

International Symposium on Black Europe 2014

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Inside Black Europe: Racial Configurations in the Post 9/11 Era

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Location: International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE),
Lombokstraat 40, 1094 AL, Amsterdam
(www.iire.org)

Introduction

This is the 5th annual international symposium organized as a component and extension of the summer school on Black Europe programme. Previous symposia were organized under the heading of Trajectories of Emancipation. These symposia benefited from insights of similar conferences and workshops at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany organized by the Black European Studies (BEST) Network (2003-2006), Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (Paris) organized by Ramon Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants (2004-2006) and Northwestern University (USA) organized by Darlene Clarke Hine and Trica Danielle Keaton (2006).

Context

Since 9/11, the rise of anti-Islamic and Anti-Muslim racism, alongside new migrations resulting from the expansion of the European Union, have pushed concern about long-established anti-Black racism across Britain and Western Europe to the margins of political, policy and academic concern. Gender ideologies continue to fundamentally shape all these issues, women are increasingly larger numbers of migrants, settlers and asylum seekers, and are increasingly active as agents of social analysis, and in social movements. What is the nature of these new patterns of migration? How do we interpret the political preoccupation with Islam and Muslims, and its effects on the experiences of Blacks in Europe? What are the effects of the economic recession and austerity programs on Black people? How are Black people mobilizing to prevent their concerns being further marginalized?

Objective

The symposium participants will address the intricate, contradictory, and sometimes, antagonistic relations between anti-black racism, Islamophobia and new migration processes (and discourses and knowledge production around these issues) against the backdrop of globalization.

Programme

Part I: Setting the Scene: From Anti-Black Racism to Islamophobia

09:30- 11:00

Chair: Melissa Weiner

Kpêdétin Mariquian Ahouansou

“Anti-black racism and Islamophobia in France post 9/11: A picture”

Despite the long presence of black populations in Europe the problematic of race and the persistence of anti-black racism is still in its infancy. Meanwhile following 9/11, the debate concerning Islam and Muslim populations emerged with force in the media and the political and the academic spheres pushing further to the margins the issue of race. The case of France is an interesting one since it is unconstitutional to document origins (race). However, with the outburst of its suburbia in 2005, France was somehow compelled to recognize racial discrimination – minorities and/or racialized groups being deemed the signifier of the crisis. Interesting enough, from 2005 on, several grassroots organizations started to bring anew to attention the issue of racialization. Contrary to the responses against the rise of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim racism, anti-black racism is yet to be taken seriously. This paper in setting the French context aims to address the intricate and antagonistic relations between anti-black racism and Islamophobia.

Camilla Hawthorne

“Internet Cafes and “Dangerous’ Networks: Internet Regulations as Racialized Border Control in Italy”

Following the 2004 train bombings in Madrid and the 2005 attacks on London’s public transportation system, the Italian government enacted some of the strictest Internet regulations in the European Union. This legislation included a slate of new surveillance procedures targeting Internet cafés, which are largely owned and operated by immigrants. This presentation examines the legislative history of Internet café regulations and explores the ways in which the technology of the Internet—as crystallized in the Internet café—intersected with ongoing debates about immigration, race, and security in Italy. Internet regulations became a means for the government to reinforce the borders of the Italian state from non-European outsiders and their “dangerous,” technologically mediated transnational networks. I use the term

dangerous to refer to the perceived “dark side” of the Internet as an unbounded space of freedom and circulation—in this case, the threat posed by Muslim immigrants’ potential linkages to online jihadist resources. I argue that the Italian state targeted the Internet as a dangerous technology (through the tracking and storage of Internet browsing data) and people of color as dangerous users (through the surveillance of Internet cafés), conflating an undesirable population with the threatening aspects of a particular technology,

Modi Ntambwe

Part II: Racism in the Context of Other forms of Oppression

11:30-13:00

Chair: Camilla Hawthorne

Mano Delea

“Pan-Africanism and Epistemology”

This presentation emphasizes the premise that people on the African continent and the African Diaspora in Europe and the Americas are more dependent on questions about knowledge production than other groups of people. This because of a colonial heritage which created several gaps or obstructions concerning development between: the past and the present; the political reality and the, on colonialism founded, political infrastructure; and the linguistic and cultural formations with their frontiers and sovereignty. Intellectuals and politicians in Africa and the African Diaspora seem to be largely exposed to knowledge and knowledge production which suffers from an on-going process of polarisation. On the one hand there is knowledge production that caters to a development that follows the lines of the colonial heritage with all its problematic consequences concerning reality, language and political infrastructure. On the other there is knowledge production that attempts to reattach itself to everyday reality and reconnect the past to present and with this embraces the struggle of dealing with the heritage of colonialism and possibilities to increase independence in knowledge production. The premise of this presentation is that the strongest alternatives were and are given by a philosophy and movement that still exists and therefore takes a central role. This philosophy and movement is Pan-Africanism.

