REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Session: Re-centring Racism in Academic and Political Debate

Session Convener(s): Marta Araújo, University of Coimbra; Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, University of Coimbra

Chair: Marta Araújo, University of Coimbra

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I) *Post-race, Post-equality: Continuing Racisms in Britain's High Schools*
Nisha Kapoor, Manchester Metropolitan University

II) *Disrupting the Colonial Gaze: Postcolonial Movements in Sikh Studies*
Katy Sian, University of Leeds

III) *The Evolution and Devolution of 'Race-Ethnic' Relations Theory: The Tension between Determinist and Dialectical Standpoints*
Alan Spector, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, IN

IV) *Global Apartheid and the University. Reflections on Academic Scholarship and Racism*
Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Universidade de Coimbra

IV) *Memory Narratives and the Configuration of Islamophobia in Germany*
Frank Peter, University of Bern

ABSTRACTS

Session description

In much contemporary debate, political discourses and practices incorporate the apparent paradox between a *historicist* conception of racism (*i.e.* the idea of the progressive eradication of racism and its residual status in liberal democratic societies) and the *awareness* that racist structures and processes have not been eliminated. This is related to the hegemonic conceptualisation of racism, which Barnor Hesse sees as being doubly-bound into revealing (nationalism, sub-humanist and extremist ideology), and concealing (liberalism, non-Europeanism and routine governmentality).

In this session, we propose to discuss the ways in which social sciences have been both (re)producing and challenging this Eurocentric conception of racism, taking into account its changing relationship with two target-audiences: policy-makers and political activists. Regarding the former, we see as crucial to generate a broader debate on evidence-based policies, considering the history of colonial governmentality. In this sense, we call for work that discusses the current displacement of the debate on racism to that on the characteristics of so-called 'vulnerable' populations (immigrants and visible minorities, uninformed of their rights). Regarding political activism, this sessions aims at exploring how different contexts are configuring the relation between the academia and social movements (and challenging the figure of the academic as expert), as well as how activists are making use of academic knowledge in political struggles and strategies.

Papers

I) *Post-race, Post-equality: Continuing Racisms in Britain's High Schools*
Nisha Kapoor, Manchester Metropolitan University

In recent discussions of race in the contemporary conjuncture the notion of 'post-race' has become increasing fashionable rhetoric both in popular and political circles, fuelling a surge of academic debate as to why and how the concept arose as well as what the implications of this political phenomenon might be. It is generally accepted though that in political terms, the idea of 'post-race' has provided suitable legitimacy for policy makers who wish to avoid addressing persistent material inequalities experienced by racialized minorities. In this paper I draw on the work of David Theo Goldberg (2009) who has theorised the trend in terms of racial neoliberalism, which refers to the process whereby the terms of race are increasingly 'evaporated' under the venture of antiracialism as a replacement of antiracism, while the institutionalization of racial governance is ever more entrenched and legitimated. I apply this concept to the findings from an ongoing research project looking at racism in education in Britain in the context of changes to education policy in the UK. Here policies addressing racism are being silenced whilst histories of colonialism and British Empire are positively promoted and claims that 'guilt about Britain's past is misplaced' are being made. This has significant implications in the context of research which shows racism in schools to be as prevalent as ever.

II) *Disrupting the Colonial Gaze: Postcolonial Movements in Sikh Studies*
Katy Sian, University of Leeds

This paper will explore how both academically and politically Sikhs have sought to oppose imperial constructs of 'Sikhness' through a series of interventions and mobilisations which have attempted to articulate alternative ways of *being* outside the colonial framing. Sikh studies has been plagued by eurocentrism, I will examine the ways in which contemporary academics in Sikh studies have disrupted such dominant imperialist readings through their

engagement with a postcolonial critique.

The Sikh postcolonial response has not just been spear-headed by Anglophone writers in the west but also by Punjabi activists which include the Singh Sabha reformists and the Marxist Sikh reformists. The Singh Sabha movement aimed to strengthen literacy and revitalize the teachings of the Sikh Gurus through the production of religious text and influenced Sikh self-consciousness by redefining both the doctrinal foundations of Sikhism and impacting the enunciation of Sikh identity. In contrast the Marxian inspired Ghadr movement was founded among Sikh immigrants principally in Western Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. This political movement linked the experience of racism by Sikhs in North America to a critique of colonialism globally.

