

# Challenging Institutional Racism in International Relations and Our Profession: Reflections, Experiences, and Strategies

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**Andrew Delatolla**

University of Leeds, UK

**Momin Rahman**

Trent University, UK

**Dibyesh Anand**

University of Westminster, UK

**Mary Caesar**

Balsillie School of International Affairs, Canada

**Toni Hastrup**

University of Stirling, UK

**Nassef Manabilang Adiong**

International Relations and Islamic Studies Research Cohort, the Philippines

**Swati Parashar**

University of Gothenburg, Sweden

**Jeremy Youde**

University of Minnesota, USA

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**Corresponding author:**

Andrew Delatolla, Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK.

Email: [a.delatolla@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:a.delatolla@leeds.ac.uk)

## Abstract

Attempts to create a more inclusive discipline and profession have been commended by many and derided by some. While these attempts have pushed for change, particularly with regards to more equal representation of gender and race among faculty, policies aimed at creating a more inclusive environment are often tokenistic, administrative and bureaucratic, and fail to address structural and institutional practices and norms. Moreover, the administrative and bureaucratic policies put into place are generally targeted at a single categorical group, failing to take into account the manner in which identities are intersecting and overlapping. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion often gets driven by Human Resources and Marketing rather than owned by the wider university. This forum draws from a variety of contributions that focus on describing the lived realities of institutional racism, its intersections with other forms of discrimination, and strategies for change. In putting together this forum, we do not aim to create a checklist of practical steps. Instead, we hope to signpost and make visible the successes and failures of previous challenges and future possibilities that must be taken by both faculty and administrations.

## Keywords

gender, race, racism, academic, faculty, policy, inclusive

## Résumé

### **Combattre le racisme institutionnel dans les Relations internationales et au sein de notre profession : réflexions, expériences et stratégies**

Les tentatives de création d'une discipline et d'une profession plus inclusives ont été saluées par beaucoup et tournées en dérision par certains. Malgré les appels au changement, notamment à une plus grande égalité de représentation des races et des genres au sein du corps enseignant, les politiques visant à créer un environnement plus inclusif sont souvent symboliques, administratives et bureaucratiques, et ne répondent pas au problème des pratiques et des normes structurelles et institutionnelles. De plus, les politiques administratives et bureaucratiques mises en place visent généralement une seule catégorie de personnes et ignorent la manière dont les identités se recoupent et se chevauchent. Ce sont souvent les départements des ressources humaines et du marketing qui pilotent la mission égalité-diversité-inclusion, et non l'université dans son ensemble qui se l'approprie. Ce forum s'appuie sur diverses contributions qui s'attachent à décrire les réalités vécues du racisme institutionnel, ses intersections avec d'autres formes de discrimination et les stratégies de changement. Avec ce forum, notre intention n'est pas de dresser une liste d'actions concrètes à mettre en place. Notre souhait est plutôt de signaler et rendre visibles les succès et les échecs des défis passés, ainsi que les possibilités futures qui doivent être saisies aussi bien par le corps enseignant que par l'administration.

## Mots-clés

race, diversité, Relations internationales

### **Desafiando el racismo institucional en las relaciones internacionales y en nuestra profesión: reflexiones, experiencias y estrategias**

Los intentos de crear una disciplina y una profesión más inclusiva han sido elogiados por muchos y ridiculizados por algunos. Aunque estos intentos han impulsado el cambio, particularmente en lo relativo a una representación más equitativa del género y la raza entre el cuerpo docente universitario, las políticas para la creación de un entorno más inclusivo suelen ser meramente simbólicas, administrativas y burocráticas y fracasan a la hora de abordar las prácticas y las normas estructurales e institucionales. Es más, las políticas administrativas y burocráticas implementadas

van, por lo general, dirigidas a grupos pertenecientes a una categoría determinada, sin tener en cuenta cómo se superponen y se entrecruzan las identidades. La igualdad, la diversidad y la inclusión son, por lo general, dirigidas desde el ámbito del márketing y los recursos humanos en lugar de ser asumidas por la Universidad en su conjunto. Este foro se basa en una variedad de contribuciones centradas en la descripción de las realidades vividas del racismo institucional, sus intersecciones con otras formas de discriminación y las estrategias para el cambio. Al articular este foro no es nuestra intención crear un protocolo basado en una serie de pasos prácticos. Pretendemos, por el contrario, señalar y visibilizar los éxitos y fracasos de retos anteriores y posibilidades futuras que deben asumir tanto el cuerpo docente como las administraciones.

### Palabras clave

raza, diversidad, relaciones internacionales

## Introduction

### Andrew Delatolla, Momin Rahman, and Dibyesh Anand

Although academia is often described as being a ‘liberal’ ivory tower in the West, the reproduction of systemic racism and discrimination in academic institutions and structures is pervasive. While race and systemic racism have become important fields of study and areas of activism, it is not just a problem ‘out there’ to be studied or engaged with through political action in our ‘private’ lives. Systemic racism operates and survives through every sphere of academic institutions as well as our disciplines. As a profession that prides itself on objectivity and meritocracy, it is always difficult to admit that race plays an important structural role in academic hiring, hierarchies, citation politics, and inclusion. In addressing these dynamics, this forum first discusses the multiple and different experiences of racism in the profession, illuminating the various ways that biases inform outcomes and the marginalisation of non-white scholars. It then discusses attempts to challenge racism and discrimination from informal to formal engagements and at different levels of institutional seniority. The aim here is not to provide a checklist of policy initiatives, ‘ways ahead’ or strategies but to contribute to a conversation on, an understanding of, and actions to, combat racism and discrimination in the academy.

The following contributions speak to and are written from different personal and professional experiences and positions, but they all offer a glimpse into the broader ongoing and overlapping debates occurring on institutional racism and diversity in academia. We argue for the importance of autobiographical, or auto-ethnographic accounts, for understanding the systemic formation of discrimination within institutions. Hence, we value the autobiographical as an ‘audit of the self’<sup>1</sup> located within and conditioned by structural or systemic contexts. By considering their own experiences in academia, the authors have reflected on the sources of painful experiences, anger and frustration in order to understand how these sources are reproduced across geographies and within the discipline. To be sure, this is qualitative analysis, but instead of thinking about

1. Liz Stanley, From ‘Self-made Women’ to ‘Women’s Made-Selves.’? Audit Selves, Simulation and Surveillance in the Rise of Public Woman, in *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories and Methods*, ed. T. Cosslett, C. Lury, and P. Summerfield (London: Routledge, 2000).

autobiographies as methodological individualism, we ask our audience to consider that these experiences illuminate patterns within our profession. The aim here is to engage in discussion with the existing scholarship on institutional racism in academia and contribute to these discussions by confronting and analysing personal experiences in tandem with the scholarly work that has been done to-date. For the contributors below, engaging with their own experiences of marginalisation, exclusion, whitesplaining, resistance, fighting, and hoping is to remind the wider field of International Relations that a commitment to genuine diversification of the discipline must go beyond topics, theories, empirical material. It needs to include experiences of those racialised as not-white. We want these experiences and stories to push the gatekeepers of academic departments and disciplines to question their own silence or complicity with racial privileges; to inspire students and scholars of International Relations to own their experiences; to feel free to speak about it and not ‘shut up’ – especially when academic institutions discourage (auto)ethnographies of university life.

This forum begins with Mary Caesar’s experience of race and racism in South Africa and Canada. She starts the conversation by exploring the multiplicities of racism and its manifestations in different institutions based in different geographies, political contexts, and histories. Her experience in these two different contexts, she argues, can address ‘the myth of the hegemonic black experience’ and she argues that diversity in experience can help develop a ‘range of skills and best practices’ to address institutional racism in universities. Building on Mary’s discussion, Toni Haastrup opens up about her personal experience of academia in the UK and the importance of survival in a ‘system built on whiteness [that] is doing the job it is supposed to do by keeping [black and ethnic minority scholars] out’. The theme of whiteness is picked up by Nassef Manabilang who discusses his experiences as a scholar located in the Philippines, having to navigate an academic discipline that is centred on, and in, predominantly white-Western spaces. Nassef makes an important intervention, noting that it is not only conferences, journals, and book publishers that shift the geographic and epistemic position of the discipline, it is also knowledge production from these geographic and epistemic positions that create path-dependency and benchmarks for institutions located in the majority world. Highlighted by Nassef and subsequently carried forward in the discussion by Swati Parashar, is the notion that expertise and its methodological underpinnings in IR, with regards to its material (financial) and conceptual realities, is racialised, producing authority and hierarchies of knowledge production. Where Swati considers how knowledge production becomes embedded in racial hierarchies, Andrew Delatolla explores the relationship between pedagogical knowledge production, representation, whiteness, and race. Drawing from his experience working with colleagues to increase representation in course syllabi and the curriculum, he ties reluctance to diversify knowledge production in pedagogy to the exclusion of diverse bodies from the halls of the academy.

Following from these discussions and addressing institutional racism and whiteness in academia, Momin Rahman, considers how these dynamics are baked in. First, Momin discusses the dynamics of *institutional blackface*, the box ticking exercise of adopting equity policies, and a possible way to address these tokenistic policies. Second, he addresses the issue of whiteness and its propensity to be viewed as ‘neutral’, generating institutional racism in academia as ‘snowblindness’ that propels institutional blackface

and prevents recognition of ‘socially learned but unconscious biases’. Considering these discussions from the position of Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota, Jeremy Youde reflects on the material institutional constraints that tend to produce zero-sum thinking on diversification and how this kind of thinking ‘leads us down the wrong path and prevents us from genuinely engaging with systemic racism’. Notably, Jeremy reflects on his role within an academic institution, highlighting the importance of providing opportunities for conversations and change to happen through an *intentional* approach. Bringing the wide range of previous discussions together, Dibyesh Anand reflects on his experience moving through academic spaces as a queer Indian scholar in a leadership position within a British university. Writing of his personal experiences, Dibyesh concludes the forum by making an argument to move beyond radical theorising towards a radical politics and reminds us that radical and progressive changes often come through incremental steps.

## **International Experience of Institutional Racism as An Unlikely Asset for Canadian Universities**

### **Mary Caesar**

I grew up in South Africa under Late Apartheid more than 30 years after the governing National Party had formalised racial segregation with Apartheid laws. The deep structural violence exercised by the bureaucracy resulting in internalised racism was as heinous as the personal violence exercised by the police and the South African Defence Force (military). However, the structural violence was far more successful in establishing racial hierarchies with whiteness as the norm while simultaneously creating the Other: the coloured (mixed race), the African, the Indian. Officially, I was labelled coloured, a group of people who were also known as the ‘half-castes’, ‘middle minority’, the ‘buffer group’ and the ‘racially hybrid’. Such an identity of marginality was imbued with shame and had a unique position in relation to oppression and racialisation. My early experience of institutional racism informed and continues to inform the ways in which I navigate white spaces, including post-secondary institutions in Canada. I suggest that my specific experiences can contribute to the complex understanding of anti-black racism and more importantly, be mobilised to inform the institutional responses to anti-black racism and oppression. I limit this discussion to experiences of anti-black racism, omitting but in no way minimising the experiences of other racialised individuals and communities in Canada.

