiume* (1982) and *Banda's Malawi* (1992) which he wrote in exile, and Masauko Chipembere and Robert Rotberg's *Hero of the Nation: An Autobiography (2001)* etcetera. The personalized historical narratives contained in these autobiographies have been corroborated by works of various independent researchers and historiographers. One prominent historian who has contributed to the balance is Desmond Dudwa Phiri, author of several biographies including *Charles Chidongo Chinula* (1975), *Dunduzu K. Chisiza* (1975), and *James Frederick Sangala: Founder of the Nyasaland African Congress and Bridge between Patriot John Chilembwe and Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda* (1974). Other comprehensive works on this suppressed history include Kapote Mwakasungura and Douglas Miller's *Malawi's Lost Years (1964-1994): And Her Forsaken Heroes* (2016), *A History of Malawi, 1859 – 1966* by John McCracken (2012), and *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi* by Andrew C. Ross (2009) among others.

In a review of *Malawi's Lost Years (1964-1994): And Her Forsaken Heroes*, Fisher (2017) notes that the stories that are told in the book – representative of the suppressed histories – are not easy stories for the victims to tell and people in power do not want them to be made public. Fisher (2017) also supports the assertion that the stories of the politicians' struggles remain anti-establishment and anarchist, and threaten the order of the day even in the post-Banda regimes. He notes that, instead, "Malawi's current leadership (referring to Bingu wa Mutharika's reign: 2005-2012) has been rehabilitating Banda's image and honouring him, despite well-documented reports of atrocities and abuse of human rights". He then argues that "even unpleasant history must be openly faced, discussed and acknowledged to provide lessons for the future" (p. 1), regarding the repressed stories of horror Dr. Banda's critics relate. He further argues that "fifty years after independence, the Malawi people continue to suffer in absolute poverty and greater numbers than

ever, because the lessons of history from Malawi's lost years have not been learned" (Fisher, 2017, p. 1).

As explained earlier, the erasure of the history of these postcolonial political activists is a result of the thirty years of suppression and alteration of the country's history at the hands of Dr. Banda's regime – a fate similar to the legacy of the early pre-independence fighters whose roles were also relegated to almost insignificant space. This is because Dr. Banda's MCP, as the triumphant liberation movement, enjoyed hegemony in the narratives that formed the History curriculum. This was, as Moyo (2014) puts it, to legitimate the new state and its rulers to the people ruled. Since the post-independence activists were anti-Banda, it was therefore abominable to have their endeavours accorded space in the curriculum. The important role of these figures in the anti-colonial struggle and post-independence political activism was being deliberately obliterated from the memories of Malawians, and it paid off – with almost no debates for the inclusion of the lost history into the curriculum until recently.

But why does the erasure of such important figures continue, almost three decades after the fall of a one-party system of government in the country? This realization points to failures in curricular reforms or a deliberate institution of reforms that sustain the official narratives of the history before multiparty democracy in Malawi. As Moyo (2014) posits, promotion of one grand narrative at the expense of others breeds the exclusion of other histories, thus making a curriculum exclusivist. This paper exists to ignite discourses on the need to restructure the History curriculum for Malawian schools to include the lost narratives – the activism that known (and unknown, due to the very erasure) political figures embarked on from the pre-independence and the immediate post-independence period in the country.

Rationale for History in Malawi

To be able to offer critical insights into the discourses of the current secondary school History curriculum, it is important to first take a look at the rationale behind its creation. This is motivated by cognizance of the fact that it is the rationale that informs the objectives, scope, and themes of the curriculum as revealed through the subject's syllabus. This, in turn, informs the subsequent choice of textbooks.

