



BESS 2017 Symposium

International Symposium on Black Europe 2017

Kwame Nimako, Camilla Hawthorne, Mano Delea

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 8th 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: Activism and Education Across the Black Diaspora

09:30- 11:00

Chair: Modi Ntambwe

Nicole Grégoire, Université Libre de Bruxelles

“Bringing the Community Forward: The Emergence of Black Solidarity in Belgium”

Drawing upon an ethnographic fieldwork mostly conducted in Brussels between 2007 and 2010, the paper will address the development of black solidarity in Belgium through African immigrants’ associational practices. From the 1960s onwards, Belgium welcomed growing migrations from various sub-Saharan African countries. Since the early 1990s, several “Pan-African” associations were created by some of these immigrants, with the aim of bringing together people of all “black” sub-Saharan African origins. They were concerned with building a unified image of the African community in Belgium and with representing the community at the political level. Analyzing the way their leaders explain and justify their associational involvement, the paper will explore the way in which Pan-Africanism, initially a Black emancipation movement that developed from the late eighteenth century, and “diaspora”, as a category of practice, have been reinvested by this associational elite in the contemporaneous Belgian racialized context.

Taharee Apiron Jackson, University of Maryland, College Park
“Young, White, and Woke: Is Ushering White People from Allies to Activist-Accomplices the ‘New’ Work of Teacher Education Programs?”

While many lament the election of Trump and newly acceptable norms of xenophobia and racism in the United States, for teacher education programs, this is a golden moment. As our teaching force continues to reflect overwhelming whiteness—as is true in myriad countries—even as public school enrollment is dominated by students of color, teacher education programs provide a unique space in which to co-opt racist, “Trumpist” dialogues into solidarity—particularly for White teachers. Critical race theory-based “allied counterstories” of enrollees in an urban education program for teachers of color at a historically black university, and those at a predominately White institution, reveal the more hopeful aspects of collectively and cross-racially resisting racism and all manner of social injustice in the information age alongside young, White, “woke” millennials in higher education spaces. This presentation will highlight the findings of Years 1-5 of a teacher education program designed for teachers of color but eventually “infiltrated” by White teachers who were looking to learn more about urban education and their role in it. The pedagogical and theoretical considerations of a mostly White teacher education program will also be discussed, as well as the way forward for building white solidarity, alliance, and activist-accompliceship.

Eddie Bruce Jones, Birbeck, University of London
“German anti-racism and the Politics of Remembrance”

In this presentation, we will briefly review the legal provisions that prohibit racial discrimination in Germany. We will then shift focus to a particular death-in-custody case. We will examine the processes of archiving, story-telling and public remembering that anti-racism activists have engaged in around the death of Oury Jalloh. Jalloh was an asylum applicant from Sierra Leone who burned to death in the holding cell of a police station in Dessau, Germany, in 2005. We will trace the work and analyse the praxis of activists who were determined to make Jalloh’s life a lesson for Black people living in Germany. Ultimately, we will consider how particular engagement with the legal system around patterns of racism and state violence is perhaps not only a form of activism, but a form of pedagogy.

Melissa Weiner, College of the Holy Cross
“The Dutchman’s Burden: Enslavement, Africa, Immigrants, and White Supremacy in Dutch Primary School History Textbooks”

The Dutch have long taken great pride in their identity as tolerant, both as a “promised land” for persecuted immigrants and for generous “development” funds in foreign nations. However, the Dutch eschew their role in historical colonial imperialism, enslavement and genocide and consider non-whites, both in The Netherlands abroad, ungrateful for their nation’s aid. This paper consolidates previous research addressing depictions of enslavement, immigration and multiculturalism, and Africa in all Dutch primary school history textbooks published since 1980 to argue that textbook depictions feature Eurocentric white supremacist master narratives of racial Europeanization within the unique context of Dutch society. These books perpetuate Dutch social forgetting of slavery

and scientific colonialism, essentialize and problematize immigrants and their cultures, highlight white Dutch supremacy, and facilitate a “Dutchman’s burden” that finds The Netherlands reluctantly aiding minorities within and outside of their borders. Findings have important implications for both The Netherlands and all nations with increasing immigrant populations as discourses, knowledges presented in textbooks impact generations of students’, who shape local and national policy regarding racial minorities, racial identities and ideologies.

