



**9th Annual  
Summer School  
on  
BLACK EUROPE**

Interrogating Citizenship,  
Race and Ethnic Relations  
June 20 - July 1, 2016

## **International Symposium on Black Europe 2016**

Kwame Nimako, Camilla Hawthorne, Mano Delea

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

**Date:** 27 June 2016

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

#### **Introduction**

This is the 7<sup>th</sup> 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: New Racial Configurations in the Age of Globalization

09:30- 10:30

*Chair: Melissa Weiner*

#### **Claudia Garcia-Rojas, Northwestern University**

##### **"The State of Exception as a Paradigm of Race Governance and Democratic Institutionalism"**

When Giorgio Agamben published the *State of Exception*, social and political theorists proclaimed it to be the first book to present a historical genealogy on the state of exception. In his introductory chapter titled "The State of Exception as a Paradigm of Government," Agamben advances this claim stating that to date there had been "no substantive theory of the state of exception" (Agamben 3), and proceeds to offer a thorough analysis of its historical context. The state of exception, according to Agamben, is the suspension of law in a state of emergency. While his analysis offers a thorough understanding of the state of exception's historical foundation, which he traces back to the French Constituent Assembly's decree of 8 July 1791, he fails to account for how the governing practices that inform the state of exception as a juridico-political logic pre-date the decree. If we consider political theorist Barnor Hesse's argument that Europe emerged in relation to its colonial territories, as he puts forth in his article "Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythology," then it follows that the state of exception was also constituted through colonialism. In other words, the state of exception did not emerge as a European phenomenon, but as a colonial phenomenon that was formally legislated by the 1791 French Constituent Assembly, and was continually elaborated through racial governance. African-American political theorist, journalist, and activist Ida B. Wells' analysis of lynching in the South of the United States allows me to refine my argument. Wells, I argue, offers a critical analysis of how the state of exception emerged as a colonial logic, and was instituted as a governing practice. Reporting on the emergent trend of lynching during the post-Reconstruction era, Wells' editorials reveal that the state of exception is a governing paradigm enacted through the routinized extra-judicial killings of predominantly Black subjects.

**Hephzibah V. Strmic-Paul, Manhattanville College**  
**“Mixed-Race, Multiracial, Salient Blackness”**

In the United States, the population that identifies with two or more races jumped by 32 percent from 2000 to 2010 making it the fastest growing racial demographic. The population that identifies as both Black and White (Black-Whites) was the largest population in 2010, at 1.8 million. This population is clearly growing but questions remain as to how Black-Whites identify and how they are similar to or distinct from Black communities in their racial logics. Through 34 in-depth interviews with Black-Whites I investigate preferred racial identity, perceptions and experiences with racism, and their racialized perspectives. I find that Black-Whites prefer to identify as multiracial, but they also are akin to Blacks in their racial logics – what I refer to as a Salient Blackness.

**Kristin Waters, Worcester State University**  
**“Towards a more comprehensive radical epistemology”**

According to Charles Mills there is “an agreement to misinterpret the world. One has to learn to see the world wrongly, but with the assurance that this set of mistaken perceptions will be validated by white epistemic authority...” He demarcates the cartology of white ignorance in the service of hegemonic whiteness as a highly functional cognitive barrier to understanding reality arguing that the barrier is necessary to effectively support, reproduce, and benefit white privilege. Philosophers of race and gender follow Mills in calling these “epistemologies of ignorance.” A more comprehensive radical epistemology identifies types of ignorance: willful and reflexive. The first requires an active effort on the part of oppressor not to see the world for what it is. Beyond the ignorance implicated in reproducing oppression in the context of knowing about intersections of race/gender/class/sexuality/ability/age, and their relations to power, reflexivity commits to processes designed to achieve fuller knowledge and understanding.