The news and images of Ahmaud Arbery’s death in February 2020 in Georgia, saddened me but did not jolt me into action. I had the same reaction when George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis and when Regis Korchinski-Paquet died in Toronto two days later. I mourned these deaths how one mourns an unnecessary death of a black person – predominantly men at the hands of the police – a political death. Following these events came protests calling for racial justice and then police violence in response, teargassing

peaceful protesters, on the streets of Portland, Oregon and in other cities across the USA.<sup>2</sup>

The renewed calls for racial justice in the USA, which spilled over into Canada, also called for a reckoning with institutional racism, including in my own institution, the Balsillie School of International Affairs at Wilfrid Laurier University. When I was invited in July to participate in an anti-black oppression and equity initiative, I spent hours analysing the invitation and my response to it, exploring my emotions and, most importantly, discussing my approach and strategy for the meeting. How much was I willing to share and what self-care strategies should I put in place for after the meeting? I was mindful of the fact that any response to Canadian institutions should be grounded in the particular manifestation of anti-black racism and forms of oppression in Canada. But, what did I know, having grown up in South Africa, about being black in Canada that could inform my understanding of equity and anti-racist policies and programmes of post-secondary institutions in Canada? There are black Canadians who are frustrated when the extent and manifestation of racism and anti-black oppression in the USA is used to dismiss or minimise those same practices in Canada.<sup>3</sup>

I came to Canada as a mature international graduate student having lived my life, until that point, as racialised, dehumanised and oppressed by the Apartheid regime. Although black Canadians and Indigenous people are no strangers to institutional and physical violence exercised on their bodies and their communities by various agencies of the Government of Canada,<sup>4</sup> I was also in no position to speak for or on behalf of black Canadians. These questions propelled me on a journey to ask more profound questions of myself and how black international students and faculty can contribute to identifying and addressing institutional racism. How did growing up under Late Apartheid affect my understanding and experience of racism at post-secondary institutions in Canada? How does my ongoing struggle to overcome internalised racism shape my experience? I suggest that my experience can contribute to understanding the complex nature of institutional racism and the collective efforts to achieve anti-racist institutions.

### *Living Under and With White Nationalism*

I grew up in South Africa and gained political consciousness during the 1980s, more than 30 years after the National Party had deeply extended racial segregation with apartheid

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2. Lilith Sinclair, 'Portland Protests Grow Despite Violent Crackdown from Militarized Federal Agents and Local Police,' *Democracy Now!* 21 July 2020. Available at: [https://www.democracynow.org/2020/7/21/portland\\_protests\\_federal\\_response](https://www.democracynow.org/2020/7/21/portland_protests_federal_response). Accessed August 15, 2020.

3. Desmond Cole, *The Skin We're In: A Year of Resistance and Power* (New York: Doubleday, 2020).

4. Kerry black, 'Tip of the Iceberg: The True State of Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations,' *The Conversation*, 3 May 2021. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/tip-of-the-iceberg-the-true-state-of-drinking-water-advisories-in-first-nations-156190>. Last accessed 31 August 31, 2021; Mary Jane Logan McCallum and Adele Perry, *Structures of Indifference: An Indigenous Life and Death in a Canadian City*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018).

laws. This included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949); the Population Registration Act (1950), which divided the population into race groups: white, coloured and African; and the Immorality (Amendment) Act (1950), which prohibited whites from having sex with people of colour to secure white security. In 1959, another critical milestone for segregation was the physical separation of racial groups. Ten newly created 'homelands' for black people, effectively new countries within the borders of South Africa, left 'the Republic of South Africa' as a country for white people only. black and coloured people who, as necessary labour, were permitted to remain in the Republic were moved to segregated neighbourhoods hence, *inter alia*, the establishment of the famous SOWETO outside Johannesburg and the forced removals of coloureds in Cape Town from District Six. By law, there was to be no racial mixing with the exception of the workplace.

Racial difference became central to notions of white superiority. The population register, established in 1950, formalised the colonial categories of race but also institutionalised a hierarchy. Whiteness was the norm sometimes established by way of personal violence but more often, and perhaps more successfully, by way of structural violence. A plethora of government departments, organised by race, served 'their own' people and one's racial classification determined the nature and extent of government services, or neglect.

coloureds were the ones most difficult to categorise. They were diverse in appearance; some could pass for white but many looked more African than white.<sup>5</sup> Residing predominantly in the Western Cape, these Cape people, half-castes, God's step-children, half-breeds, or the middle minority were simultaneously less of a threat than those with a darker skin colour (Africans) and a serious threat because of the potential for misclassification. While the colonial record shows some evidence of agency and class formation,<sup>6</sup> the coloured identity became imbued with shame and marginality, yearning for assimilation, and fear of losing a position of relative privilege during the consolidation of racial hierarchies under Apartheid. The totalising effect of structural racism is evident in the extent and success of internalised racism, when 'racist stereotypes, values, images, and ideologies perpetuated by the white dominant society about one's racial group [results in] feelings of self-doubt, disgust, and disrespect for one's race and/or oneself'.<sup>7</sup>

The first time I entered the predominantly white society was when I attended the University of Cape Town. In 1989, on the eve of democracy, black students constituted 24.7 percent of the student body.<sup>8</sup> At the time, I was one of only two students from our

5. George T. H. Ellison and Thea de Wet, 'The Classification of South Africa's Mixed-Heritage Peoples 1910-2011: A Century of Conflation, Contradiction, Containment, and Contention,' in *The Palgrave International Handbook of Mixed Racial and Ethnic Classification*, ed. Peter J. Aspinall and Zarine L. Rocha (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020).

6. Mohamed Adhikari, *Burdened by Race: coloured Identities in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2009).

7. E. J. R David, Tiera M. Schroeder and Jessica Anne Fernandez, 'Internalized Racism: A Systematic Review of the Psychological Literature on Racism's Most Insidious Consequences,' *Journal of Social Issues* 75, no. 4 (2019): 1060.

8. Shose Kesi and Josephine Cornell, 'Coming to UCT: black Students, Transformation and Discourse of Race,' *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* 3, no. 2 (2015): 1-16.

cohort who had attended high school in a coloured neighbourhood. When a student advisor, and I use that phrase loosely here, suggested that I complete a general Bachelor of Social Science degree before enrolling into the law programme, I did not question her. In fact, she was completing the form for me in my presence and sending me on my way. At one of the liberal bastions of South African post-secondary education, it was unthinkable that, as an incoming coloured student, I had the ability to decide my own career path. I thought I had social anxiety when I struggled to find my voice in tutorials, avoided making eye-contact with instructors, sat quietly in the back row, and avoided joining clubs. For the first time in my life I entered a predominantly white space and all I could do was, as articulated by Rosalind Hampton, minimise my racial difference: be less coloured, less visible and at the same time, try to assimilate.

### *Learning from the Racialised Other*

Approximately 10 years after the introduction of democracy in South Africa I came to Canada. At home, we had built the foundations of Mandela's Rainbow Nation, a symbolic erasure of racial difference. At Queen's University in Kingston, I was an international graduate student, a parent of a toddler, and lived in a town where I experienced public civility and institutions that worked without my nudging. The childcare support, student services, and academic support were all available as soon as I asked, and sometimes the support was offered even before I asked. Students and administrators were respectful and friendly. As an instructor, I worked in classrooms where the majority of students were white, and if there were students of colour, they were predominantly Canadians. I positioned myself in relation to all these people as African, sometimes South African, not coloured or black. In spite of this insular life, racism on the Queen's campus was always present and the institution tried to find its way through it with no less than four official inquiries into racism between 1991 and 2011.<sup>9</sup> The events that led to these inquiries were prompted by racist incidents committed by students. The Wilfrid Laurier University campus was also not immune to racist attacks. These overt expressions of racism are, in my experience, not as debilitating as those practiced via the ordinary business of the university, both in terms of its procedures and by its implementers (staff and faculty). And, according to the evidence in 'Being Raced',<sup>10</sup> racialised students in Canada are facing similar challenges I encountered in South Africa about two decades ago.

The explosion of racial violence in the USA during the summer of 2020 and the invitation to join an institutional conversation inspired me to reflect on what Canadian institutions can learn from International students and faculty of colour with lived experience of extreme institutional racism. Firstly, universities can benefit from actively recruiting students with this experience to serve on anti-racist and anti-oppression committees at all

9. Anisa Rawhani, 'Racism Alive but Subtle at Queen's. black Students Report Experiences of Microaggression and an Alienating Student Culture,' *The Queen's Journal*. 27 February 2015. <https://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2015-02-27/features/racism-alive-subtle-queens/>. Accessed on August 16, 2020.

10. Paige Grant et al., 'Being Raced,' Research Study. Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DN30DjK4utKGAFuL392r-Rr7Ah9hV0Pq/view>. Accessed July 20, 2020.



levels of its administrative levels, including University Councils. These students and faculty members bring a wealth of understanding about how racism operates and more importantly, the effects of overt and subtle racist practices. Their voices, together with Canadian voices, especially People of Colour expose the myth of the hegemonic black experience.<sup>11</sup> At the intersection of race and migrant status, too often the migrant status of International students is prioritised over their racial and/or gender identities resulting in a missed opportunity for the university. Secondly, as a mature black international student, I also bring with me transferable skills to fight racism and build anti-racist communities and institutions. Together with black Canadians, we have the potential to assemble a range of skills and best practices to reach multiple stakeholders across the university.

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## Scars and Scabs: Being a Black Immigrant in the British Academy

**Toni Haastrup**

A short while ago, I was once again reminded that in the UK, there are approximately 155 black full professors out of approximately 21,000. Of those about 36 are women. Across the approximately 2,123,525 academic staff in the UK in the 2019-2020 academic year only 2 percent of them are black women.<sup>12</sup> As one of the 2 percent, I might as well be bigfoot in what always feels like a wilderness of whiteness.<sup>13</sup> And this is the context for that constant uneasy feeling at the pit of my stomach, that is so entrenched I forget it is actually painful.

### *Precarity in Its Many Guises*

Growing up in a majority black country; in fact, in the Giant of Africa<sup>14</sup>, I was brought up to be black and proud. I never questioned race. I don't think I really understood race as a construct; as a technology 'for the management of human difference, the main goal of which is the production, reproduction, and maintenance of white supremacy on both a local and a planetary scale',<sup>15</sup> until I left Nigeria. That is to say, I was cloistered, not that it did not exist and manifest in a variety of ways in Nigeria. At 16, I became a *privileged*

11. Rosalind Hampton, *Black Racialization and Resistance at an Elite University* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

12. HESA, Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK 2019/20. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/19-01-2021/sb259-higher-education-staff-statistics>. Accessed February 5, 2021.

13. George Yancy, 'Introduction: Fragments of a Social Ontology of Whiteness,' in *What White Looks Like: African-American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question*, ed. G. Yancy (London: Routledge, 2004).

14. Nigeria is commonly regarded as the giant of Africa.

15. Alana Lentin, *Why Race Still Matters* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

immigrant – leaving home was my choice. First in the United States (US), then South Africa and then the United Kingdom (UK). This appears a secure trajectory for an international academic.

As a black, immigrant woman I've always had to think about security and precarity differently. Until relatively recently my job was dependent on my reliance on a violent carceral racist immigration system<sup>16</sup>. This system also determined my minimum worth even as it denied me full participation in academic liege. I could join the union but striking threatened my status; I could earn a comfortable salary, but I also had to pay the exorbitant visa and immigration fees. Meanwhile, the University happily enforces this system through endless monitoring. And I am forced to complicity every time Human Resources asks to see my passport. On the surface, and despite the statistics, I am one of the lucky ones; having escaped the brutality of endless casualisation in UK academia. And there are a few of us like this. However, this masks the reality of black and/or immigrant academic life, which is at once lonely, and yes, communal keenly felt, in different ways perhaps, by those of us who are minoritised by the academy. In a way we are the perpetually precarious.<sup>17</sup>

### *Can We Get Ahead, Already?*

'It's defensive. . .'

That's the feedback I remember from my second attempt at promotion to senior lecturer. The first time, my application made it to the relevant University committee before they sent it out to three white men – referees I did not choose. When the three reports come back – one was good; one was too short, and the last, the committee did not like its *tone*. While all the referees recommended that I be promoted, the committee just could not get over the tone. . . I imagine there's a whole book to be written about the tone used for people like me. My Dean and Head consoled and assured me I was good to try again the next year on the strength of my portfolio. It was still shit. It still feels shit. But rejection is a part of the academic journey we are told and that is how I rationalised this to myself. Sure, there had been people, white colleagues, with less or same levels of publications, service and teaching experience than me who went through no problem, but there was always next year. . .

Round 2. One year later: 'It's defensive. . .but understandable because of what happened last year.'

I was now the youngest and first black editor in chief of a top ranked journal. I had more publications than the previous year: I had given more talks and received more invitations than ever, I held important (at least useful) leadership and administrative roles in my School. My external funding was tiny, but this was not a criterion for this level. And going by emails and formal evaluation, I was a good teacher and I got on well with colleagues. My immediate colleagues, though, felt it might not be a good

16. I became a British citizen only two years ago, the prize for compliance. But I still get asked by the border guard how I became a citizen whenever I have not used the electronic gates.