As stated in the History syllabi for both junior and senior secondary schools, its significance as a subject primarily lies in its ability to contribute to Malawi in several ways. First, what justifies its existence is that it contributes enormously to the development of the learners' identity and dignity. As Marcus Garvey argues, "a people without the knowledge of their history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots" (Harris, 2018, p.3). According to MIE, History provides a mirror of people's achievements and challenges which helps them to effectively plan for their future (Malawi Institute of Education, 2013). In this regard, Harris (2018) posits that "our identities are informed by our recollections of the past, an awareness of that past is indispensable to who we are,

and one might add who we become" (p.3). Dignity as part of the rationale for History resonates with propositions by Africanist activists on the need for Blacks to rewrite their past. For example, the Black Consciousness Movement called on blacks to re-write their history focusing on the dignity and self-respect of heroes that formed the core of their resistance to the white invaders (Ebot, 2008).

Further, its space in the Malawian secondary curriculum is warranted by the understanding that it develops students' research skills as they trace various cultural traditions back to their roots and investigate the interrelationship between the past and present generations. In this context, History – to borrow-Zerbo (1981)'s explanation of African prehistory as epic tradition – "is a para-mythical recreation of the past; a sort of psycho-drama revealing to a community its roots and the corpus of values which nourish its personality; a magic passport enabling it to travel back up the river of time to the realm of its ancestors"(p.8).In a keynote speech at the first *Historians without Borders* seminar session, Bernard Kouchner (2016) argued that "humans are made of roots and dreams and to put that in other words; humans are made of history and the hopes for future" (p. 6). Thus, understanding the role history plays in society is essential. He argued that "that is why historians are essential in understanding the world. In the same way, understanding the world is essential in understanding history" (Couchner, 2016, p. 6). Against this context, Stearns (1998) validates the assertion by noting that the skills cultivated by History include the ability to assess evidence and conflicting interpretation; experience in assessing past examples of change; developing broad perspectives and flexibility; and enhancing research skills and basic writing and speaking skills. Concerning this, the Malawi History syllabus touts historiography as promoting critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills as learners try to understand events that took place in the past, in terms of their causes, effects, and the lessons humans draw from such a past (Malawi Institute of Education, 2013).

History also promotes local, regional and international understanding. This encourages tolerance as students discuss and appreciate their history as well as the history of people of different cultures at the local, regional and international levels (Malawi Institute of Education, 2013). This is very significant. As Woolman (2001) argues, "building tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity should be a major goal of any curriculum" (p. 41). History also uncovers a catalogue of indigenous knowledge, skills, and values that can be exploited for personal advancement, employment and the general development of the society. Thus, Chirwa and Naidoo (2014) note that indigenous knowledge is among the key design features of the curriculum. This is sensible, especially in the context of Malawian colonial experiences since "the study of World/European history and to a lesser extent, other parts of pre-colonial and colonial Africa takes precedence over the inculcation of indigenous knowledge" (Ndille, 2018, p.92).

The Scope and Themes of the Curriculum

The various changes that have occurred in relation to the History curriculum have meant syllabi that vary in scope and theme. Various studies have noted that initially the scope and themes were overtly Eurocentric. This was because of the inheritance of a colonial education system at independence. However, in the post-independence, the reforms that followed showed trends of improvement in the readjustments, although the changes were largely insignificant in the Banda regime due to his glorification of European culture (Tlou & Kabwila 2000; Wyse 2008). Further, as observed in the nationalist history of most postcolonial states, narratives in the History curriculum were rewritten in favour of the MCP as the main triumphant liberation movement. As such, the introduction of multiparty democracy witnessed yet another spate of curricular reforms but whose main aim was the inculcation of democratic culture (Wyse, 2018; Namphande et al, 2017).