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

11:00-12:30

*Chair: Camilla Hawthorne*

**Nikolas Dickerson, University of Lincoln**

**“Skating across the 49th Parallel: The African Diaspora and Ice Hockey”**

Both historically and presently, the cultural space of sport has functioned as an arena for the “making and remaking of race” (Carrington, 2010, p. 3). This presentation will outline a current project that examines the ways understandings of race are made and remade within the sport of ice hockey. More specifically, this presentation will examine representations of black Canadians and Americans within ice hockey, to think through how understandings of blackness within North America are produced and reproduced. While, the sport of hockey is typically associated with Canada, the highest professional league, the National Hockey League (NHL), operates primarily within the United States. In regards to race, while both black Canadians and black Americans play the game, it is primarily black Canadian men that play in the NHL. This presentation will draw upon Ben Carrington’s

(2010) unique use of diaspora, which he refers to as the “sporting black Atlantic”, to think through the ways race and gender shape the experiences of black Americans and Canadians, within the sport of ice hockey, in both Canada and the United States.

**Trudier Harris, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa**

**“Flying Back to Africa: African American Writers and the Quest for an Ancestral Home”**

Since Africans arrived upon New World soil, stories of their return to Africa have been constant. The most prominent of these narratives, the myth of the “flying Africans,” posited that those stolen from certain tribes on the continent could return to their homeland through at least three different methods. They could utter secret/magical words and take to the air; however, this procedure could be effective only if they had not eaten polluting foods, such as pork, in the New World. Zora Neale Hurston would later dramatize this belief briefly in her narrative entitled “High John the Conqueror.” A second way in which Africans could return home was simply to take off walking, chains and all, back across the Atlantic Ocean, a procedure that represents its own symbolic “flight” and that Paule Marshall captures in her novel, *Praisesong for the Widow*. Or, those recently enslaved could, as Angelina Reyes argues, commit suicide, and “fly” spiritually back to their homeland. Such tales have influenced African American culture from its origins and are captured in any number of literary texts, including Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*. They have also influenced the life choices of African American writers and essayists, as many of them, from Langston Hughes to Marita Golden to Molefi Asante, have charted their courses from American soil to presumed African origins. Their successes and—more often—their failures will shape this presentation.

**Funmilayo Showers, Central Connecticut State University**

**“Solidarity and Disjuncture in the ‘New African Diaspora’: African Immigrants Caring for African-Americans in the United States.”**

Drawing from qualitative interviews and ethnographic research conducted among contemporary West African immigrants who work in occupations along the continuum of the health care industry, this paper sheds light on contemporary race relations in the United States context by exploring a group of West African immigrants who provide care for a predominantly African American clientele. Exploring the relationships between the ‘new African Diaspora’ as represented by recent immigrants from Africa and the historical African Diaspora, this paper finds points of solidarity, but also important points of divergence and discord among these groups of Blacks in the United States. The findings of this paper hold significance for our understanding of the changing contours of race and ethnicity in the United States context. These findings can be useful to launch a discussion of the similarities/differences between the United States context and the Black Diaspora in Europe.

**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.

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

Part III: Activist Roundtable – Art & Archives in Diasporic Struggles

14:00-15:30

*Chair:* Camilla Hawthorne

**Victoria Burgher, Artist (UK)**

**“A material way through the mire”**

A London-based artist and artist educator, my multi-disciplinary, politically engaged practice ranges from sculptural installations and site-specific interventions to collaborative projects, public ventures and education workshops with young people and the homeless. The work is largely sculptural and materials based. Fascinated with the materiality of things, I use this obsession with the fabric of life, via objects and immersive environments, to process my thoughts and communicate my passions. I’m often drawn to ‘poor’ materials and immersive, yet ephemeral, outcomes. I am 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 and situations inform it, such as the ongoing trans-Mediterranean refugee crisis and the slave trade. This talk introduces my practice and research, as both artist and artist educator. I will make particular reference to a recent body of work, ‘King Sugar Had Begun His Deprivations’, exhibited in Amsterdam

earlier this year, as an example of how my practice helps me to negotiate the post-colonial mire that I find myself in.