17. Sean Hill II, 'Precarity in the Era of #blackLivesMatter,' *Women's Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 3/4 (2017): 94-109.

idea to reapply. I asked why – ‘because it’d be like telling them [University] they got it wrong last time.’ They did get it wrong, but I didn’t have the School’s support this time. Following an alternative application for a salary increment to the Faculty promotions committee, the School representative on the faculty committee, told me in excited/proud tones that the Faculty committee had been very annoyed that the application had merely been for increment rather than promotion, but not to worry, I just have to keep trying. I got my increment.

Round 3. One Year Later, Success? I was at the annual British International Studies Association Conference when I got the news that I had been promoted. It was all the more significant because I was with my feminist colleagues and friends. It had finally happened and in my safe and joyful place. In addition to this happy result, I was also offered the opportunity speak with the Dean about next steps – my five-year plan of sorts. I made that appointment even though I was leaving the institution. The Dean too was surprised that I still took this opportunity as I officially resigned before my appointment. This was my chance at closure. I went into that meeting, not to talk of the next five years but to draw the line under the last five. In this meeting, one of the things that happens is I am shown the very brief notes from the University committee’s deliberation, and I was keen to understand what I had done better.

The only thing I remember from that sheet is the word ‘borderline’. After 3 years of working myself to meet and exceed the criteria, getting feedback and mentors, finally getting put forward by my School with no reservations and flying through the Faculty process, there was enough of a debate at the University committee that the secretary minuted my application as *borderline*, which was sent to referees anyway because it had been sent out once before. Ironically, at least one of the referees used from 3 years prior – the one whose letter then had been too short was required to write another reference. When the Dean asked me if I wouldn’t reconsider staying, he was taken aback when I said I could never be happy there.

I left there, but it will happen again here. Someone new will judge that I am borderline – it is the same system after all. It is as my friend, another black woman academic, said to me: as a black scholar, it is not enough to be good or excellent, black scholars must also be black Unicorns, and double so when you’re a woman. We must attain unicorn status to be hired, to be retained, to be promoted. So yes, it will happen again because I’ll forget that I can’t just be excellent.

**‘Every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets’ – W. Edwards Deming (origins disputed)**

To anyone who’s been paying attention, two things are observable: first, that representation matters. And every October in the UK for black History month even the University sector reminds us of this fact elaborating on the attainment gap and that only 0.7 percent of University academics are black. Second, that despite the wealth of evidence, there is absolutely no commitment to systemic change. At the heart of the UK’s very obvious lack of ethnic minority representation, is the thread of structural racism that runs through our institutions of higher education. This is not unique to the UK in the least, but there is something unique about the

British system. When I started my PhD, I was part of a School whose Centre for African Studies had no black academic staff, despite the graduating black students.<sup>18</sup>

This system built on whiteness is doing its job perfectly by keeping people like me out. For many black academics it is not overt acts of racist violence that gets us, it's the slow polite ones – the micro-aggressions couched in neutral professionalism that says our work and presence is borderline.<sup>19</sup> Just a couple of months ago, we were asked to take a survey about the impacts of COVID, and race and ethnicity were required without the 'prefer not to say' option. When I raised this as identifying thus nullifying the intended anonymity promised, I was simply told the authors of this badly designed survey will keep it safe – this was not the point and I know they know. What is the motivation for being honest then? It feels like almost every day, something is revealed to suggest we don't belong. It is no wonder that for the most part, we just want to keep our heads down and get the job done. To not do so gets us labelled as troublesome, rather than passionate. This is the context that sees many black and ethnic minority PhD holders leaving the academy.

### Concluding Thoughts

When I remember the well-meaning (white) colleague who wanted me to go back to real research on EU-Africa Relations (not 'the gender stuff') I remember again why the 'tone' of my reference letter indicated non-promotion or maybe why I was borderline. In those moments, staying feels very much like a too steep hill to keep climbing via an invisible hamster wheel.

But then I remember why this is important to me. My responsibility is not just to myself. I especially think it is important that students, early career colleagues, and particularly students of colour see that we too are here. This (in)visibility of black and ethnic minority academics informs the fabric of what is a modern higher education sector in the same way that even when they write us out of society we are still there. Supporting students to create spaces where black students especially can express themselves fully – intellectually and culturally – without being disciplined by Eurocentrism; and discussing the values of intersectionality in my teaching refocuses the trauma that often manifests itself physically.

Survival, for me has been contingent on specific types, feminist friendships with an understanding of the precarity of racialised others in an academic space that is increasingly under attack. This informal support is necessary because, while recent innovations like the Race Equality Charter Kitemark are intended to support institutions to 'identify and self-reflect on institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students', they are no remedy. They too remain invested in the reproduction of the hierarchies that are fundamental in the racial inequalities that persist. By finding

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18. This has changed significantly, which gives me significant hope that change is possible, albeit change which is contrary to the grain of UK academia.

19. Azezat Johnson and Remi Joseph-Salisbury, "'Are You Supposed to Be in Here?'" Racial Microaggressions and Knowledge Production in Higher Education,' in *Dismantling Race in Higher Education*, ed. J. Arday and M. Heidi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2018).

remedies in these feminist friendships, not only do I have the outlet for my frustrations, but it reminds me of my ethical commitments to challenge what is normal in this context for my students, for my colleagues and for the future of British academia.

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## The Irony of Systemic Racism in the Global South Academy: How ‘Othering’ Perpetuates the Western Colonisation of Knowledge

### Nassef Manabilang Adiong

There seems to be an emerging awareness of systemic racism, the political economy of knowledge production and recognition, academic dependency, and professional discrimination between the Global North and the Global South IR academics, but it is unheard of and uncommon to talk about these issues lingering within the Global South, in general, and the Philippines, in particular. In comparing the global north-south academic spaces, Southern intellectuals wonder how come their geography possesses rich data with comprehensive homegrown concepts and yet foreign (Western) theories are predominantly used, preferred, and taught at their academic institutions. How come most research institutions, academic IR journals, and book publishers based in the UK, US, and Western Europe are regarded as having top quality and are ranked higher than their counterparts based in Asia, Africa, and Latin America? Are there ways to decolonise IR knowledge and eliminate academic dependency towards Euro-American colonial structures and paradigms by authorities in higher educational institutions and state’s educational agencies in the global south? These are some of the questions and pressing concerns whenever I think of the disparity of IR knowledge production between the global north and global south hemispheres. It reminds me of Dabashi’s work – *Can Non-Europeans Think?*<sup>20</sup> that questions coloniality in theoretical musings on current affairs and laments whether Westerners can read and aptly appreciate IR knowledge originating from the oriental world.

Relatedly, my interdisciplinary and conceptual research on ‘Islam and International Relations’ brought me to a spectrum of achievements, failures, and risks in terms of conceptual engagement with the possibilities and need for ‘southern’ theory (in this case, an Islamic theory). Reintroducing the importance of interdisciplinary and theoretical research between Islam and IR to both *ulama* (Muslim scholars) and IR scholars gave me a sense and feeling of fulfilment. My works at the *International Relations and Islamic Studies Research Cohort* (Co-IRIS) were truly inspired by the following ground-breaking contributions of Majid Khadduri,<sup>21</sup> J. Harris Proctor,<sup>22</sup> AbdulHamid

20. Hamid Dabashi, *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (London: Zed Books, 2015).

21. Majid Khadduri, ‘Islam and the Modern Law of Nations,’ *American Journal of Law* 50, no. 2 (1956); Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

22. J. Harris Proctor, *Islam and International Relations* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

A. AbuSulayman,<sup>23</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu,<sup>24</sup> Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul,<sup>25</sup> John Turner,<sup>26</sup> Faiz Sheikh,<sup>27</sup> and Mustapha Kamal Pasha.<sup>28</sup> Co-IRIS aims to include Islamic scholarship in the academic world of IR; however, since its inception in 2012 the cohort has struggled and faced hurdles and marginalisation in mainstream Western IR. These hurdles extended to me at a personal level through the wanton devaluation of any serious engagement with Islamic frameworks; illustrating Eurocentrism in knowledge authority within IR that also reflected a more general social Islamophobia in the everyday experiences of the academy and to some extent, the wider society as well. I vividly remember that I had a difficult time entering the US for the 2017 International Studies Association (ISA) convention in Baltimore. I came from Manila to Baltimore via Tokyo and Detroit, and I was about to board my flight for the Tokyo-Detroit leg when I was taken from the line and questioned by a US official about my home address in Manila, my family, my background, and the foreign countries I had visited.<sup>29</sup>

I thought that after that humiliating situation, I would not have any difficulty at the port of entry in Detroit – but I was totally wrong. In the airport, I was asked by a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officer what my research was all about. I answered, ‘interdisciplinary research between Islam and IR.’ After hearing that keyword, *Islam*, I was immediately taken out from the line, escorted and brought into a confinement room, where I had to take out all my electronic gadgets (cellphone, power bank, and laptop). Against my will, freedom, and not knowing what violation I committed, I was brought into a room for secondary screening and questioned for two hours by two Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers whose questions kept circling around issues of Islam, violent extremism, and terrorism. Fortunately, they decided to release me about five minutes before my connecting flight to Baltimore was about to leave. I asked why I was subjected to a secondary inspection – an additional assessment on foreign national’s admissibility – and the CBP officers responded surprisingly that ‘it was just a random check.’ After that horrendous experience, I had doubts and uncertainties about going back to the US again despite my primary travel purpose so far being to participate in the annual ISA conventions or for research fellowships. Adding to this injury, a few weeks following the Baltimore convention, I received an email from ISA headquarters inviting me to be part of its Committee on the Status of Diversity and Representation.

23. Abdul Hamid A. AbuSulayman, *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations* (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1993).

24. Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Alternative Paradigms* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1993).

25. Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul, ‘Theory of International Relations in Islam,’ *Digest of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007).

26. John Turner, ‘Islam as a Theory of International Relations?’ *E-IR*, 3 August 2009. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2009/08/03/islam-as-a-theory-of-international-relations/>. Last accessed September 20, 2021.

27. Faiz Sheikh, *Islam and International Relations* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

28. Mustapha Kamal Pasha, *Islam and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

29. Elizabeth Redden, ‘Some of Our Friends Couldn’t Make It: International Relations Scholars Meet in the Shadow of Trump’s Presidency and His Temporarily Halted Travel Ban,’ *Inside Higher Ed.*, 27 February 2017. Available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/27/international-relations-scholars-meet-against-backdrop-trumps-presidency-and-travel>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

My experience with the US immigration officers was nothing compared to the day-to-day professional struggles and the sense of self-worthlessness from the traditional trappings of academic culture in the Philippines. It all started with my aspiration of creating an International Studies (IS) body that would represent the diversity of IS scholars nationwide. In 2015, I wrote an open letter and sent emails to almost all faculty members in various IS and Political Science departments across the country. The letter called for the establishment of a national organisation dedicated to the promotion of International Relations as a field of study in the Philippines, as well as interdisciplinary exchange of research and knowledge through workshops, conferences and collaborative publication projects aimed at furthering understanding about the concept and idea of the ‘international’.

Most of the early career academics with backgrounds in humanities and social sciences responded to the call and became part of the core group as Trustees and Steering Committee members of the Philippine International Studies Organization (PHISO). For the past five years, PHISO has organised four international conferences and workshops, one flagship book series with Routledge (the International Relations in Southeast Asia series), one edited volume published by Routledge (the International Studies in the Philippines: Mapping New Frontiers in Theory and Practice), solely designed the creation of the BA International Studies programme in a state university, collaboratively designing the first PhD International Studies programme in the country with a private academic institution, edited a forthcoming national textbook, preparing to write a handbook (the Philippine Reader in International Relations), became the country partner of the TRIP Faculty Survey, became a member of ISA, WISC, IPSA, AASSREC, etc., and jointly created the Decolonial Studies Research Network (DSRN) in 2020.