The History syllabus that is underuse in the school system now has its origins in the 2013 curriculum review. The recommended changes were implemented in September 2017, replacing a curriculum that had been in use for over a decade. This change was necessary considering several emerging issues that had either been excluded or partly included (M'manga, 2017).M'manga further states that the new curriculum comprises contemporary and emerging knowledge for learners' survival and national development. Table 1 and Table 2 below present a summary of the content in terms of scope and themes of the curriculum as presented in both the junior and senior secondary syllabi as well commentaries after each of the tables:

Table 1. *Contents summarized in scope and topics for History syllabus (Forms 1 and 2)*

Syllabus	**Topics**	
Core element	**Form 1**	**Form 2**
Interrelationships among the individual, family, and society	• The study of History • Origins of people	• Iron Age in Malawi • Maravi Kingdom • Tumbuka-Nkhamanga Kingdom
Interdependence between Malawi and the world	• The growth of world civilizations - Egyptian - Greek - Aztec - Chinese	• Origins of Christianity and Islam - Christianity - Islam • Aspects of European civilization - Renaissance - Reformation - Enlightenment
Patriotism and nationalism	The partition of Africa	• Nationalism and independence movements in Africa - Ghana - Malawi

		• Regional and continental groupings Organization of African Unity (OAU)
Economic and social issues in History	Slave trade	• Industrial Revolution • Voyages of Exploration
Leadership styles in History	• Ancient Kingdoms - Mali - Buganda - Mwenemutapa	The French Revolution

The summary of the scope and themes in Table1 represents the core elements and topics that form the scope of the syllabus content for Form 1 and Form 2. The core elements are the general thematic areas that the syllabus covers, while the contents in the sections under Form 1 and Form 2 represent the topics that correspond with the Malawi Institute of Education's recommended textbooks. For example, all the topics in the table are presented in the same order as they appear in the recommended textbooks *Arise in History* books 1 and 2 by Philip Kampepuza Beza.

As can be observed, the topics covering the syllabus for Form 1 do not have any Malawian history in particular detail. It is mostly preoccupied with narratives that have been documented based on colonial encounters, as noted by various scholars (Ki-Zerbo, 1981; Manyane, 1999; Ebot, 2008; Katenga-Kaunda, 2015; Nasibi, 2015; Ncube, 2017; Falola & Borah, 2018). The African kingdoms and the historical events such as the slave trade and the partition of Africa are all subjected to a European periodization which is a product of the very colonial encounters. On the pretext of highlighting important historical moments of interdependence between Malawi and the rest of the world, the Form 1 syllabus – as presented in the summary above – does not offer a narrative of Malawi's place in this global historical interdependence. Rather, it is a narrative of how other civilizations shaped the world, the tragedy of slave trade which was succeeded by another equally devastating tragedy – the partition of Africa, and the narratives of some pre-colonial African kingdoms.

This lack of Malawian narratives is compensated, albeit with little detail, by four topics that touch on Malawi in Form 2. One is a scanty narrative of the Iron Age period in Malawi, two are about its ancient Kingdoms, while the other one concerns nationalism and independence movements in Africa with Malawi as the second case study (after Ghana). A close read of the chapter on Malawi, however, leaves the impression of one prominent figure, Dr. Banda, whose place in the History can only be regarded as being seconded by John Chilembwe of the 1915 uprising in terms of the space accorded to narratives about him. The rest is European/other non-African histories or African narratives informed by the colonial experience.

Table 2. *Contents summarized in scope and topics for History syllabus (Forms 3 and 4)*

Syllabus	**Topics**	
Core element	**Form 3**	**Form 4**
Interrelationships among the individual, family, and society	• 19th-century immigrants to Central Africa - Yao and Lomwe - Ngoni - The Ndebele	Post-colonial Africa up to 2000
Interdependence between Malawi and the world	• The Missionary factor in Malawi - Islam - Christianity	• The First World War • Developments in the Inter-war period - The Paris Peace Conference - The League of Nations
Patriotism and nationalism	• European occupation and administration of Central Africa - Southern Rhodesia - Northern Rhodesia - Nyasaland	• The Second World War • Developments after the Second World War - United Nations Organization - Post-war alliances - The Cold War • Decolonization in Asia and Africa - India - Kenya
Economic and social issues in History	• Growth of trade in pre-colonial Central Africa - The Portuguese factor • Growth of ivory and slave trade in Pre-colonial East and Central Africa • Economic developments in Central Africa from the colonial to the independence era	• Developments in the inter-war period - economic problems in Europe - the economic situation in Asia (Japan) - The Great Depression - The Communist revolution in Russia
Leadership styles in History	• Political development in Central Africa from colonialism up to independence - Central African Federation - The role of independent churches in nationalism	Development of the autocratic government in Germany