Part II: Alternative Archives and Audiovisual Methodologies

11:00-12:30

Chair: Alessandra Benedicty

Tanisha Ford, University of Delaware

“Michelle Obama: Global Fashion Icon”

When Michelle dresses, the world watches, which is why her decision to wear a designer’s garment can make him or her a household name overnight. She has helped to launch and/or elevate the careers of designers of color including Jason Wu, Tracy Reese, Naeem Khan, Duro Olowu, and Maki Oh. And seemingly overnight, Michelle Obama has joined the pantheon of black women actors, singers, models, and socialites who have set the world ablaze with their signature looks. What sets her apart is her participation in the tumultuous space of American politics within which she must dress and present herself to the world. But behind the garments themselves, is the tumultuous geopolitical landscape of the global fashion industry, which Obama's dress body has also come to represent. This talk explores the visible and the invisible politics of Lady O's fashion.

Annalisa Frisina, University of Padua

“Young Gazes of Dissent: Exploring Everyday (Anti)Racism in Italy through Visual Methods”

My paper starts by suggesting that becoming visual researchers can be very useful to counter dominant representations of “Post-Racial Italy.” As “collector and interpreter” of found images as well as “facilitator and communicator” of images produced during the research encounters (Pauwels 2015), I will introduce different ways of studying visually the everyday racialization and inferiorization of Afro-descendants in Italy. I will discuss three research examples, which explore the de-racialization of Italianness performed by young Afro-Italians and by children of migrations in Italy. The first example focuses on one side on the invisibilization of Black Italianness in Italian history and the current reproduction of white nationalism in the neo-fascist propaganda against reform of the Italian “citizenship law” (n. 91/1992); on the other side, it explores the visual celebration of Black Italianness in the alternative public sphere created by social media. The second example reflects on the icon of Abdul Guiebre (Abba), a nineteen-year-old Burkinabe-Italian murdered in Milan in 2008 because of his “wrong skin” (Tabet 1997). Through the memories and experiences of members of the Rete G2 (the so called “second generation” of migrants) and the *Comitato per non dimenticare Abba e per fermare il razzismo*, I will show how Abba became a generational icon and a catalyst for constructing wider and more

transversal solidarities in response to growing inequalities. The third and last example presents a “photovoice” (a visual participatory action-research) with young people with and without a migrant background from Veneto (North East of Italy). Research participants expressed visually (through pictures) their dissent against hegemonic representations of Otherness and, thanks to discussions between peers, they ended up seeing “differently” and unlearning everyday racism.

Aja Y. Martinez, Syracuse University

“Counterstory: The Writing and Rhetoric of Critical Race Theory”

Counterstory suggests a method by which to incorporate critical race theory (CRT) in rhetoric and composition, as a contribution of other(ed) perspectives toward an ongoing conversation in the field about narrative, genre, dominant ideology, and their intersecting influence on institutions such as law enforcement, education, mass incarceration, and language policy. As a narrative form, counterstory functions as a cultural rhetoric and method for marginalized peoples to intervene in methods of research and media reporting that would form master narratives based on ignorance and on assumptions about minoritized peoples. Through the formation of counterstories, or those stories that document the persistence of racism and other forms of subordination, voices from the margins become the voices of authority in the researching and relating of our own experiences. Counterstory serves as a natural extension of inquiry for teacher-scholars whose teaching and research recognize and incorporate, as data, lived and embodied experiences of people of color. I argue it is thus crucial to use a narrative methodology and pedagogy that counter practices that seek to dismiss or decenter racism and those whose lives are affected daily by it.

Gayle Murchison, College of William & Mary

“Afro-British Identity, Black Atlantic Transnationalism, and Protest in the Age of Empire: Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s Twenty-four Negro Melodies”