Because of my initiatives in PHISO and in DSRN, including: promoting a decolonial research agenda in the field of International Relations, I have experienced hate, ostracisation, and gatekeeping by the old guards and stalwarts of Western paradigms in IR theory, methods, and praxes. They argued that I should have informed them or sought their consent before creating PHISO, seemingly forgetting that I did reach out in the very beginning and yet they ignored my emails. And now, after organising and establishing PHISO, they belittle the organisation by regarding it as an ‘indie’ – meaning, PHISO is not housed in these three big universities (University of the Philippines Diliman, De La Salle University–Manila, and Ateneo de Manila University) which is usually the case for an academic association being affiliated with a certain college or department based in those Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs).

Elitism and hierarchy in professional academic organisations dominated by membership and authority from these big triumvirate universities are quite the acceptable contemporary norm. The extent of white/Western knowledge systems is tremendously pervasive and entrenched in the entire educational system nationwide, thus, its effects extend to the creation, management, and recognition of professional associations. Any serious efforts in establishing academic groups by the young generation of scholars, especially by those who understood the importance of homegrown, indigenous, and decolonial knowledge systems, are seen to be abnormal, bizarre, or aberrantly deviant. Consequently, academic associations created outside the influence of the triumvirate universities – particularly those located in Northern Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao or by those ‘lesser’ universities – are considered a nuisance and insignificant.

There are even disappointing situations where activities held in far flung places by established associations are considered only to be an ‘outreach program’ aimed at assisting perceived disadvantageous academics and not to be seen on an equal footing in terms of intellect, academic pedigree and status. The word ‘prestige’ is exclusively owned by people affiliated to these established associations of triumvirate universities. This exclusivist mental framing is what PHISO desires to break: to bring down the walls of divisive academic turf, parochialism and paternalism. PHISO aims to nurture a collegial environment that fosters cooperation and research collaborations among IR scholars, practitioners, teachers, and students that are based in any parts of the country. However, long-held traditional infrastructures set by gatekeepers are certain obstacles difficult to demolish.

The problem is such that new generations of scholars have to circumvent to Western knowledge system-based infrastructures established by gatekeepers, not only in establishing groups, joining associations, and networking but also to learn how to navigate job applications, the hiring process, tenure system, promotions and up to crafting academic policies, designing curriculum, and amplifying the use of Western canons in learning materials. Publications can only be recognised in academic promotions if for instance the article is published in a Scopus or ISI-indexed journal or if a book is published in a reputable Western academic press. This publication rubric defined by the political economy of Western knowledge systems and blindly followed by university administrators and educational state agents is so pertinent to hiring, tenure, and promotion. Unfortunately, the young generation of scholars are indeed imprisoned and slaved to this current system.

An archipelagic Philippines where power and influence is centrally situated in the metropolis, Manila City or to some extent the National Capital Region, seems to be the perpetuating colonial tradition in all aspects of Filipino lives. In other words, Euro-American-centrism is the civilisational standard of living, particularly in the academy.

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## **Racialising the 'Field': Global South as 'Case Study'**

**Swati Parashar**

### *Who Gets to Define the Disciplinary Field?*

In this short essay I reflect on fieldwork practices and the politics of expertise that not only thrive on the labour of the racialised ‘other’ as research subjects, assistants and brokers, but also treat locations in the ‘Global South’ as case study sites on which Western and Eurocentric theories are applied. This hierarchy of ‘theory’ and ‘case study’ has resulted in an unequal and exploitative academic fieldwork industry, where Global South sites (mediated through understandings of statehood and nation-states) remain permanently suspended in a state of conflict; the spatial ‘other’ lagging behind on development indicators, and therefore, in need of rescuing and being made intelligible through frameworks and practices emanating from Global North scholarship alone. It is important to recognise that these hierarchies are also endorsed and maintained by privileged Global South scholars in those locations or in Western institutions, but that discussion requires another reflection forum.



Despite recent debates on race and racism, the discipline of IR remains steadfastly Eurocentric and white, creating genealogies and canons that hardly reflect the richness of the work produced in different contexts.<sup>30</sup> It affects academics of colour, particularly those located in the Global South, as they try to find home in a discipline that is largely foreign in its orientation and scholarship. This was demonstrated at a panel on gender rights at the International Studies Association's annual convention, that I was chairing a few years ago. An Indian scholar presented a well-researched, empirically grounded paper on marital rape, laws, and gender justice in India. Quite curiously, she had omitted to cite any Indian scholar in her paper, which otherwise had referenced the usual canon of Western feminist scholars. Her response to this curious omission will always resonate with me, as she said that she was not aware of 'Indian' scholars doing 'feminist IR'. It was not enough that feminist scholars in India have studied the institution of marriage and sexual violence in the Indian political and social context for a very long time. Citing every possible European or American feminist, but none from India, South Asia or any other non-Western country, was the young scholar's way of building a career in what she saw was the field of 'feminist IR'. If the path to a career in feminist IR is so white-dominated, one can imagine the racialised gatekeeping in other branches of IR. Feminist scholars have written about self-reflexivity and dismantling White Privilege, but much needs to be done to challenge the whiteness that has become so entrenched in academic events, publication avenues and citation politics.<sup>31</sup>

### *Methodological 'Field' Work*

Feminist and post/decolonial scholarship, in particular, have paid attention to people's lived experiences, rescuing the discipline from its many abstractions. They have focused on how knowledge is produced and disseminated, the ethical concerns during and after field research, and the representations of Global South, and non-mainstream systems of knowledge. Arguably, a major development in IR, in the last couple of decades has been the proliferation of fieldwork supported research that has enhanced the mobility of scholars and scholarship on the one hand, but has also created the burgeoning 'expertise' industry on the other. One could argue that the field has democratised through significant methodological interventions and access to people and places beyond the policy chambers, governance structures and other measures of 'high politics'. There is increasing attention to the idea of everyday life (low politics) as the determinant of international relations, security relationships and domestic politics. People have populated the discipline's core concepts such as war, security, sovereignty, peace, human rights and even the state. Studying people and their lived experiences has taken precedence and undertaking people centric research projects in locations outside the Global North, has become the norm. However, this has unleashed a vicarious expert industry, thriving on the

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30. Maria Eriksson Baaz and Swati Parashar, 'The Master's "Outlook Shall Never Dismantle the Master's House": Interventions on Race and Racism,' *International Politics Review*, (2021).

31. Caroline Faria and Sharlene Mollett, 'Critical Feminist Reflexivity and the Politics of Whiteness in the "field"', *Gender, Place & Culture* 23, no. 1 (2016).

intellectual labour of people of colour but the bounties of which are only available to white scholars with access to resources, funding and publications.<sup>32</sup>

### *The 'Expert' Industry*

In almost a decade of working in academia in different Global North institutions in the UK, Ireland, Australia and Sweden, I have observed how 'expertise' on Asia, Africa, Latin America is commonly attributed to and claimed by white scholars. That expertise is not only about having undertaken some kind of field visit in these locations to study the people and politics, but also includes claims about intimate and authoritative knowledge about those sites. Some key indicators of this 'expertise', easily determined by western location and white privilege are highlighted below:

- A short visit suffices to claim expert knowledge and insights. Even touristy travels can produce regional and local expertise in some cases. This expertise gets wider attention and legitimacy through media appearances and write-ups.
- Research funding and resources are mostly controlled by Global North institutions, and sites of expertise, case study locations can change if lucrative areas of funding emerge. If funding bodies divert research funds to Africa from Asia, overnight expertise shifts to a new region or country which the scholar is yet to travel to. Even tacit support by a white group translates into an unfair advantage for funding applicants against those who are from non-white contexts.
- You may not be trained in the subject matter, but you become the sought-after expert on that subject and more. A white Hindi or Bengali linguist, for example, becomes a commentator for India's domestic and foreign policy aspects which have very little to do with knowing these languages.
- White Privilege implies that your analysis is considered more credible and legitimate as against a body of work produced by a local expert or agency that may be intellectually more rigorous and representative of the local conditions and voices. Even on subject matters that require local skills and lived experiences, an intellectual assessment from a white Western expert is treated as authoritative even if it does not speak to the empirical evidence.
- The 'case study' is formulated through methodological insights from participant observations, field archives, focus groups and interviews, but the entire empirical study becomes a case of knowledge predetermined through Western frameworks and theories.

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32. Oscar Abedi Dunia et al., 'The Covid-19 Opportunity: Creating More Ethical and Sustainable Research Practices,' *SSRC*, 18 June 2020. Available at: <https://items.ssrc.org/covid-19-and-the-social-sciences/social-research-and-insecurity/the-covid-19-opportunity-creating-more-ethical-and-sustainable-research-practices/>. Last accessed February 24, 2021; Oscar Abedi Dunia et al., 'Moving Out of the Backstage: How Can We Decolonize Research?,' *The Disorder of Things*, 22 October 2020. Available at: <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2019/10/22/moving-out-of-the-backstage-how-can-we-decolonize-research/>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

- Most significantly, the process of data gathering and doing field work in the Global South can reveal how racialised identities and hierarchies are imposed and how biases work. It is important to highlight that ‘whiteness’ in the field is not always about white bodies but how researchers and the researched perceive each other and construct a knowledge space where legitimacy and authority are constantly negotiated.

### *Racialised Hierarchies In and Beyond the ‘Field’*

Research ethics clearances have become mandatory for field sites in the Global South and claims of doing ethical, self-reflexive research have acquired a cacophonous quality within critical IR spaces. However, all is not well with this picture. Coloniality continues to determine the direction of research, choice of subject areas and nature of fieldwork, heavily influenced by racialised ideas. This does not only refer to the power and prestige enjoyed by white western researchers in the field, it also means that native researchers based at foreign, Western, institutions, or those with foreign, Western, degrees, associations or networks are valued more. The ‘fieldwork’ experience can also vary for different types of non-white Western researchers, such as natives<sup>33</sup> or ‘halfies’ who navigate different geographical and cultural spaces.<sup>34</sup> I recall a conversation with an African colleague from the UK, whose white student was treated with more deference in the field, which was her (African colleague’s) native country in the first place. I have elsewhere documented the outsider-insider dilemmas of Global South researchers working in institutions of the Global North, researching their own native societies or parts of Global South.<sup>35</sup> How we treat field sites, research subjects, and local research assistants or brokers who help us navigate the ‘field’, and how knowledge claims are made, remain critical questions in the racialised world order that the discipline endorses.

- The language of field work is mired in colonial logics and practices. White researchers are known to turn their research into saving missions, often treating their research subjects as backward, poor and violent. One such incident etched in my own field work memories is of a white researcher from the UK, researching on the Naxalite/Maoist conflict in Jharkhand, India. As we saw him off at the airport, from where he was flying back to Delhi and onwards to London, his parting words were, ‘Now I return to civilisation!’<sup>36</sup>
- Research subjects, research assistants and brokers are invisibilised, diminished and erased, or figure in acknowledgements or footnotes of academic research

33. Lila Abu-Lughod, ‘Fieldwork of a Dutiful Daughter,’ In *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, ed. S. Altorki and C. F. El-Solh, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988).

34. Binaya Subedi, ‘Theorizing a ‘Halfie’ Researcher’s Identity in Transnational Fieldwork,’ *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19, no. 5 (2006).

35. Swati Parashar, ‘Research Brokers, Researcher Identities and Affective Performances: The Insider/Outsider Conundrum,’ *Civil Wars* 21, no. 2 (2019).

36. Ibid.

outputs and publications. The entire experience of field research is based on local collaborations, but it can hardly be grasped from the publication credits and authorship attributed only to the western researcher.<sup>37</sup>

- Underpayment of local collaborators, and exploitative contracts with research brokers have been widely reported. Colonial power relations mean that local collaborators, instead of providing access to evidence reflective of reality, insert biases to reinforce pre-existing ideas and White Privilege. The counter narratives are silenced due to the fear of losing foreign funding.<sup>38</sup>
- Credit taking, citation politics, and publishing access are heavily influenced by racialised thinking and gatekeeping. It is well known that Global South researchers are cited less, more so if they are not part of Global North research networks. Citation politics becomes critical in most journal spaces for example. If the known 'canon' is not cited, the chances of the article being rejected are high during peer reviews. I have personally witnessed this as also documenting here, experiences of other scholars shared in informal settings. Most publishing avenues are controlled by western researchers and there are ample examples of unethical practices and undue credit taking, where collaborators from the Global South are reduced to footnotes, if not completely erased.