In Table 2 above, the core elements cover significant topics in Form 3 whose focus is on Malawi (both as an individual geographical space and as part of the Central African region) and other African countries. While the periodization of the events as experienced through the actual textbook is still symptomatic of the colonial experience, what is of particular interest to this study are the sections of Patriotism and Nationalism as well as Leadership Styles in History. The earlier covers European occupation and administration of Central Africa with a particular focus on Nyasaland (Malawi's colonial name) and two other countries. This is merely a starting point, as it is all colonial history.

In the latter core element, it transcends into an important section of Malawian history: Political development in Central Africa from colonialism up to independence. Here, the syllabus' main focus is on the Central African Federation (1953-1963) and the role of independent churches in nationalism. In the earlier, Banda is projected on the scene as the lone indisputable father of the struggle against the federation - a fiercely contested proposition which placed economic monopoly in the hands of the colonial apartheid regime in Southern Rhodesia (Mlambo, 2003). In *Target in History of Central Africa* book 3 by Daniel Munama and the other recommended textbooks, several critical players, as well as some important facts, are not presented in detail as is the role Dr. Banda played. For example, initially, it was the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) which was very organized in its stern opposition to the federation, with Dr. Banda as a political activist and an anti-colonial fighter himself supporting the cause from abroad where he only returned to Malawi (then Nyasaland) in 1958. Thus, the struggle involved a lot more activists than just Dr. Banda: Aleke Banda, Dunduzu Chisiza, Lali Lubani, Masauko Chipembere, Kanyama Chiume, Vera Chirwa and many more others (Chirwa, 2007), all of whose narratives are either missing from the curriculum or not in compelling detail where they are available.

In the Form 4 syllabus, however, no content is specific for Malawi. The country's appearance happens under the umbrella of Africa mostly on the chapter on Post-colonial Africa up to 2000. The rest is the usual preoccupation with European and other histories on all aspects of the core elements of the syllabus.

Critical Perspectives on the Syllabus

The current History curriculum for secondary education in the country, with its junior and senior secondary syllabi as presented in Table 1 and Table 2, can be divided into two types based in part on a model developed by Moyo (2014). This division, on the surface, would seem insufficient with the heavy presence of European history in the syllabi. However, European history (as well as other histories) serves as a supposedly temporal bridge between Malawi, its past and the histories of other civilizations and nations that have shaped the world. Also, the explanation behind the division by Moyo (2014) suffices for the present study. Although his study periodizes the history

into three categories, only two are directly relevant for this discussion. These categories include Nationalist history and Patriotic history.

Nationalist history encompasses the pre-colonial history, colonial struggles and remarkable feats of the first postcolonial regime and subsequent ones as well as other figures that do/did not pose serious threats to the establishment enough to warrant a space in its historiography in post-independence. The pre-colonial historiography largely serves to counter colonial narratives of an Africa that was devoid of its own history and sociopolitical systems before colonization (Okuro, 2008; Moyo, 2014; Nasibi, 2015; Ncube, 2017), assertions that faced outright rejection both in the colonial and independence eras (Chinua Achebe's 'Things Fall Apart' in 1958 remains a classic example of such resistance in the colonial era while Walter Rodney's 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' in 1973 exemplifies the latter). Thus, the primary focus from this perspective rests on the kingdoms and empires of ancient Africa (as noted in the syllabi). The sociopolitical organizational structures that are central to these ancient African systems are brought into the limelight again in the struggles against colonialism where Malawians (and other Africans) united in well-coordinated efforts to thwart continuance of colonial rule. It is here that Dr. Banda and his cronies feature a lot – with much of the focus on Dr. Banda himself, of course.

