



BESS 2018 Symposium

International Symposium on Black Europe 2018

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

Date: 2 July 2018

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

Introduction

This is the 9th 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-Universitat 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 make up 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: Black Europe at the Margins

09:30-10:30

Jeffrey Colemam, Marquette University

“The Consumption and Rejection of Blackness in Contemporary Spain”

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, Spain has consumed, coopted, and rejected Blackness and Black People in various ways. This talk will analyze literature, sports and popular culture in order to demonstrate how Spain’s oscillating Whiteness operates to the detriment of its development as an increasingly multiracial nation. Prominent examples include: Blackface in festival culture, the caricature of Black people in advertising, and the cooptation of Black struggle for the gain of regional nationalist movements. By analyzing these cases, we can reach a stronger understanding of how Blackness operates in Spain. In addition, the talk will end discussing how Black people in Spain have begun to organize in order to fight the problematic representations of Blackness in society.

Angelica Pesarini, NYU Florence

“Situated Knowledges” of Autoethnography

This paper will provide an account of the challenges I faced using autoethnography as one of the main methodological tools of investigation for my doctoral research project. Autoethnography is defined as an approach that “seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011:1). However, given the recognition of the personal, what kind of challenges may one face while producing a rigorous and accurate piece of research? Does the presence

and acknowledgement of the researcher in the text imply a process of centralisation of the self? By using notions of “positionality” and “self reflexivity” the paper shows how autoethnography can be used to decolonise the research process by restoring the sense of uniqueness between researcher and participant and rejecting impositions of master narratives. The autoethnographic approach not only may render the researcher’s experience meaningful, but it can also highlight particular cultural facets excluded by mainstream processes of knowledge production and give prominence to alternative epistemologies.

Part II: Alternative Archives and Audiovisual Methodologies

10:30-12:00

Alessandra Benedicty, Archimedes Institute, Hogeschool Utrecht **“Steve McQueen’s *Shame* and *Twelve Years a Slave*”**

I explore the relationship between English director Steve McQueen’s films *Shame* (2011) and *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013). Notably, I am interested in thinking the two films together as regards Édouard Glissant’s notion of “opacity,” as an ethos, whereby “to resist the other, is fundamental to its process of knowledge; only in opacity (the particular) the other finds recognition for itself. In the end, that the unveiling is the principle of the Tragic [...]” (Leupin, 2017: 232). In particular, I explore the relationship between and among *dignity*, *humiliation*, and *shame* as they relate to “*Black consciousness of Blackness*” (Mbembe, 2017: 30) as well as to whiteness. I am interested in how McQueens’ work as a filmmaker and artist living between Amsterdam and London, whose work considers the US-American context, deliberates on which ethical stances are possible in our contemporary times.

Victoria Burgher, Multidisciplinary Artist **“A Material Way through the Mire”**

Victoria Burgher is a London-based, multi-disciplinary artist, with a broad, conceptual practice that spans sculptural installations, video and print, collaborative and public ventures. It is a practice based on response – to spaces, situations, objects and contexts – and collaboration – with creative partners, audiences and spaces. She is interested in art’s ability to communicate ideas, tell stories and preserve histories – the power of art to make past lives and events visible and relevant to contemporary audiences. A sense of place and identity are engrained in this. Current as well as historical geopolitical events inform it, such as the trans-Mediterranean refugee crisis and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. She is committed to taking a decolonial approach to making, exposing the whitewashing of imperial history and its legacies.

Malika Crutchfield, UC Berkeley **“Black Spatial Poetics”**

Malika Crutchfield is a Bay Area-based artist, educator, and community advocate. With a focus on urbanity in the 21st century, her work examines spatial poetics and the influence that space and architecture have on the human psyche. Her work suggests the existence of a uniquely Black architectural

phenomenology. She showcases her work regularly and has had work shown in exhibitions, galleries, and publications across the U.S., internationally, and online, including the International Symposium on Black Europe, in Amsterdam, Netherlands, and the Art Basel festival in Basel, Switzerland.