### *The Road Ahead*

Credible research in the social sciences is about evidence that can generate informed debates. This 'evidence' is not just fact selection based on biases but an acknowledgment of multiple voices and the unpacking of silences. Our research training should prepare us to deal with both: the biased, one-sided data collected during field work and the racialised absences, silences and erasures. Instead we continue to perpetuate Western theoretical paradigms and knowledge systems through these skewed research practices that reduce Global South sites and people to passive research subjects, obsequious research brokers and permanent case studies. These 'case studies' are actually repositories of traditions, experiences and knowledges, that are invaluable in the interpretation of global politics and international relations.

Forums such as these, are an opportunity to recognise that we as students and scholars of IR are complicit in the production of hierarchies and power relations in our research and field work practices. Moreover, there is an urgent need to engage with the ethical and affective impact of the knowledge production process. In a world increasingly getting comfortable with anti-intellectualism, 'post' truths, cancel culture and unverified facts, greater transparency can invite more conversations, analogical thinking and reflection. Abandoning the language of 'expertise' and adopting practices of genuinely collabora-

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37. Maria Eriksson Baaz and Mats Utas, 'Exploring the Backstage: Methodological and Ethical Issues Surrounding the Role of Research Brokers in Insecure Zones,' *Civil Wars* 21, no. 2 (2019).

38. Abedi Dunia et al. 'The Covid-19 Opportunity'; Abedi Dunia et al. 'Moving Out of the Backstage'.

tive and fair research, requires urgent attention and long-term commitment from academics both from the Global North and South.<sup>39</sup>

We need a decolonial fieldwork methodology that draws inspiration from, among others, turning our minds ‘downside-up’, an attempt made by the editors of *Himal*, a popular South Asian magazine to focus on ‘people’ rather than on established nation state geographies in a region with shared histories and experiences. A great illustration of this point was a story narrated by postcolonial scholar and thinker Ashis Nandy at a conference organised by the Institute of Post-Colonial Studies in Melbourne in 2014, about Khan Abdul Wali Khan, son of non-violent Pashtun freedom fighter, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Wali Khan was questioned by a journalist in 1972 about his loyalty and allegiance to Pakistan, to which his reply was, ‘I have been a Pashtun for six thousand years, a Muslim for thirteen hundred years, and a Pakistani for twenty-five.’ Nation states and national passports are not the sum total of identities, modes of being in many parts of the world. Any approach that recentres people can help us reclaim those histories and narratives that have been subsumed by the posturing of nation-states as symbols of modernity, human progress and only legitimate sites of knowledge.

At the very least, this would mean doing away with the theory, case study model, and recognising that all phenomena in the Global South have their own theoretical foundations and explanatory potentials rooted in alternative and sophisticated empirical knowledge systems. Moreover, it would also mean recognising the complex challenges of fieldwork in Global South sites and learning and unlearning from available reflections.

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## The Canon as Exclusion: Challenging Epistemic Privilege

### Andrew Delatolla

As scholars we are trained to inquire about the world around us, yet very few of us have been taught to, or are able to, question and challenge the methodological and intellectual foundations that drive our inquiry. Doing so tends to lead to uncomfortable truths regarding the historical and scholarly foundations of our discipline(s), including the concepts, frameworks, and theories mobilised to make sense of the world around us. While we may not view the ‘canon’<sup>40</sup> – or what is often assumed to be ‘universal’ methodologies and ‘neutral’ intellectual foundations – as epistemic, they are emergent from specific historic positionalities that are often white, straight, cis-gendered, and male.

The positionality and orientation of the ‘canon’ and its methodologies in International Relations/Studies (IR) are inflected with whiteness, masculinity, and heterosexuality under a shroud of assumed universality and neutrality that is required for proficiency in

39. Abedi Dunia et al., ‘Moving Out of the Backstage’.

40. ‘Canon’ is an accepted group or body of scholarship that is perceived as foundational or basic to a discipline.

the disciplines of Politics and IR. Here, non-Western, feminist, and queer traditions are marked as *other*, excluded from the ‘canon’, and positioned to be read in the final weeks of a course, specialist classes, or consumed by students with specialist interests. As peripheral, and not ‘universal’ or ‘neutral’, the knowledge that emerges from these ‘other’ systems are considered subordinate. Although this may not seem like an immediate problem, it produces, as Ramón Grosfoguel argues, Epistemic Privilege. This is a privilege that is historically produced in expanding systems of Western imperialism from the 16th century onwards, dominating racialised and gendered bodies and knowledge systems; resulting in the white Western man being ‘the only one left as epistemically superior’.<sup>41</sup> This epistemic superiority is evident on the pages of syllabi, in leading academic journals, as well as the halls of the academic institutions.

But what happens when these intellectual foundations and this epistemic privilege, or superiority are put into question and critiqued? At the best of times, it can be alienating and in its worst manifestations it becomes a matter of ego. With regards to the latter, when challenged and critiqued, those who rely on knowledge that has been developed from positions of privilege can quickly descend into defensive positions. The reactionary defensive positions are, arguably, underpinned by a fear of foundational assumptions being challenged and a fear of learning a new way of thinking.

When the very concepts and frameworks that help us make sense of the world become the target of critique for having reproduced patriarchal, colonial, and/or white privileged positions, it can feel like years or a lifetime of work and dedication have been shattered. Although these challenges and critiques can bring (much needed) reinvigorated debate to the discipline of IR, there is little sense of pause and reflection. Instead, these challenges and critiques have often generated blowback that targets, not only the critical interventions, but the individuals engaged in the critique. By slipping into protective and defensive positions, rather than pausing and reflecting before engaging in discussion, we fail to see the forest for the trees and can mobilise arguments and positions that are *implicitly* racist, misogynist, homophobic, and transphobic. Here, the immediate instinct to defend scholarship that has been critiqued for reproducing patriarchal, colonial, and/or white privileged positions, not only lends itself to re-engaging with implicit racism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia, but can also create practices of exclusion, and provide space for others to engage in *explicit* racism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia. All of which function together to reassert the traditional and ‘universal’ epistemic positions that were initially critiqued.

A recent of example of these dynamics playing out – and quite publicly – include the Securitisation Theory (ST) debate on Twitter/social media that centred on Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit’s 2019 *Security Dialogue* article.<sup>42</sup> The reaction to Howell and Richter-Montpetit’s critique of ST was immediately defensive, with a 90 page ‘long reply’ that closely associated ST with its founding scholars. While the critique of ST

41. Ramón Grosfoguel, ‘The Structure of Knowledge in Western Universities,’ *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 9, no. 1 (2013): 86.

42. Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, ‘Is Securitization Theory Racist? Civilizationism, Methodological Whiteness, and Antiblack Thought in the Copenhagen School,’ *Security Dialogue* 51, no. 1 (2020).

immediately became personal due to the defensive response, Howell and Richter-Montpetit explicitly stated in their article that the critique had no bearing on the scholars. The debate that ensued, despite Howell and Richter-Montpetit actively removing themselves from visible and digital platforms, gave encouragement to racists, misogynists, and homophobes who largely ignored the initial critique, and engaged in personal attacks against Howell and Richter-Montpetit. During this debate, scholars defending ST distanced themselves from the personal attacks made by some individuals<sup>43</sup> by dismissing the scholarly intervention as methodologically unsound. A position that reproduced the epistemic prominence of colonial-racist and civilisational knowledge systems that had been critiqued by Howell and Richter-Montpetit. In this particular example, the defence of ST was anchored in the emotional reactions of scholars whose labour, scholarly identity, and – ultimately – ego had become wrapped up with the sub-field of critical security studies. For others, it was a defence of an epistemic privilege of ‘universal’ methodologies and knowledge systems. Rather than consider the critique as a valuable intellectual intervention, Howell and Richter-Montpetit were made out to be dishonest, interlopers; their identities were reduced to angry queer feminists whose sole aim was to take down (white-cis-hetero) male scholars. It was in this dynamic that space was provided to explicit racists, misogynists, and homophobes; making academia less welcoming for individuals who would be considered diverse within white-male/masculine spaces. Although the debate concerning ST is probably the most widespread and explicit example in very recent memory, other – smaller – challenges to the intellectual foundations of the discipline, in my experience, have led to similar responses – even from those who would otherwise be seen as critical.

Over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year, I worked with a group of colleagues in my PhD programme on a project to address and challenge issues of diversity in the curriculum. Titled the Gender and Diversity Project (GDP),<sup>44</sup> we sought to contribute to a developing discussion outside of academia on diversity, race, and gender; debates occurring among undergraduate students in the United Kingdom; and add to conclusions in similar studies, such as those by Jeff Colgan<sup>45</sup> and Dawn Langan Teele and Kathleen Thelen.<sup>46</sup> The goal of our project was to uncover whose voices are most represented in knowledge production and who had been left out. About 30 of us began downloading departmental reading lists from across undergraduate, graduate, and PhD level modules. The aim was to code every reading by gender of the author, as determined by name and

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43. Jarrod Hayes, ‘It Isn’t Just about Waever and Buzan,’ *Duck of Minerva*, 5 May 2020. Available at: <https://duckofminerva.com/2020/05/it-isnt-just-about-waever-and-buzan.html>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

44. Joanne Yao and Andrew Delatolla, ‘Gender and Diversity in the IR Curriculum: Why Should We Care?’ *The Disorder of Things*, 20 April 2017. Available at: <https://thedisorderofthings.com/2017/04/20/gender-and-diversity-in-the-ir-curriculum-why-should-we-care/>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

45. Jeff Colgan, ‘New Evidence on Gender Bias in IR Syllabi,’ *Duck of Minerva*, 8 August 2015. Available at: <https://duckofminerva.com/2015/08/new-evidence-on-gender-bias-in-ir-syllabi.html>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

46. Dawn Langan Teele and Kathleen Thelen, ‘Gender in the Journals: Publication Patterns in Political Science,’ *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50, no. 2 (2017).

faculty profiles, and subsequently code the readings by diversity of content. On the latter, we looked at abstracts and skimmed readings to understand whether authors discussed colonialism, gender, race, or whether they were written from a non-Western, educated, industrialised, rich, democratic perspective (non-WEIRD).

Our results were not exceptional. In fact, they followed from other similar studies that examined other departments (international relations, international studies, and political science) at similar research focused institutions. This included an overall gender split of authors – 20 percent female and 80 percent male on the reading lists. In addition to confirming these statistics, Dr Joanne Yao (Queen Mary University of London) found that just 36 *female scholars* accounted for 18.5 percent of the 20 percent of female authors on these reading lists. One female scholar in particular accounted for 2.3 percent of the total number of assigned texts written or co-written by a female scholar.

When looking at the diversity of content across four undergraduate and three post-graduate modules, our results were even more worrying. It should be noted that these modules were introductory and mandatory for the programme of study, and excluded specialist courses with either regional, post- or de- colonial emphasis. Nevertheless, across these modules, we found that just under 5 percent of readings explicitly dealt with issues of gender; under 2 percent discussed race; less than 8 percent discussed colonialism; and under 8 percent engaged in a non-WEIRD perspective. The lack of diversity with regards to content made it even more evident that there existed an epistemic privilege in what knowledge is, and has been, considered foundational to the discipline.

