



**8th Annual
Summer School
on
BLACK EUROPE**

Interrogating Citizenship,
Race and Ethnic Relations

June 22 - July 3, 2015

International Symposium on Black Europe 2015

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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 6th 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

Alessandra Benedicty, City College of New York

“La Ve République,’ Frantz Fanon, and ‘Je (ne) suis (pas) Charlie’: Why ‘Black Europe’ So Threatens a French ‘Secular’ Sensibility”

Philomena Essed explains that Black Europe is about “being black in Europe and Europe turning black” (‘Foreword,’ Black Europe, University of Illinois Press, 2009: ix). Meanwhile, in 2013, the French legislature attempted to literally delete the word ‘race’ from its legal apparatus. As such, a Europe that is “turning black” finds itself devoid of an officially legitimate (i.e. state endorsed) lexica with which to narrate itself, much less with which to assure the legal rights of its citizens who are identified and/or who self-identify as ‘black.’ If mainstream discourse on the French citizen today sidelines, or rather strives to completely delete the word ‘race’ as a legal means through which to claim rights, it does so because it is not yet capable of imagining a society that is multiracial, much less post-racial.

Given the context of the French Fifth Republic, founded on October 4, 1958, in large part as a reaction to Algeria's struggle for independence, and given Fanon's important intellectual role in articulating Algeria's struggle [Fanon was in Algeria from 1953 to 1957 and achieved major attention when Jean-Paul Sartre endorsed his work with a preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961], I argue that any veritable effort to really assure the rights of all humans means dealing courageously – and un-politically correctly – with Fanon's theoretical apparatus. If France and the larger public sphere find themselves at a loss to understand the January 7, 2015 attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the ensuing polemics around “Je suis” or “Je ne suis pas Charlie,” it is because there is a reticence, or rather a complete inability to deal with the menace, and possibility, of Fanon's psychoanalytically informed intellectual project and his anticolonial political aspirations. Fanon, whether openly acknowledged by an anti-colonialist, Marxist-leaning minority or unknown or ignored by the mainstream majority still lurks in the background with an unsaid, yet threateningly, ever-present legacy both on intellectuals and the larger public sphere. Admittedly, my argument that a Fanonian psychological, intellectual, and political project might in part fuel the angst of the staunchest proponents of a post-racial French republicanism may sound a bit far-fetched. And so, to illustrate and lend credibility to my claims, I briefly discuss three recent and extremely controversial events through a Fanonian critical lens: the polemics surrounding the attacks on Charlie Hebdo's employees; the accusations of anti-Semitism of one of France's most prominent Caribbean intellectuals, Raphaël Confiant; and the advent of two extremely left-leaning groups in Europe, Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece.

Sarah Demart, Université de Liège

“Reading the race in Belgium. The Congolese (RDC) diaspora in the former colonial metropole.”

There are few international and comparative studies relating to multiculturalism and colonial legacy that take into consideration the case of Belgium. Like other countries, the kingdom lies in the shadow of British and French Powers. However, these patterns do not necessarily influence the reading of other social formations such as Belgian postcoloniality. This paper aims to shed light on the Congolese presence in Belgium and in particular on the « unthought » around this presence. Despite five decades of Congolese presence in the country, two decades of Black activism, the growing number of studies made even by public institutions, the state and its institutions still claim ignorance of the Congolese population (and by “racial extension”, of the African and Black population). The global sociology corpus on migration and public policy seems focused on the figure of the poorly-qualified immigrant worker (Moroccans, Turks, Italians, etc.). This paper will bring to light the continuity of paradigm that this “unthinkable” is underlying in order to show how this has consequences in the research agenda characterized by little consideration of the Congolese and Black situation, and few institutional

development in racial issues and postcolonial studies. I'll show how this unthinkable "governs" the Congolese presence in Belgium and is inherited from colonization.