-----**12:00-13:30 Lunch**-----

Part III: Race, Gender, and Power: Intersectional Approaches

13:30-14:30

Amani Morrison, UC Berkeley

“Quotidian Expenses: Navigating Domestic Infrastructure in Chicago’s Kitchenette Buildings”

Kitchenette apartments were the primary habitation for black southern migrants to Chicago during the mid-twentieth century. Known as overcrowded, dilapidated fire traps, kitchenette apartment buildings precipitated Chicago’s 1956 housing code and were primary targets in campaigns for urban renewal. These dwellings were manifestations of racial capitalism and racial disposability and can be understood as what Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods (2007) have referred to as a “black geography.” Moreover, authors such as Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Lorraine Hansberry all featured the Chicago kitchenette centrally in their literary works. Within kitchenettes, black Chicagoans experienced severely degraded and neglected building infrastructure. The compounded dysfunction of infrastructure in kitchenette buildings resulted in different modes of being at home. In this presentation, I argue that the infrastructure of the kitchenette building produced unique domestic practices evincing Black Belt Chicagoans’ predisposal to increased labor expenditure in daily home life. Examining literary texts and archival evidence, I analyze the quotidian expenses of kitchenette living for black inhabitants.

Bedelia Richards, Saint Mary’s College, University of Richmond

“Faculty Assessments as Tools of Oppression: A Black Woman’s Reflections on Colorblind Racism in the Academy”

This presentation draws on my experiences as a Black woman teaching at a historically white institution (HWI) to illustrate how institutional assessments can function effectively as tools of gendered racial oppression when colorblind frames are used to evaluate the experiences and accomplishments of underrepresented faculty. I do so by using critical race theory’s counterstorytelling methodology to highlight the gendered anti-black stigmas that manifest in students’ end-of-semester evaluations of my teaching, and my departmental colleagues’ reliance on a colorblind lens to assess these biased comments. In doing so, my colleagues minimized my racialized experiences in the classroom, whilst empowering and legitimizing student biases, converting student evaluations into effective

tools of gendered racial oppression. This conversion was particularly effective because excellence in teaching is critical to career advancement at small liberal arts schools where I am currently employed, and until recently, student evaluations have been uncritically accepted as a reliable measure of excellence. I end this chapter with five research-driven, actionable steps that institutions can take in order to truly foster a more inclusive, anti-racist environment for underrepresented faculty.

Part IV: Spaces and Scales of Black Political Organizing

14:30-15:30

Gerald Lenoir, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society “A 21st Century Movement-Building Challenge: Forging a Common Identity Among ‘People of Color’”

One of the essential elements in the building of a cohesive social movement across communities of color aimed at dismantling structural racism is the formation of a common identity that is a marker for a common worldview and set of politics. Drawing upon the history of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s when the terms people of color and Third World peoples signaled a common identity across communities in the struggle against racism, economic exploitation, and colonialism, this paper poses that this identity formation is an imperative for 21st century activists.

Sherice Nelson, Saint Mary’s College “The Congressional Black Caucus: How Legislation is Realized in Member Districts”

The goal of the research is to look closely at the effectiveness of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in the implementation of its agenda through the lens of political leadership. The late Ronald Walters was affectionately known for asking the question: “What does this have to do with the liberation of Black people?” This research seeks to in many ways answer that question by finding out if legislation sponsored, co-sponsored, and or championed by CBC members have actually changed the lives of Black constituents in their districts. This research in many ways will expand on the research done by Harold Watkins in, “Assessing the legislative agenda and legislative behavior of the Congressional Black Caucus from 1992-2012, the 102nd through the 112th Congresses.” Watkins categorized CBC legislation in the follow categories: health, education, civil rights, labor and employment, and social welfare. This categorization is in response to the Caucus’ legislative concerns. This research seeks to identify CBC districts with the highest populations of Blacks to measure the effectiveness of the members leadership in the above categorized policy areas.

-----15:30-17:00 Closing Reception-----

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