With this information in hand, the University was receptive to providing us public forums to discuss and share the findings, for this we were grateful and hoped that it would result in positive change. Indeed, we – along with undergraduate students who were vociferously questioning why their curriculum was so white – were creating so much noise that there was talk of being invited to a Departmental meeting. While the invite never materialised, we did become the subject of at least one meeting, where the proposal to have research students *suggest additions*<sup>47</sup> to the syllabi led to a senior faculty member – according to a reliable source – referring to the group of research students as ‘Stalinists’. Despite all the evidence, the hours of coding, analysis, and comparison to other similar studies, the barrier to change remained. The barrier was buttressed by a defensive position, one that opposed intellectual discussion and debate, and attacked those making the intervention as illegitimate. Here, the argument was made that the foundational texts to the discipline were written from industrialised and developed geographies, by the disciplinary founders who were almost exclusively white and male, and these histories could not be changed without changing the nature of the discipline. We, the ‘Stalinists’, were presented as individuals keen to take a wrecking ball to everything that this senior member of the faculty knew and built a career out of. The defensive position taken by this academic is reflective of a need to retain an epistemic privilege. It should be noted, however, that three faculty members who were sympathetic towards the project volunteered to have their syllabi examined, taking suggestions provided by

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47. Although problematic for its failure to deal with the foundations of epistemic privilege apparent in the discipline, the ‘add and stir’ proposal seemed like the most amenable option for a group of junior research colleagues to put forward to senior faculty in the department.



research students, these faculty had some of the more diverse syllabi – in terms of content and focus – from our study. Nevertheless, the evidence that had been provided by our study had led to our position within the department being that of violent challengers to an existing *civilised* knowledge, norms, and structures of IR.

This, however, should not be considered exceptional to IR or to institutions located in the minority world (the West), rather it is tied to an epistemic orientation of whiteness in academia.<sup>48</sup> Taking the conclusions from the GDP to my new position as an Assistant Professor in an institution in the majority world, and on the curriculum committee for the Department of Political Science, I remember asking why we were replicating the hierarchies of knowledge production by equating *western* political theory to ‘political theory’, when the politics and political realities of our students better reflected a theoretical positioning of scholars and thinkers that spoke from and to South West Asia and North Africa. The suggestion was rebuked for two reasons: first, because the department needed to remain competitive in an American academic market, despite being located in Africa. Second, because hiring an academic with a specialisation in Eastern or Islamic Political Theory was an extravagance the Department and University could not afford. Evident in these responses was the reproduction of knowledge constructed from positionalities and orientations of the white West as being considered the norm, or a universal and neutral standard. Yet this position is not benign, it has displaced other positionalities and orientations as being ‘specialist’ or ‘niche’; subordinate to dominant ‘Western’ knowledge systems; or an extra(vagance) to a ‘canon’.

While Grosfoguel outlines a method of decolonial engagement that builds on his critique of knowledge as being anchored in systems of epistemic privilege/superiority,<sup>49</sup> the critique of Western-centrism in knowledge production, from my experience, has largely resulted in defensive responses and a feigned impossibility to engage in change by citing a necessary ‘canon’. Whether intentional or not, by defending this epistemic privilege, there are real consequences on the kinds of bodies that are included and represented in academic spaces, producing a circular dynamic of exclusion. Here, the white-Westernman being ‘epistemically superior’<sup>50</sup> is evident in the knowledge that is reproduced in many classrooms. Indeed, the GDP study suggests that the knowledge we reproduce matches our own identities. Here, we found that female module conveners include nearly double the number of female authors on their syllabi than their male colleagues. Whereas the few racialised faculty in the department were specialised in post-colonial studies or the Middle East and North Africa, whose syllabi reflected more diverse (non-WEIRD) perspectives. What this suggests, and needs further examination, is that the lack of diversity of authors and content of the scholarship on the syllabus mirrors the lack of diversity among educators in the UK, with 76.3 percent of all faculty self-identifying as white, 9.8 percent as Asian, 1.9 percent as black, 2 percent as mixed, and 10 percent as ‘other’ or ‘not known’.<sup>51</sup>

48. Sara Ahmed, ‘A Phenomenology of Whiteness,’ *Feminist Theory* 8, no.2 (2007).

49. Grosfoguel, ‘The Structure of Knowledge,’ 89.

50. Grosfoguel, ‘The Structure of Knowledge,’ 86.

51. HESA, ‘Who’s Working in HE? Personal Characteristics, UK 2018/2019’, 2020. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/working-in-he/characteristics>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

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## Academic Institutional Racism as ‘Snowblindness’

**Momin Rahman**

I began my career around 20 years ago in less precarious times and so was fortunate to go from graduate studies to full employment in academia, first in the UK and now in Canada. I am both privileged as a male, tenured full professor and extremely conscious of my minority status, since everywhere I have worked has been dominated by white and straight faculty and administrators across the entirety of the institution. In my view, this is ample evidence that every university where I have worked is *institutionally* racist, whether they would admit to that or not (they won't). There is, however, a particular way that institutional racism exists in the academy and this is my focus below. I write both as a racialised gay British Bangladeshi who has been living and working in Canada for the last 14 years and as an active union member focused on equity issues, serving for the last three years as the co-chair for equity on the Executive for our national union, the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). I write with faculty in mind as my primary audience.

### *The Stubbornness of Institutional Racism in the Academy*

Systemic discrimination was in part developed from the idea of *institutional* racism, first conceptualised by the black power movement in the USA in the 1960s.<sup>52</sup> Broadly speaking, it describes processes and practices in organisations that have the effect or outcome of discriminating against racially stigmatised groups, even when there is no overt or conscious intent to discriminate. Often, systemic racism and institutional racism are used interchangeably, but the recent wave of protests, primarily in North America, Europe, and South Africa, have demanded a clear focus on how racism operates systemically *through* institutions. There are now innumerable analyses of institutional racism across the whole range of social institutions and indeed, its existence has become an accepted part of critical management and organisational studies.<sup>53</sup> The key insight remains that ‘normal’ practices and standards are, in fact, often derived from the expectations and experiences of white majorities and so, in effect, disadvantage those whose route into and experience within the organisation is conditioned by their racial difference. While policing has been a major focus of such analyses, and rightly remains so in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, we also have a

52. Karim Murji, ‘Sociological Engagements: Institutional Racism and Beyond,’ *Sociology* 41, no. 5 (2007).

53. Savita Kumra and Simonetta Manfredi, *Managing Equality and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Fiona Wilson, *Organizational Behaviour and Work: a Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

burgeoning literature on how institutional racism operates within the university sector, including within Canada.<sup>54</sup> As large institutions within white majority or hegemonic societies, it would be strange if western universities were somehow immune from this general social pattern and, indeed, evidence abounds.

Studies such as CAUT's Equity Report<sup>55</sup> and research on universities in *The Equity Myth*<sup>56</sup> provide ample evidence that racialised and Indigenous groups are under-represented in Canadian academia and, moreover, that all racialised groups are over-represented in precarious contracts, particularly racialised women. There are also numerous studies that demonstrate the same in other western contexts and all make the point that while there have been institutional anti-discrimination policies in place for many years, they have not had the effect of equalising access for racialised groups. One or two non-white faces in white spaces doesn't signify real change, but rather a 'token' of a colour-blind organisation. Thus, something more systemic is at work in our institutions. Indeed, the national research funding agencies have recognised institutional racism and sexism through their adoption of increased targets for access to grant funding and the related Canada Research Chairs programme, as well as a (voluntary) action plan that encourages universities to recognise and address institutional failures to achieve equity.<sup>57</sup> Management have also recognised these failures are beginning to explore best practices for addressing the gap between rhetoric and reality,<sup>58</sup> including the appointment of many senior positions dedicated to advancing equity institutionally. Thus, we are in an era of good intentions and, it seems, a recognition that these problems are systemic.

### *Stubbornness as An Effect of Institutional Blackface*

One such associate vice-president recently described various forms of institutional cultures and governance as part of the 'enduring challenges' to progress on equity, despite 30 years of policy.<sup>59</sup> This analysis correctly identifies the need for a 'paradigm shift' in

54. Frances Henry et al., *The Equity Myth: Racialization and Indigeneity at Canadian Universities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017); Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society, 4<sup>th</sup> edition* (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 2010); Audrey Kobayashi, 'Now You See Them, How You See Them: Women of Colour in Canadian Academia,' in *Racism in the Canadian University*, ed. Frances Henry and Carol Tator (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

55. CAUT, 'Underrepresented & Underpaid Diversity & Equity Among Canada's Post-Secondary Education Teachers,' 2018. Available at: <https://www.caut.ca/latest/publications/education-equity>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

56. Henry, 'The Equity Myth'.

57. Government of Canada, 'Dimensions Charter: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion,' 2019. Available at: [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/EDI-EDI/Dimensions\\_Dimensions\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/EDI-EDI/Dimensions_Dimensions_eng.asp). Last accessed February 24, 2021.

58. Universities Canada, 'Action Plan on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion,' 2020. Available at: <https://www.univcan.ca/priorities/action-plan-equity-diversity-inclusion/>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

59. Arig Al Shaibah, 'How to Mobilize and Sustain EDI Change in the Academy,' University Affairs, 2020. Available at: <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/in-my-opinion/how-to-mobilize-and-sustain-edi-change-in-the-academy/>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

understanding equity within the academy, but it focuses more on thinking about how to reframe the contemporary management discourse of ‘inclusive excellence’ rather than naming systemic racism as one of the cultural barriers that prevent institutional change: ‘we need to understand EDI in terms of justice (the right and inclusive thing to do) *and* excellence (the best and smart thing to do). We need to adopt an inclusive excellence paradigm.’ We can understand the reluctance of administrators to name their institutions as racist because they may think first of the consequences for public relations, branding, and recruitment. Furthermore, faculty may be reluctant to talk in these terms because the general assumption is that we strive for objective, merit-based assessments of research and job candidates and so we feel we are too smart to engage in ‘bias’, however much the evidence above suggests otherwise.

But we need to acknowledge that *actively* adopting equity policies and rhetoric without naming systemic racism is a form of *institutional blackface* – the parodying of concern for racism by using tokenistic visual representations in marketing and the tokenistic use of racialised students and faculty to ‘educate’ others or demonstrate that the workplace cannot be racist and, more recently, endorsing policy without linking it to outcomes, all to provide a veneer of credibility for the university without really wanting to *see* or address the differential, systemic, experiences of racialisation. Such strategies draw in those of us who are racialised to aid the university’s performance of institutional blackface, and illustrate the myth of progress that such ‘black faces in white spaces’ are used to support.<sup>60</sup> The point I want to make here is not that university administrators should be able to name institutional racism (they should) and also stop parodying their concerns for equity (they should), but rather that it is difficult to begin to develop strategies within our own departments, or engage with intentionality with our colleagues and administrators if we, *as faculty*, cannot see or name institutional racism. And by failing to do so, while endorsing policies that are supposed to advance equity, we are *all* engaged in institutional blackface.

Advancing equity requires serious effort to engage with various aspects of the institution’s structures, from our own departmental curriculum, to research hiring committees, right through to Senates and, along the way, marketing, recruitment and communications offices. We cannot, however, begin that journey and develop effective actions unless we understand our strategy. For example, CAUT has developed a guide to the processes needed to engage with equity issues that identifies the threshold need for a clear strategy. While I don’t mean to suggest that these institutional steps are easy to organise and achieve, the overall strategy to ‘STEP IN’ to equity is relatively easy to understand:

- ST– identify your overall strategy, including your ultimate goal and what areas of everyday workplace practice need to be addressed.
- EP– identify the specific equity practices that would address the problem by transforming current workplace practice (what do we need to DO to achieve the goal).

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60. Randall Pinkett, Jeffrey Robinson and Philana Patterson, *Black Faces in White Spaces: 10 Game-Changing Strategies to Achieve Success and Find Greatness* (New York: Amacom, 2018).

- I– identify what institutional steps are needed to implement these practices (awareness, education, training, new policies, scrutiny or oversight, reporting).
- N– how do we make sure that the implementation of equity practices is normalised within our institutions (policy reviews, reporting structures and oversight)?<sup>61</sup>

Before these specific institutional steps, however, we need to recognise and incorporate institutional racism within our strategy. How then, as faculty, do we create that motivation to address systemic issues when the data show there is a need to do it and, moreover, that we have clearly not done enough in the past? In conclusion, I want to suggest that it is particularly difficult to create this intentionality because of an inability to see beyond the normalisation of whiteness in the academy, what I term here, in a partial nod to my geography, ‘snowblindness’.