The patriotic history emphasizes much on the political history of the Dr. Banda era through multiparty democracy in the 1990s to the current history. This is, as Moyo (2014) argues, to legitimate incumbency. The patriotic history, in the one-party regime, included an extensive reading of the MCP's history, structures, and ideologies. As Wyse (2008) observes, it consisted of among others Dr. Banda for his role in the independence movement and his role in developing Malawi as a nation-state, as well as the MCP's political ideology of national goals known as the four cornerstones which were unity, loyalty, obedience, and discipline. As times changed, new battlefronts emerged from intra-party wrangles which culminated into the cabinet crisis and a consequent rise in criticism of the Malawi government right shortly after independence in 1964 through to the 1990s (Chirwa, 2007). This led to a constant need for seizure and reinterpretation of historiography to make sure the critics were de-legitimatized as they presented a threat to the regime's incumbency. However, this was occurring while Dr. Banda and re-imaginations of his 'courageous and 'bold' past still formed the crust of the text in the curriculum. The historiography at the time deliberately erased other political figures as it served the purpose of obliterating the unpatriotic 'rebels' from the country's history and encouraging patriotism through the four cornerstones of the MCP.

Katenga-Kaunda (2015) argues that Dr. Banda's abuse of historiography in the country's curriculum represents what Foucault (1977) speaks of apropos knowledge within the realms of power and how that knowledge can be legitimated or subjugated. Katenga-Kaunda argues that Dr. Banda influenced Malawi's old History syllabus and only legitimized some events and names involved in the struggle. He ordered names of those he considered rebels and called them as such

to be kept out of the syllabus, for example, Rose Chibambo and Kanyama Chiume, due to the fallout he had had with them at the time (Kalinga, 1998). As Katenga-Kaunda (2015) argues, this exemplifies how one man was able to control the content of history by leaving out notable events which otherwise are currently embraced as part of Malawian history.

The Transition to multiparty democracy ushered in relatively new faces into the curriculum with Bakili Muluzi (the first multiparty president) and his United Democratic Front (UDF) featuring prominently in the syllabus. His presence was accompanied by the heroic feats he performed, along with many others, as he wrestled the country away from the pangs of dictatorship and introduced democracy. The change in government also meant considerable inclusion, albeit not to a greater extent as with the other one-party narratives which remained almost unaltered, of those that criticized Banda's regime and were therefore erased from the history curriculum. This minimal inclusion of the omitted historical figures still draws criticism from historians and educators in the country. In 2015, Malawi's renowned historian Desmond Dudwa Phiri decried the erasure of these historical figures as well as the omission of some important facts. He argued that "the recent JC (Junior Certificate) curriculum for the history of Malawi needs to be revised. We do not find some individuals who played a pivotal role in the struggle against the hated Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and those foreigners who facilitated our struggle for independence" (Phiri, 2015, p. 1).

A close reading of the recommended textbooks and a critical examination of the syllabi shows that apart from Dr. Banda's exploits in the anti-colonial struggle, it is the collective role of the independent African churches that is highlighted to an extent nearing but still far from Banda's status. For example, the wittiness and courage of Reverend John Chilembwe of the Providence Industrial Mission and other African clergies such as Elliot Kamwana, Yesaya Zerenji Mwase, and Charles Chinula in pre-independence are demonstrated clearly through descriptions of what actions they undertook to lead the initial liberation struggles. This is accompanied by other critical roles and acts of bravery by the Nyasa Native Associations, which culminated in the formation of the Nyasaland African Congress. It is mostly leaders of these formations who are briefly presented, probably because their presence in the history books precedes the real powerful presence of Dr. Banda who was only convinced of actively fighting in the struggle from home once he was promised the NAC presidency.