### **Lazare Ki-Zerbo, International Joseph Ki-Zerbo Committee for Africa and Her Diaspora (France)**

#### **“African or Pan-African Week at UNESCO? Lessons for the future”**

Every year the African group at UNESCO organizes an event called the "African week" in which the International Joseph Ki-Zerbo Committee for Africa and the Diaspora has participated (2012, 2013 and 2014). Though we can capitalize on an important production of knowledge with prominent African and African American scholars, and take steps in networking beyond boundaries, the impact on other Pan-African networks appears limited. We need to prepare the centenary of the first Pan-African Congress in Paris with a more broad coalition and certainly in another venue, may be the historical site of the Du Boisian event: the Grand Hotel near the Opera in Paris. Moreover we might have to learn from the digital activism of younger generations in order to connect with them. This is an ongoing reflection for which the input of the participants and moderators will be needed.

### **Anabela Rodrigues, GTO-LX (Portugal)**

#### **“Ami-Afro Lab: Bitterness and Honey in Paper”**

In this presentation, I will focus on my experience working with the Theatre of the Oppressed. The playwright Augusto Boal believed that theatre is a form of knowledge that can help us build our future, rather than just making us passively wait for it. His methodology for the Theatre of the Oppressed intends to promote individual and community empowerment through a theatrical and political perspective. Accordingly, a theatre group creates performances from real situations lived by themselves, which are subsequently presented to the community. The spectator (audience) is encouraged to step in on stage, to improvise, as protagonist, playing alternatives solutions to the problem. It was following this approach that emerged the AMI –AFRO Lab, born out as one of the results of the community work carried out by the Lisbon Theatre of the Oppressed Group (GTO LX). The group has been working in communities marked by social exclusion – the so-called "social and illegal ghettos" – where legality, nationality, poverty and race play a very *bitter* role in their daily lives. In paper, we live in a *honey* word: legally and administratively, we all are equal; however, (post)colonial migrants and their descendants are treated and seen as criminals or outsiders, especially in the media. Also, the school curriculum maintains a Eurocentric perspective: the narrative of “*our* Glorious” Portugal does not represent the diversity of these communities; some are not full-fledged citizens. Not surprisingly, the descendants of these immigrants, even if born and raised in the host country, sometimes do not feel part of the nation; they do not fit this Europe of all. This disbelief makes one lose his/her sense of belonging. This made us feel the need to create a black consciousness, as Steven Biko proposed, PRAXIS in our communities. An aesthetic process based on Theatre of the Oppressed techniques (Image theatre, forum theatre, invisible theatre, rainbow of desires and legislative theatre), that creates a privileged space for Afrodescendants to dialogue and research on the silencing of issues, notions and words, such as racism, Eurocentrism, migration, Black power, to deconstruct our oppressed mind. To use drama as a tool that addresses controversial topics reduces conflicts, and that

also inspires audiences to social and political change. This is thus a space that promotes interaction between theory and practice, that allows us to gain awareness of our own problems and skills, and that begins to change own situation. I will invite the audience to take part and know more about how the bitterness and honey of a paper, including as an aesthetic process.

### **Mujing Rukambu, Womcreativ'z (Belgium)**

Womcreativ'z is a Womanist-Afro-feminist group of women of African descent, centered on black women's empowerment through art, social involvement, wellbeing, and media.

Women of African descent are invisible despite the fact that they are active and have some influence in Belgian society. We want to change that by showing that they have power, that their voices are valuable and valid. We choose to be centered on art, social involvement, wellbeing, and media because we want to change the way black women are seen and how they see themselves in those specific topics.