Claudia Garcia-Rojas, Northwestern University

"On the Question of the Political in Frantz Fanon's Wretched of the Earth"

In this presentation, I read Fanon's description of decolonization through the work of political theorists Barnor Hesse and Carl Schmitt. I put forward that in order to understand what Fanon means by decolonization, we must first understand the notion of the political difference, and its Western historical ontology, which in its liberal-colonial and democratic-racial formations, continues to disavow a radical black politic.

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

11:30-13:00

Chair: Alessandra Benedicty

Tanisha Ford, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

"Creating an 'Eclectic Archive': New Directions in Cultural History"

From the civil rights and Black Power era of the 1960s through antiapartheid activism in the 1980s and beyond, black women have used their clothing, hair, and style not simply as a fashion statement but as a powerful tool of resistance. Whether using stiletto heels as weapons to protect against police attacks or incorporating African-themed designs into everyday wear, these fashion-forward women celebrated their identities and pushed for equality. In this talk, I will discuss how I developed a research method and the archive necessary to explore why black women in places as far-flung as New York City, Atlanta, London, and Johannesburg incorporated style and beauty culture into their activism. My book *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* (UNC Press, October 2015), is the first of its kind to elucidate this understudied history. I had to create an eclectic archive consisting of oral interviews, FBI files, passports, fashion and lifestyle magazines, personal correspondence, yearbooks, and organizational documents to piece together this history. I will share with the audience what contributions I believe this work makes to the overlapping fields of social movement history, black Europe/African diaspora studies, women's studies, and cultural studies.

Jan Mendes, York University

"Destabilizing re/stylizations of the Other: Disruptive Performances of Blackness and Muslimness in/through Conversion to Islam"

In dominant, idealized imaginings of the nation-state Canada is constructed as that which accepts all difference--an institutionalized benevolence seemingly confirmed in the appropriate "wishful and hopeful gaze" (Ahmed 2004) of the welcomed Other who anticipates full belonging. Yet, scholarship on the African Diaspora in Canada includes critical discussion of Black subjects as those who are perpetually spatialized as outsiders and made to occupy an eternal, naturalized Otherness (McKittrick 2006; Walcott 2003). Hence, this paper will explore the ways some Black women might give-up or refuse to maintain the wish of/for what is an impossible belonging by instead willfully moving away from this national ideal by converting to Islam. Extending Judith Butler's (1999) analysis of "unintelligibility" I suggest that because Islam signifies a familiar difference it is not the becoming/being Muslim in itself that is incoherent. In reaching away from approximations of whiteness/Canadianness and towards the foreign unlikeness of Islam I instead speculate that Black convert women illustrate a non-conforming, improper desire that is culturally unintelligible. Further, understanding the hijab as that which makes "the Muslim woman" locatable, Black convert women's capacity to put-on/take-off the hijab, moving between a visible/invisible Islam, introduces a fluidity and performance of Black/Muslim identity that should not exist. By enacting Blackness and Muslimness in discontinuous and unexpected ways convert women potentially confuse and destabilize the Canadian nation-state's ability to congeal bodies into certain kinds of enduring Otherness and therefore create new possibilities for how difference can be occupied by subverting ruling signifiers from within.

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

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

15:30-17:30

Chair: Mano Delea

George Barganier

"Thug International: Black Consciousness, the Crips and The Hague"

From the archetypes of Malcolm X to Tupac Shakur, Black criminality has been a central component to the development of Black political consciousness on a global

scale. In this trajectory, Black street organizations throughout the diaspora have a long and complex relationship with Black radical politics. Yet scholarship has overlooked the everyday efforts of the Black youth at the farthest margins of subalternity to decolonize. By employing the work of Frantz Fanon and more recent theories of coloniality, this paper examines the development of Black political consciousness amongst the Crips of the Netherlands and the ways in which their articulation of Blackness both internalize and resist coloniality. Established in the Hague by Black Surinamese youth in the 1980s, the Crips of Holland have come to embody the inspirations and desperations of colonized ghetto youth in contemporary Europe.

Melissa Weiner, College of the Holy Cross

“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