During both his lifetime and posthumously, Afro-British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), was best known for his choral work, *Hiawatha’s Wedding Feast* (1898), which became a staple of English choral music shortly after its premiere. Coleridge-Taylor negotiated not only an individual biracial identity (a Sierra-Leonean—Egbo-Krio—father and white British mother), but also a public aesthetic and subject position that engaged legacies of slavery and colonialism, diaspora, and transnationalism. His characteristic piece for piano, *Twenty-four Negro Melodies*, Op. 59 (1905), consists of settings of African, Caribbean, and African American folksong, reflecting a long-standing European classical music practice. This work, however, stands as more than quaint Romantic folklorism or exoticism. This paper situates Coleridge-Taylor and *Twenty-four Negro Melodies* in the multiple contexts of: British imperialism and the African slave trade; African and African American transnational cultural and political determinism; and, Pan-Africanism. Coleridge-Taylor’s ideas about and explorations of diaspora were shaped in part by his London interactions with prominent Sierra Leoneans and African Americans (including Paul Laurence Dunbar, W.E.B Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington). These were joined to his own subject formation. It reflects the aesthetic and political ideas of a young Victorian who began to develop political consciousness about race and nation. In the context of Victorian

British history, *Twenty-four Negro Melodies* can be understood as Coleridge-Taylor's anti-war and anti-imperialist stance directed at British incursion into sub-Saharan Africa. I argue that in the various movements of this work, Coleridge-Taylor: 1) pays homage to his father; 2) explores the African diaspora as he traces the trans-Atlantic slave trade; and, 3) makes an outright critique of British colonialism and imperialism, and of Britain's involvement in wars on African soil.

-----**12:30-14:00 Lunch**-----

Part III: Art, Photography, and the Politics of Blackness

14:00-15:30

Chair: Harriette Moore

Bridget Cooks, UC Irvine

“Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum”

In 1927, the Chicago Art Institute presented the first major museum exhibition of art by African Americans. Designed to demonstrate the artists' abilities and to promote racial equality, the exhibition also revealed the art world's anxieties about the participation of African Americans in the exclusive venue of art museums—places where Blacks had historically been barred from visiting and exhibiting. Since then, America's major art museums have served as crucial locations for African Americans to protest against their exclusion and attest to their contributions in the visual arts. In this presentation, art historian Bridget R. Cooks provides an overview of the exhibition history of art by African Americans. She exposes the issues involved in exhibiting cultural difference that continue to challenge art history and American museums. Tracing two dominant methodologies used to exhibit art by African Americans—an ethnographic approach that focuses more on artists than their art, and a recovery narrative aimed at correcting past omissions—Cooks analyzes the curatorial strategies, challenges, and critical receptions of the most significant American museum exhibitions of African American art of the twentieth and twenty first centuries

Malika Crutchfield, UC Berkeley

“Capturing a Black Aesthetic: Hiding in Plain Site”

Malika Zwanya Crutchfield is a Bay Area based educator, writer, and community advocate. As a certified CAADAC therapist, she works with addiction, trauma, and mindfulness in her mental health practice. As PhD student in the African Diaspora Studies department at UC Berkeley, Malika looks at intersections between race, gender, mental health, racialized space, and freedom, and how black bodies experience different spaces throughout the Diaspora. Malika is a documentary photographer who has had work shown throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Reyes Lazaro, Smith College

“Performing Painter, Mulatto, Morisco and Slave in 17th-Century Spain”

In my presentation I study a dialogue of two portraits: the famous Portrait of Juan de Pareja by the equally famous Spanish painter Diego de Silva Velazquez (presently at the Metropolitan in New York), and The Calling of Saint Matthew by Juan de Pareja (presently at the Prado). The latter includes a self-portrait by Pareja himself in dialogue, I argue, with his 'master' Velazquez's painting of him. This fascinating dialogue between Velazquez's truly unique vision and fashioning of Pareja and Pareja's self-fashioning, unveils dominant racial and class ideologies of 17th century Spain, and poses crucial questions about the conditions under which individuals engage with them, are interpolated by them, possibly also confront them.