This paper will examine how both these forms of activism played an important role in disrupting the surreptitious and essentialising colonial framework which was significant in (re)articulations of Sikhness. I will look at the way in which such political mobilisations influenced the reformulation of Sikh studies enabling contemporary academics in the field to adopt a critical postcolonial reading of Sikhs which narrates them as agents rather than producers of data.

III) *The Evolution and Devolution of 'Race-Ethnic' Relations Theory: The Tension between Determinist and Dialectical Standpoints*
Alan Spector, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, IN

As the global economy grapples with crisis, earlier, pre-war fatalistic conservative perspectives gain in strength while liberal perspectives either weaken or become more conservative themselves. Contradictory political-economic trends intensify - contradictory because those who dominate the political-economic system are preoccupied with survival rather than intellectual consistency. So on the one hand, we see a homogenization that crushes low income members of all ethnic/racial groups into one homogeneous mass, as Marx predicted, but on the other hand, we see that the ethnic/racial fractures widen under the strain of competition for the shrinking pie intensifying ethnic/racial stratification within class stratification which serves the political function of protecting the capitalist order. An especially camouflaged form of seemingly humanistic ideology that can serve reactionary purposes is the rise of identity politics and its softer version, preoccupation with "diversity" in a way that fails to empower the oppressed but rather segments the oppressed into weak, sometimes competitive groups. An effective strategy against all forms of exploitation and oppression needs a framework which rejects both the reductionism of "race" into a one-dimensional concept of "class" ("Post-Racial Society") and also rejects the opposite, but complementary perspective that essentially divorces racial/ethnic oppression from class oppression (although occasionally seeing them as "intersecting" rather than as symbiotically mutually saturating as they shape and define each other as organic parts of the whole system of stratification and oppression). The activist struggle against racial-ethnic oppression must see its connection to the overall systems of class exploitation, but the overarching struggle against exploitation and oppression must grasp and put into practice that the struggle against racial-ethnic oppression and exploitation must be at the front edge of this broader class struggle. This has been true in the United States for many years and is becoming increasing more true in Europe and elsewhere as well.

IV) *Global Apartheid and the University. Reflections on Academic Scholarship and Racism*
Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Universidade de Coimbra

In this paper, I posit that the context in which the university operates can be described as global apartheid due to the racial character of the social, economic and epistemological divide that segregates the north from the south. The paper highlights that global apartheid's role within which the university operates. Largely, the social sciences and the

humanities continue producing knowledge that obeys the logic that marks global apartheid. More concretely, the paper draws upon some of the findings concerning racism in academic scholarship of a large European research project on the semantics of racism (TOLERACE), and from the author's own records concerning this problem. On the basis of this, the paper centres in discussing the ways in which racism in the academia is intimately linked with transnational networks of policy making that reproduce racism and work as a defence of global apartheid.

IV) *Memory Narratives and the Configuration of Islamophobia in Germany*
Frank Peter, University of Bern

Current debates about Islam and Europe are closely linked to the (re)configuration of national identities and the emergence of a supranational identity in the new Europe. Historical narratives and memory are an essential part of these politics of identity. Hall in this respect defines the concept of identities as "the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (1990: 225). This paper seeks to broaden our understanding of memory narratives and make them relevant to the study of the government of Islam and Muslims. For this purpose, it considers the citational use of narratives as authorizing interventions in the process of government, both inside and beyond the State. These interventions, by a multiplicity of actors, consist in rationalizing the exercise of government by constituting its objects, determining the means and aims of government and, ultimately, defining the different kinds of authority on which government ought to be based (Rose & Miller 1992).

Memory narratives are studied here as part of the continuous business of rationalizing the politics of incorporating Islam into Germany. More particularly, this paper examines the citational use of two prominent narratives in debates about State neutrality and Islam in Germany on the one hand and, on the other, in debates about Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. The first case study concerns references to Lessing's play Nathan the Wise (1779) and the plea for tolerance of 'other' non-Christian religions, notably Judaism, which has been associated with it in Germany. The second case study concerns citational use of the history of Jews in Germany and the Holocaust in analogy to German Muslims. I propose exploring these references in relation to the concept of Islamophobia and how it is shaped by the Holocaust as the paradigmatic experience of racism.