## Part IV: Activist Roundtable – Youth Politics across Black Europe

16:00-17:30

*Chair:* Mano Delea

### **Evelyne Afaawua, Nappytalia (Italy)**

#### **“Dove capelli ed identità si intrecciano” (Hair & Identity, Braided Together)**

This adventure began two years ago with a Facebook page, “Afro- Italian Nappy Girls,” where “Nappy” means naturally and happy. After a personal crisis about my identity, based on my confusion about the mix of Italian and Ghanaian cultures I have, I decided to stop accepting the negative consideration society was giving to me. I refuse to accept that the color of my skin should be a limit to my personal skills, resulting in a lack of opportunities and laws that did not recognize my citizenship as Italian even though I have lived in Italy for 24 years. I decided to express this awareness in two ways: with a new word to define myself as “ Afro-Italian” or Italo-Ghanaian, putting these two countries on the same footing; but especially by appreciating my physical appearance by showing off my natural Afro hair and no longer using hair relaxers. A lot has been done in only two years. I use hair as a means to carry a broader message related to acceptance: accepting natural Afro hair and dark skin; refusing to change ourselves to be accepted in society; saying no to only one standard of beauty. Keeping our natural hair is a message to encourage black women to be self-confident and aware of their natural beauty, showcasing to Italian society that being black does not determine our destinies, intelligence or skills, but rather that we will create our own opportunities even if they are not there.

### **Kwanza Musi Dos Santos, Questa è Roma (Italy)**

What does it mean to be black in Europe (in particular in Italy) nowadays? I think, when we're referring to the Italian case, we cannot define “Afro-Italian” youth. It would be more appropriate to define an Italian Black girl with a Ghanaian background as “Italian-Ghanaian.” There's a considerable difference between being Italian-Congolese and Italian-

Ethiopian for example. But indeed they're both Black Italians. But despite simple “terms,” I would like to focus on strategy: it is very urgent nowadays to find a method in order to build a decidedly strong lobby which, gaining a certain power, will be finally able to have some influence on global politics, which regard our future as well. In this sense, following the inspiration of the American poet Neal Hall, I would propose to create a collective economical network, in which we can choose our rules and indirectly compel the majority to listen and finally adapt to our needs and claims. Now, two main concepts should be key points of our next concrete actions: opportunity and formation. The first cannot be achieved without the second one and the BESS itself is a great example of how we can develop and finally achieve our aspirations.

**Karen Sieben, Rainmakers Foundation/Panafstrag (Netherlands)  
“Young Ghanaian Diaspora of The Netherlands/Rainmakers Foundation”**

I will discuss the aim of my PhD research regarding the young African (especially Ghanaian) Diaspora in The Netherlands. My aim is to find out how the identity of this young generation is being developed, and what factors influence the sense of belonging. In my research I will include the Dutch and Ghanaian primary and secondary education system, because my focus group is on Dutch born Ghanaians and Ghanaians who came to the Netherlands at a very young age. The education systems are part of the research since the knowledge gained in school about Africa might effect the perceptions of Africa and of being an African. This knowledge about Africa may additionally have an impact on the identity of African people. I will also discuss the Rainmakers Foundation. The Rainmakers Foundation focuses on young people of African descent from The Netherlands, especially regarding education, employment and entrepreneurship. The Foundation was established about a year ago by Ghanaians and has already organized some successful events. I would like to discuss what we have done so far and what projects are currently being developed.

**Randa Toko, Matters of the Earth (UK)**

Matters of the Earth is a social justice organisation advocating for Intersectional Liberation for ALL Black Lives around the world, by bridging the gaps between activist, academic, and artistic mediums to facilitate the organising, strengthening, and building of movements. We work to build consciousness and knowledge around anti-racism, gender liberation, mental health awareness, and environmental justice through knowledge dissemination and education, activist campaigning, and art. We centre our goals around defending the human rights and dignity of ALL Black people; recognising the reality of anti-Blackness at a personal, systemic, and institutional level for people of African Descent.

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

*For additional information see: [www.dialogoglobal.com/amsterdam](http://www.dialogoglobal.com/amsterdam)*