However, as explained earlier, most of the other figures that participated in the struggle through the formation of the NAC – and later MCP – and led in both violent and peaceful anti-colonial protests disappeared from the History curriculum. A clearer example is David Rubadiri who was jailed along with Orton and Vera Chirwa by the colonial administration (Chirwa, 2007), became the first Malawian ambassador to the United Nations upon independence and in 1965 fell out with the regime(Mapanje, 1995). Despite his continued fight against the Banda dictatorship in post-independence, his presence in the curriculum remains erased even in the post-one party era.

Another definitive example of erasure is the story of Yatuta Chisiza. Having led a brief guerilla incursion into Malawi in October 1967 (Chirwa, 2007), knowledge of his exploits, motives, and support would normally be expected to have space in the curriculum. This is also the case with the earlier happenings of the cabinet crisis in 1964, and later events such as the Mwanza Four incident in which Dick Matenje (Secretary-General of the Malawi Congress Party), David Chiwanga (Minister of Health), Aaron Gadama (another minister) and John Twaibu Sangala (an MP) were brutally murdered by agents of the Malawi government because they were becoming critical of the regime (Human Rights Watch, 1990). To the chagrin of the country's true history, none of the stories above and hundreds – perhaps thousands– of other important narratives have remained omitted from the syllabus. This, as argued in the paper, results from fear of incumbent regimes as regards what such narratives of dissent even at such a time when Malawi was under the yoke of a dictatorship would inspire amongst the population today. As Ncube (2017) notes, histories of resistance to colonialism (and to postcolonial tyrannies across the continent) "continue to resonate with current struggles for transformation and decolonization" and "would, therefore, be viewed with skepticism by post-independence regimes struggling with attempts to assert their incumbency on the people" (p. 1).

The erasure of the narratives that present other historical and political figures in the curriculum creates a very big gap in the country's history. The consequence is that the knowledge of Malawi's past after independence is dominated by Dr. Kamuzu Banda, the Malawi Congress Party and all the nationalist struggles that predated Banda's arrival. This is then complemented with the arrival of Bakili Muluzi as the first president of Malawi in the multiparty era. Such revisionist narratives leave the nation with a distorted version of the post-independence past whose knowledge only rests in the heads and hearts of those who lived through the one-party regime. It is a period with hollow pages in the history textbooks, one that requires rewriting. As explained earlier, much of this history survives in alternative narratives by the political and social activists who were ostracized at the time, and by other observers of the events as they unfolded. Inclusion of all the important – yet erased – events from independence to 1994 when there was a change in government, and from then to the present day, Malawi is critical for the development of the country and its citizens. As Desmond Dudwa Phiri states, "Without basic knowledge of the history of one's country, your patriotism falters. It is by knowing the heroes of the past that you can identify yourself with the greatness of your country. That knowledge will encourage you to try and make your own contribution to history" (Phiri, 2015, p. 1).

IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the current History curriculum for secondary schools in Malawi is deficient. Through a review of the syllabus for both junior and senior secondary school, this paper reasserts the notion acclaimed by History critics that official narratives posing as Malawi's history in the secondary school curriculum are lacking due to the high revisionism the history has suffered since

independence. As such, there is an urgent need to reimagine the past through the development of a History curriculum that includes the omitted narratives. The paper focuses on the erasure of political activism in the narratives that are passed down generations through the curriculum. This, the paper argues throughout, is because such history – that of political activism – involves heroic figures that at the time of the development and the subsequent revisions of the curriculum were regarded as anti-establishment and anarchical as they sought to challenge the political hegemony. The paper also argues that these political figures remain erased from the curriculum today because they still pose a threat through what their heroism would inspire in current instances of social injustice, and their acts are as such still anti-establishment, albeit to the disadvantage of the archiving of correct narratives that have shaped the country's past and continue shaping present.

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