### *Snowblindness: the Particular Formation of Academic Institutional Racism*

I define snowblindness as the academic manifestation of institutional racism through the equation of whiteness with ‘neutral’ academic knowledge such that we only ‘know’ and ‘see’ through whiteness. It is neither conscious discrimination, nor the denialist ‘white innocence’ of discrimination and racism<sup>62</sup> but rather an active *preclusion of the very possibility of systemic* biases through the deployment of the academic as a neutral analytical producer and arbiter of knowledge. To illustrate briefly, let’s consider a common objection that many who argue for equity initiatives have experienced, particularly around hiring. We are often told that the reason our profession looks the way it does is that departmental planning and hiring committees focus on *merit*, rather than actively discriminating against under-represented racialised and Indigenous applicants. If hiring outcomes are indeed the result of a merit-based process one implication is, however, that under-represented groups are just not as good as the dominant groups that usually get hired. Unless you retain a belief in (scientifically discredited) biological causes of gender and ethnic inequalities, then it is not really credible to argue that racialised groups are less intellectually successful than dominant white groups. This means that there has to be some other explanation as to why certain groups are under-represented and research cited above shows that these have to do with lack of equal access to opportunities to study, publish, or to secure research funding, and/or the lack of seeing the achievements of under-represented groups as equally valid as those from dominant groups.

The question then becomes whether we are able to recognise that socially learned but unconscious biases affect who we judge to be meritorious in planning, hiring and promotion processes. Snowblindness prevents this recognition. We, as a profession, don’t claim innocence of racism but rather that we are too smart to be racist and instead, that we evaluate the CV (research knowledge) without bias towards the knowledge producer. We are, above all, neutral in our analysis and so our white colleagues are not affected by their positionality within whiteness as the dominant, *normalised* knowledge producers and arbiters in academia.

61. CAUT, ‘Equity Toolkit’.

62. Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016).

Is this logic really sustainable as an explanation for why the profession is so dominated by white people? If the argument is that we select only on merit, surely the outcome would include at least a closer statistical correlation between the available PhD pipeline and faculty? When so many disciplines are failing even at that level of correlation, that justification of a neutral merit-based approach becomes unconvincing. A more convincing explanation is that we see the existing norm of whiteness as the outcome of a neutral merit process and then are blinded by its normalisation to any consideration of it being a partial and flawed outcome. Furthermore, in Arts, we know that many racialised faculty often focus on community based research, or at the very least draw upon their own lived experience to illuminate under-studied social phenomena. If these are ‘new’ areas, then they won’t necessarily be given the same weight as established research and teaching. Again, we are blinded by the normalisation of whiteness to the fact that the knowledge produced by white faculty may miss experiences of the social world from oppressed groups, because they experience the world differently and, therefore, provide a more accurate understanding or *fuller* objectivity in understanding the formations of, and solutions to, social problems.<sup>63</sup>

### *Seeing through Whiteness*

We need to see through the dazzling normalisation of whiteness as the blueprint for knowledge production by recognising that it is blinding us to other perspectives, other knowledges, and that it is not ‘normal’ and nor should it be. Physically or metaphorically, snowblindness need not be permanent, and so here are some issues to consider in trying to move from seeing *only* through whiteness, to seeing *through* the dominance of whiteness:

- Whether our faculty complement is reflective of at least the statistical expectation of diversity, regardless of community or life-experience based research in our fields.
- We regularly think about the renewal of our curriculums – so adding racialisation isn’t a huge step but it needs to be *intentional* and that requires us to acknowledge that whiteness may be excluding other topics and authors.
- To help us as faculty, we need to establish ways of adding diversity to the criteria for staffing renewal at the management (resource allocation) level, so that diversity is not an ‘add-on’ but central to rebalancing us away from snowblindness.
- Our disciplines are fundamentally about contesting intellectual diversity through differing research agendas and peer review and that is what creates relevance for us as researchers and teachers – so encouraging a broader diversity of ideas that is connected to specific equity-seeking groups should not be a big leap to make in academia.

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63. Sandra Harding, *Objectivity and Diversity: Another Logic of Scientific Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Above all, we need to work towards an understanding that equity-based hiring and renewal is one key dimension of maintaining our intellectual relevance, within departments' research and curriculum, across the university institution, as well as in our own disciplines. We cannot do that if we are snowblinded to institutional racism in our workplaces and professions and so we need to intentionally work through the intellectually restricting effects of whiteness.

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## Generous Thinking and the Role of the University in Dismantling Systemic Racism

Jeremy Youde

On 15 June 1920, three African-American circus workers – Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson, and Isaac McGhie – were lynched by a mob of white residents of Duluth, Minnesota, after a rumour spread that they had raped a 19-year-old white woman. A picture of the three men being hung became a popular postcard. This is the only known case of African-Americans being lynched in Minnesota.<sup>64</sup> In 2003, the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial opened at the intersection of East 1st Street and North 2nd Avenue East in downtown Duluth – the spot where a racist mob killed the three men. When it opened, it became 'the first substantial public lynching memorial in the nation'.<sup>65</sup>

Almost exactly 100 years later, George Floyd was murdered 160 miles south of my university at the intersection of Chicago Avenue and 38th Street in south Minneapolis. Many of my institution's students, staff, and faculty gathered in Minneapolis to protest his murder and, similarly, we gathered in Duluth to march, mourn, and protest in response to his death. Here, we often congregated at the Clayton Jackson McGhie Memorial, explicitly linking the two events as a way of highlighting the slow speed of racial justice in a state and a city that are overwhelmingly white.

I bring up these events for three reasons. First, for all of its progressivism in other areas, Minnesota has been – and remains – a state where systemic racism is deeply entrenched. The image of 'Minnesota nice' belies the fact that it has among the widest racial inequity gaps in terms of employment, educational achievement, and home ownership in the country. This has come to be known as the 'Minnesota paradox',<sup>66</sup> and the two incidents described above demonstrate that this seeming paradox has persisted for more than a century.

64. Michael W. Fedo, *The Lynchings in Duluth* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016).

65. Dora Apel, 'Memorialization and Its Discontents: America's First Lynching Memorial,' *The Mississippi Quarterly* 61, no. 1/2 (2008): 217.

66. Randy Furst and Mary Jo Webster, 'How Did Minn. Become One of the Most Racially Inequitable States?' *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, 6 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.startribune.com/how-did-minnesota-become-one-of-the-most-racially-inequitable-states/547537761/>. Last accessed October 23, 2020.

Second, communities have repeatedly mobilised throughout Minnesota to demand that its institutions – including institutions of higher education – take real and tangible action to address inequities. It took more than 80 years to create a public memorial to the lynching victims – and another two decades to pardon Max Mason, who was accused of the rape along with Clayton, Jackson, and McGhie but was not hanged. When he was pardoned in 2020, it was the first time Minnesota had ever granted a posthumous pardon.<sup>67</sup> In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, protests happened throughout the state (and, indeed, the world). Crucially, the protests brought the idea of systemic or institutional racism to a prominent place in the public consciousness, and this has had direct effects on universities. As part of these efforts, students, staff, and faculty at my institution demanded that the administration take concrete actions to address and dismantle systemic racism by better supporting persons of colour, creating a vice chancellor for diversity, equity, and inclusion position with genuine power and authority, and increasing the number of faculty of colour hired into tenure-track positions.

The requests described above are being discussed and debated, but there has not yet been action. That leads me to my third point: that talking about issues of systemic racism and the failures of our institutions to live up to their stated goals remains difficult. Higher education institutions have come under significant criticism for their unwillingness to engage with conversations about systemic racism in the academy.<sup>68</sup> As both a white faculty member in the social sciences and a college dean, with few colleagues of colour in either role, I have seen this reluctance – and have been guilty of it myself.

It is at this last juncture – getting higher education institutions to take tangible and direct action to address systemic racism – where conflicts often arise. We often think about these conflicts as arising around principles, strategies, and tactics, and we certainly have to work through these if we are going to move beyond rhetoric to implementing action. At the same time, though, we also need to appreciate the financial component that contributes to a reluctance, unwillingness, or inability to take decisive action.

Institutions like mine face a host of financial pressures. We are a regional comprehensive university that is highly tuition-dependent at a time when our traditional demographic cohort is shrinking<sup>69</sup> and state appropriations make up an ever-decreasing portion of our budget.<sup>70</sup> The effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic only serve to exacerbate these problems, as they have led to decreased enrolment levels (and, thus, less tuition revenue) and caused a state budget deficit that will likely lead to greater cuts to the higher education budget.<sup>71</sup>

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67. CBS News, ‘Minnesota Grants State’s First Posthumous Pardon to black Man in 1920 Case That Led to Lynchings,’ 12 June 2020. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/max-mason-pardon-posthumous-duluth-lynchings-1920/>. Last accessed October 23, 2020.

68. Hassan Kwame Jeffries, ‘Higher Ed’s Shameful Silence on Diversity,’ *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 October, 2020. Available at: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/higher-eds-shameful-silence-on-diversity>. Last accessed October 23, 2020.

69. Nathan D. Grawe, *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018).

70. University of Minnesota, University Budget, 2020. Available at: <https://finance.umn.edu/budget.html>. Last accessed October 23, 2020.

71. Lori Sturdevant, ‘Minnesota’s Higher Education is Facing a Crisis,’ *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, 29 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-s-higher-education-is-facing-a-crisis/570880262/>. Last accessed October 23, 2020.



As a result, we end up in a situation where zero-sum thinking comes to dominate. In an environment of limited – and diminishing – resources, any changes are seen as coming at the expense of something else. If we pursue a cluster or cohort hire strategy that will bring more faculty of colour to our campus, some will invariably see this as coming at the expense of other hires – particularly at a time when the number of tenure-track positions available in American higher education is shrinking.<sup>72</sup>

To some extent, the sceptics are not wrong. We have limited resources, and there are a limited number of faculty that an institution will hire in a given year. If neither state appropriations nor student enrolment numbers are increasing, the university's budget will decrease.

What I want to suggest, though, is that this framing leads us down the wrong path and prevents us from genuinely engaging with systemic racism in higher education. If addressing systemic racism is portrayed as a battle over resources, it will polarise conversations and leave the university in worse shape than before. It is nearly impossible to eliminate financial considerations from any sort of decision-making in contemporary higher education, but we also need to recognise how thinking first in financial terms – either implicitly or explicitly – can lead us to either institutional paralysis or an unwillingness to engage in these tough conversations.

Instead, we need to frame genuinely tackling systemic racism in the academy in terms of 'generous thinking.' Kathleen Fitzpatrick coined this term in relation to higher education in her 2019 book as a way to re-centre the mission of the university to better engage with the wider community, rebuild trust with the public, and promote the common good. These are exactly the sorts of ways that we in higher education need to engage with addressing systemic racism.

Generous thinking pushes us to move from seeing the university in zero-sum terms to positive-sum terms, even (and perhaps especially) during times of austerity. It encourages us to reconceptualise engagement as focusing on *listening* rather than speaking, *community* over the individual, and *collaboration* over competition.<sup>73</sup> It shifts the core assumptions underlying these conversations and their resulting actions. 'Rather than understanding generosity as transactional, and thus embodied in finite acts,' Fitzpatrick writes, 'I want to approach it as a way of being that creates infinite, unbounded, ongoing obligation.'<sup>74</sup>

This will not in and of itself ameliorate systemic racism within higher education, and it does not mean that conversations will not be contentious. Generous thinking is not a panacea. What it does provide, though, is a useful way of reframing how we approach these conversations in the midst of diminishing financial resources. Rather than seeing diversity, equity, and inclusion as an adjunct to our educational mission or as something we address instead of doing other things, we can work on understanding

72. American Association of University Professors, 'Data Snapshot: Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed', 11 October 2018. Available at: <https://www.aaup.org/news/data-snapshot-contingent-faculty-us-higher-ed#.X5MOiS9h1TZ>. Last accessed October 23, 2020.

73. Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).

74. *Ibid.*, 54.

how we can embed it into *our core operational procedures*. For example, rather than seeing a cluster hire programme with the aim of increasing the number of faculty of colour in tenure-track positions as *taking positions away* from other areas, we can engage in collaborative processes to understand how a cluster *contributes to* – and, indeed, fits into the heart of the university’s mission and the central place that generous thinking should hold in the modern university. Rather than see diversity, equity, and inclusion work as something discrete and as a tick-box exercise, we can incorporate it into our sense of obligation – to our students, our colleagues, our communities, and ourselves.