Daphne Harris

“Marginalized Masculinities and Black Fathering in Europe”

This presentation will explore non-resident Black European fatherhood, the possible contextual factors that cause absence from the home and the consequences of this absence for Black European children. This social phenomenon has been an ongoing focus of social scientific research on African American fathering and unfortunately has led to the overarching ideal that these fathers are “deadbeat dads.” Within the United States this has led to governmental policies and initiatives designed to address what Dubois would call the “Negro problem”; America’s attempt to fix the social problems

perceived to be the result of the presence of Black bodies. A cursory review of the current discourse and emerging research on Black European fathers suggests the same underlying desire. It appears that Europe is proactively trying to address their "Negro problem." The initial research on non-resident Black European fathers will be presented, using the current literature on African American fathers to frame the discourse. The initial presentation will be followed by an informal discussion of the application of the "Hierarchy of Masculinities," more specifically the philosophical concept marginalized masculinities first introduced by Dr. Raewyn Connell to Black European fathers' conceptualization of fatherhood. The goals of this presentation are to 1.) Draw attention to this growing subgroup of Black European fathers, 2.) Explore the contextual factors specific to this population, 3.) Look at the possible impact on optimal child development of Black European children, 4.) Discuss the possibility of using the concept of 'marginalized masculinity' to frame research and discourse on Black European fathers.

Giovanni Picker

"Is Racial Domination in Urban Europe Residual or Neglected? A View from an Adriatic town"

The article explores the ways in which, in the almost complete absence of institutional discourse, social order is imposed and maintained in Rancitelli, a periphery stigmatized 'Gypsy neighbourhood' in Pescara, southern Italy, in which the majority of local (Italian) Roma live. Drawing on extended fieldwork in the city, I discuss the various ways in which Rancitelli is represented by single public officials and by local media, as well as the practices through which it is governed on a daily basis. Various dynamics happening in the neighbourhood and outside its boundaries, suggest that the main regulatory mechanism imposing social order in the neighbourhood is 'racial domination', as defined by Loic Wacquant. However, I underline major differences between the French sociologist's concept and Pescara's peculiar form of 'racial domination'. I conclusively argue that rather than neglecting or denying the working of race in governing urban Europe, privileging instead 'cultural' or 'ethnic' lenses, scholars need to start seriously detecting the working of racial domination in institutional, media and everyday practices and discourses also in the old continent.

Tiffany R. Smith

"Dunkin' Donuts: Cultural misunderstanding and public relations gone wrong"

Dunkin' Donuts, a multinational corporation received backlash after accusations of racism. Thailand's franchise of Dunkin' Donuts created an advertising campaign that featured a woman who resembled the racist American image of "blackface". The country of Thailand is very homogenous and does not have a large population of people of African descent. This case study examines the implications of an American born company expanding globally while debating the issue of racism, the underlying implications of colorism, and the ever-present glorification of whiteness. The public

relations campaign analyzes Dunkin' Donuts use of crisis communication, image restoration, and reputation.

-----13:30-15:30 Lunch-----

Part III: Youth and New Racial Configurations in the Age of Globalization

15:30-17:30

Chair: Mano Delea

Sandra Kyeremeh

“My Eyes, My voice: A new generation of North East Italy.”

Today in Veneto (a region in northeast Italy) one newborn in five is a young person of foreign origins. Therefore, changes in this area are a deep and an inescapable fact.

This research aims to observe and describe the ongoing changes through the gazes and voices of children, a group that actually includes both youth of foreign origins and interracial-mixed couples' children. Those young boys and girls are often downsized to one dimension that coincides with their parents' origins and this situation leads us to lose the complexity of their belongings and everyday life experiences. The research started in 2008, in several upper-level schools of Padua and Verona, in cooperation with a visual research project conduct by Prof. Annalisa Frisina (Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology, University of Padua). This research involved several youth of foreign origins in Italy and intended to explore many issues such as identity, self-representation, and relationships with areas in which they lived by analyzing locations and people that made those youth feel secure or unsure. Another important aim was to examine what it means for these youth to be foreigners or citizens in Italy. Thanks to the above-mentioned project, realized with a “photovoice” methodology, participants became aware of themselves as parts of a new generation that shares, with their Italian peers in spite of different origins, ways of life, languages and cultures. This awareness appeared in the opposition shown by those young boys and girls to racism and discriminations that they suffered daily (and still suffer) due to their skin color, different origins or gender.

Robert Valentine

“Improving every day to grow roses from the concrete: How we inspire youths to realize their full potential and work to provide equal opportunities”

After finishing high school and climbing up the academic ladder, the founder of the New Urban Collective Mitchell Esajas saw cultural variation diminishing with every step he took. He soon started wondering how this came to be and began working on finding an answer to a more interesting question: How can we improve this situation? The New Urban Collective (or NUC) organizes projects for youth in

Amsterdam Zuidoost that focus on strengthening the personal and cultural identities of the participants and giving them the social capital needed for succeeding in the Dutch society. Our motto: Improve Everyday!

Melissa Weiner

“Inside Black Europe’s Classroom Practices: The Silencing Disparagement, and Discipline of Students of Color”

Racial and ethnic minority students are far more likely to experience discrimination at the hands of teachers in schools that negatively impacts academic achievement in the form of grades, retention, and graduation in both Europe and the United States. In the U.S., scholars have documented the ways in which a predominantly white teaching force is more likely to use discipline, have lower expectations, and be less caring and empathetic toward students of color. But in Europe, racial Europeanization, or anti-racialism, finds less acknowledgment of race and so less research regarding structural explanations for minority students’ disadvantaged educational position compared to their white peers. Low educational attainment, with few exceptions, is explained using cultural explanations. This is especially true in The Netherlands where research about classroom practices is largely absent. This paper begins to address this omission by describing classroom practices of a white teacher during observation in a diverse primary school in Amsterdam. I find that the teacher disproportionately disparaged, disciplined, and touched students of color while allowing the lone white student to direct classroom without fear of punishment for his many transgressions. This research has critical implications for students in The Netherlands and throughout Europe.

-----17:30-19:00 Closing Reception-----

For additional information see: www.dialogoglobal.com/amsterdam