Shaweta Nanda, Central University of Himachal Pradesh

“Digging Out’ African American Artistic Foremothers”

This paper intends to examine the nature of art that was created by the African Americans in the Pre -Abolition Era. In order to understand the character of this art in a comprehensive fashion, the paper begins by debating/analyzing the question of what is considered to be a work of art. The paper studies varied kinds of objects/activities, ranging from “outdoor arts” such as slave houses, gardens and funeral sites to crafts such as metal (including gold, iron and silver) objects, baskets, pottery, furniture, and textiles to conventional fine arts like paintings, under the umbrella term of art. The paper also analyses other material that lies at the crossroads of verbal and visual arts, such as women’s friendship albums that have been unearthed by scholars like Lisa Farrington recently. While taking stock of the kinds of objects/works of art that are extant from the days of slavery, the paper furthers the discussion by unearthing the provenance of these art works. The paper, thus, seeks to probe how much of this art was redolent of its African heritage, and explores the manner in which contact with the “New World” shaped the artistic sensibilities of these artists. The paper proceeds to analyze the various ways in which the artists grappled with the issues of race, racism, training, and professional opportunities. The paper proceeds to analyze how the difficulties faced by the artists then are not over yet. Their work continues to suffer on account of the biased, neglectful and/or condescending attitudes of the museums, art galleries and interestingly of the plantation museums tours that ostensibly invite the tourists to “step back in time” but are modeled on “social forgetting” (Irwin-Zarecka’s term) as any meaningful discussion about life and activities especially creativity of slaves is conspicuous by its absence in most plantation museums sites and tours. The paper concludes by unraveling the significance of these works of art that were produced often under the demeaning and dehumanizing conditions of servitude.

Part IV: Spatiality, Power, and Resistance

15:30-17:00

Chair: Thomas Glave

Chelsea Frazier, Northwestern University

“Theorizing Red and Wounds in Wangechi Mutu's Eco-Art”

My paper, “Theorizing Red and Wounds in Wangechi Mutu's Eco-Art,” argues that Wangechi Mutu employs a strategic use of the color red to illuminate the interrelated ecological wounds of several kinds of bodies—human bodies, bodies of land, and certain political bodies—that are routinely occluded from environmental conversations. Here, I spotlight Mutu’s collage work and contend that she advances what I call a “maximalist eco-consciousness” by heavily layering images and materials that have largely come to signify excessiveness (Fleetwood, 2011). These “excessive” images and symbols include but are not limited to non-white bodies, non-male bodies, a mosaic of iridescent hues, highly constructed physical terrains, and many pools and splatters of bright red (blood). In turn, this “maximalist eco-consciousness” offers of method of comprehension that aggressively grasps at yet never attempts to contain the multitude and magnitude of the ecological crises we’re struggling and failing to conceptualize. Ultimately, though I chart the aesthetic and bio-political conditions of trauma for certain bodies, my goal is not to strip already marginalized subjects of their agency. Instead I aim to illuminate the ways that Mutu visualizes a celebration and affirmation of the methods by which black female and femme subjects in particular have conjured alternative (and sustainable) modes of being from their wounds and from the wounds of our ecologically ailing world.

Giovanni Picker, University of Birmingham

“Racial Cities: Governance and the Segregation of Romani People in Urban Europe”

This paper draws on my homonymous just-published book [Routledge, 2017], and argues that the logic behind the emergence and persistence in Europe of segregated and stigmatized “Gypsy urban areas” is race. Through a series of ethnographic studies in a number of cities, I will show the ways in which race, from driving segregation technologies in colonized cities of European empires, has variously permuted into a subtle and effective rationale of segregation in contemporary urban Europe. I will then put this reflection in dialogue with contemporary EU measures for the social inclusion of Roma. Through the case of France, I will show how color-blindness assumptions behind EU policies ultimately lead to contradictory social inclusion discourses at the national level, that in turn leave space to nothing else but state exceptions and arbitrariness. The conclusion calls for engaging political anti-racism in response to raceless technologies of both exclusion and inclusion in European cities.

Russell Robinson, UC Berkeley

“Same-Sex Relationships and Racial Preferences”

This qualitative study will explore the extent to which LGBT people describe race as important in determining their choice of partners. It will also consider the extent to which LGBT communities express expectations in terms of “normal” racial preferences and racial

configurations of couples, and how such communities react to people who depart from such norms. We draw on a broader research project that aims to better understand the intersections of LGBT relationships, identity in its various forms, and health disparities. We are in the process of conducting interviews with 100 LGBT people in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York, and Chicago. We are intentionally emphasizing the experiences of the most marginalized members of the community as a corrective to U.S. marriage equality discourse and litigation, which has tended to focus on the most affluent members of the community. We are very interested in thinking through how related dynamics play out in LGBT and heterosexual communities in Europe.

-----17:00-18:30 Closing Reception-----

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