This may sound a bit Pollyanna-ish, and I fully admit that generous thinking does not give us specific answers or programmes that we can implement. That does not mean it is not valuable, because it helps us to ensure that the conversations *begin* and *move forward*. Too often, these sorts of tough conversations do not even happen, and that means that none of the structural, transformational change that we need will ever occur. Reframing how we approach the conversation is the start – and *only* the start – of the process that allows us to identify the sorts of tangible actions we can take. Like Gannon avers, ‘For those of us committed to changing higher education for the better. . . a commitment to *radical hope* offers the chance to do so without succumbing to hostile resignation or burned-out despair’.<sup>75</sup> As an administrator, I know that I have a powerful role in helping to set the stage for how these sorts of conversations take place and getting the necessary buy-in for changes. Instead of giving up because we lack resources, generous thinking can give us a way to start and sustain tough conversations. It also places a sense of obligation on me as the dean to facilitate these discussions so that they lead to action.

Minnesota has a legacy of systemic racism, and its higher education institutions have an important role to play in taking concrete steps to dismantle those systems. Universities may be facing tough times, but that does not diminish our obligation to work on these issues in a serious manner. Generous thinking can be one tool to ensure that we live up to our obligation. Our students, staffs, faculties, and communities are watching – and wanting to be involved. If we get caught up in zero-sum thinking, we will have failed before we even get started.

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## Incremental Institutional Change and Individual Lived Radicalism

### Dibyesh Anand

Straight-white-male

Straight-male-white

75. Kevin M. Gannon, *Radical Hope: A Teaching Manifesto* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2020), 4.

White-straight-male

White-male-straight

Male-straight-white

Male-white-straight

Who says the liberal institutions in the UK ain't diverse when it comes to the senior management?

The Political Right's imagination of academia as a den of radical and excessive progressivism that valorises feminism, critical race theory, and/or queer identities at the expense of 'straight-white-men' could not be more different from the experiential accounts of non-white, non-male, and non-straight academics and students who continue to face the straight white male dominance in the university structures in general, and in Politics and International Relations in particular, in the Western world. While some disciplines are better when it comes to gender parity and others in having more non-white 'people of colour' (North America) or 'black and Minority Ethnic' (UK) scholars, our disciplines of Political Science and International Relations are rather predictable when it comes to its own politics of inclusion and exclusion where the primary diversity can be satirised rather easily as my opening lines suggest.

The straight white male dominance is visible and felt in many forums – from journals to ISA conferences, from institutions to networking, from grants to hiring. Given the absence of detailed data-based studies on the state of the discipline in different countries, partly due to a culture of silence, we have to rely on experiential accounts, narratives, visual evidence at events, and gossips around the woeful under-representation of black, Asian and other non-white scholars. Feminist and Postcolonial theories of IR remain mostly confined to the last two chapters in most textbooks and last two classes in most semesters; queer theories remain almost always invisible. At the ISA annual conventions, in two decades of my participation, I note that themes of gender, race and sexuality are often in panels with familiar faces as both the established and the emerging straight-white-male scholars often maintain a safe distance from these panels. What has changed is the growing visibility of those of us who neither fit nor want to fit the dominant norms while creating our own spaces where we don't have to justify our existence as differently marked scholars.

The situation within our universities, as opposed to the discipline of Politics and IR, is not remarkably different; the disciplines as well as professional organisations like the ISA are reflective of the wider institutional realities of academia. White resistance and silence around anti-racism remains endemic. In the UK, the idea of British exceptionalism continues to remain prevalent when it comes to racism ('this happens in the USA, not here in the UK), colonialism ('British empire was, on balance, a force for good and based on the rule of law unlike the more brutal French and other Empires'), and multiculturalism ('unlike others, we are tolerant'). As David Olusoga<sup>76</sup> states, 'Excusing or

76. David Olusoga, 'Britain is Not America. But We Too Are Disfigured by Deep and Pervasive Racism', *The Guardian*, 7 June 2020. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/comment-isfree/2020/jun/07/britain-is-not-america-but-we-too-are-disfigured-by-deep-and-pervasive-racism>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

downplaying British racism with comparisons to the US is a bad habit with a long history.'

As feminism reminds us, the personal is political. I am often someone who has been viewed as 'having made it'. A professor, a head of department for a few years, and then the dean of a school constituting several disciplinary units, and now holding several positions of responsibility within a university in the UK. I identify personally and politically as queer and I am of Indian origin in the UK and therefore part of the range covered by the acronym BME – Black and Minority Ethnic identity. My University is one of the most diverse universities in the world and yet, I am one of the two non-white faces in the entire senior and middle management of our University. Our discipline is meant to be respectful of diversity and yet it would be rare for a queer as well as non-white person to be a professor, let alone the head/dean of a department in Politics and IR. Our personal stories matter, of course, but what is more important is whether the individual careers of a few of us minoritised yet successful are part of a wider institutional change in the profession, or evidence of its inability to change.

While I can be seen as ticking more than one 'diversity box' – non-white, queer, migrant – I never forget to assert that I also inhabit several privileges along cis-gender, class, caste and educational lines. All too often, migrant scholars from post-colonial countries fit in, almost, comfortably within Western academia and get seen as/represent themselves as speaking for the margins, for the subaltern, for the oppressed, even though they are from an educated social elite background. I don't. Through my research on Tibetans occupied by China and Kashmiris occupied by India and on religious minorities oppressed by Far Right Hindu nationalists in India, I practice what some call scholarly-activism. But, my solidarity is one of speaking about and not speaking for the marginalised. Yet, the temptation to become the 'authentic voice' of the minoritised within the British academia is always there.

Many of us in Politics and IR are vocal in theorising about radical politics or even adopting radical political positions in society. However, what I have found missing is the effort to practice radical politics within one's own institution. Unlike many of my fellow academics, I see our primary struggle as one that ought to go beyond radical theory and radical activism outside to radical politics within our own institutions. It is not easy; we rightly fear for our careers and it is easy to be seduced by incentives to conform. But when has anything exciting been easy?

Systems claiming to be non-discriminatory function more through tokenism than complete exclusion. But they also offer glimmer of hope interstitially. So long as we have the energy, creativity, tenacity and, needless to say, thick skin to struggle together with fellow travellers and secure allies where we can, there is hope. My university offers hope. Despite my vocal social media and political activism, I never felt any pressure to 'tone down' or become more 'respectable'. If anything, my spirit of agitation was praised by those senior to me to the point where I started wondering why my experience is so different to that of other academics elsewhere. However, this positive experience is based on personalities of a few involved and not a product of systemic encouragement to change.

What I discovered was that a serious commitment to compassion rather than an obsession with excellence is used as a key value within my institution. Yes, these values are easier published in glossy leaflets than put into practice. Still, words matter. Actions

matter even more. After the murder of George Floyd in the summer 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement galvanised many of us. Like some other institutions, our university reaffirmed its opposition to racism. But, we went beyond it. Our rather vocal black and Minority Network of academic and professional services colleagues worked closely with students and other networks including the Women of Westminster and LGBTIQ to not request but demand change. What we secured was not lofty words but concrete commitments.<sup>77</sup> We see this as a process and not an end in itself. As I, along with my fellow co-chair of BME Network, wrote, agitation and allyship both are equally important.<sup>78</sup>

Can we be sanguine that securing commitments from the University means real change? No. But is cynicism something that we can afford? In our case, when most of my non-white colleagues are in junior, insecure, or part-time positions, when many of them are women bearing the disproportionate burden of caring, when we see colleagues as including academics as well as support staff, can we afford to spend endless time debating the most suitable vocabulary of expression or most radical forms of engagement? I'd propose that constant negotiation, securing incremental gains, refusing to give into either euphoria or cynicism, is radical in itself.

Anti-racism is a struggle that has a long history and, sadly, will be necessary to be carried on in the future too. Racisms, along with other forms of discriminations, hierarchisations and dehumanisations won't go away easily. As Kimberlé Crenshaw notes, a more powerful way to combat multiple forms of dehumanisations is through a recognition of our intersectionality without diluting that specific identity which may be more salient at one or the other juncture.<sup>79</sup>

'You must hate me because I am a straight-white-male' to 'so, you stand for change? Like Obama?', to 'you promote over-work', to 'you have to understand that white men like myself are insecure these days' to 'oh but Postcolonial politics is not core Politics or IR', I have navigated enough prejudices, more politely called 'unconscious biases', to now smile, laugh off and speak back without justifying myself all the time. I am not alone.

While several black and other non-white persons like us have been chipping away at the edifice of racialised structures and making it clear that 'we exist, will shall continue to exist', the onus is also on white persons to reflect and join the critical interrogation and help the society fight out the racist backlash. It is vital that we shift from conversations to actions so that anti-racism, along with the rejection of all other forms of majoritarianism

77. University of Westminster, 'University of Westminster: black Lives Matter Commitment Plan', 2020. Available at: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/news/university-of-westminster-publishes-black-lives-matter-commitment-plan>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

78. Deborah Husbans and Dibyesh Anand, 'Agitation and Allyship – Our Experience Working towards An Anti-racist University', *Wonkhe*, 29 October 2020. Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/agitation-and-allyship-our-experience-of-working-towards-an-anti-racist-university/>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

79. Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Kimberlé Crenshaw: What is Intersectionality?' National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). YouTube, 22 June 2018. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

prejudices and bigotries, becomes integral to our way of life. As Audre Lorde reminds us, 'there is no hierarchy of oppression'.<sup>80</sup>

Whether the wider body of the IR scholarly world questions its own silences/marginalisation/appropriations or not, we are here. Loud and clear. Racism, like other forms of prejudices, will be dismantled. Tomorrow, if not today.

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## Conclusion

To create a checklist or strategy to tackle institutional racism in the academy would require a narrow view of it, where institutional racism becomes a single object to be fixed with bureaucratic and administrative zeal. While bureaucratic and administrative transformation can have a positive impact on occurrences of institutional racism, such transformations need to be extensive and not merely a perfunctory exercise. Indeed, institutional racism needs to be understood as a problem in the academy that is multifaceted, with no single administrative or bureaucratic solution, and that has long lasting personal and professional impact.

What we hope to have accomplished here is an honest conversation; one that is not only an exaltation of pain, anger, and frustration about the impact institutional racism has had, but to also highlight its multimodality and difference across geographies and contexts. From discussions of personal experience, Mary Caesar, Toni Haastrup, Nassef Manabilang explore institutional racism, highlighting the predominance of whiteness in the discipline. Building on Nassef Manabilang's discussion, which – in part – highlights the Western geographic and epistemic position of the discipline, Swati Parashar and Andrew Delatolla discuss the white-racialised dynamics of expertise and its methodological underpinnings of the discipline. Examining the institutional productivity around whiteness, Momin Rahman discusses the tokenistic policies to tackle institutional racism where Jeremy Youde reflects on the institutional constraints on effective change, where Dibyesh Anand encourages us to move beyond radical thinking into a radical politics; one that forces the institution become unrestrained.

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80. Audre Lorde, 'There Is No Hierarchy of Oppressions', University of Missouri, Women's Center, 2013. Available at: <https://womenscenter.missouri.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2013/05/THERE-IS-NO-HIERARCHY-OF-OPPRESSIONS.pdf>. Last accessed February 24, 2021.

**Author Biographies**

Andrew Delatolla is Lecturer, Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, a.delatolla@leeds.ac.uk

Momin Rahman is Professor, Department of Sociology, Trent University, mominrahman@trentu.ca

Dibyesh Anand is Professor, Department of Politics and International Relations, School of Social Sciences, University of Westminster, d.anand@westminster.ac.uk

Mary Caesar is BSIA Fellow, Balsillie School of International Affairs, mcaesar@balsillieschool.ca

Toni Haastrup is Senior Lecturer, History and Politics, University of Stirling, toni.haastrup@stir.ac.uk

Nassef Manabilang Adiong is Founder, International Relations and Islamic Studies Research Cohort, info@nassef-m-adiong.com

Swati Parashar is Professor, Institute for Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, swati.parashar@gu.se

Jeremy Youde is Dean, College of Liberal Arts, Duluth, University of Minnesota, jyoude@d.umn.edu