



# Are We Really Post-Race?

## Profiles & Abstracts

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Parramatta South EB G.17

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### Invited Speakers

**Sohail Daulatzai** (University of California Irvine) is the author of *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom beyond America* (2012) and is the co-editor (with Michael Eric Dyson) of *Born to Use Mics: Reading Nas's Illmatic* (2009). He has written liner notes for the 2012 release of the 20th Anniversary Deluxe Box Set of Rage Against the Machine's self titled debut album as well as liner notes for the DVD release of *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme*.

**Christopher Kyriakides** (Cyprus University of Technology) is the co-author of *Race Defaced: Paradigms of Pessimism, Politics of Possibility*. With Professor Rodolfo D. Torres, University of California, Irvine, he recently completed a two-year historical comparative US-UK analysis of racialization pertaining to the 'browning of America' and the reception of new Arab migrations on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Suvendrini Perera** (Curtin University) is the author of *Australia and the Insular Imagination: Beaches, Borders, Boats, and Bodies* (2009). She is Professor of Cultural Analysis in the Department of Cultural Studies, in the School of Media, Culture & Creative Arts. She has published widely on issues of race, ethnicity and multiculturalism, refugee topics, critical whiteness studies and Asian-Australian studies.

**Joseph Pugliese's** (McQuarie University) latest book is *State Violence and the Execution of Law: Biopolitical Caesurae of Torture, Black Sites, Drones* (2013). He is Research Director of the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies.

**Sherene Razack** (University of Toronto) is the author of *Casting Out: Race and the Eviction of Muslims From Western Law and Politics* (2008). She is Professor, Sociology and Equity Studies in Education, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and writes extensively on race and gender issues in the law.

## Abstracts

### **Oishee Alam**

#### *Islamophobia and the racialised experiences of white converts to Islam*

Over the past decade Islam has become a highly racialised religion in Australia, a country in which the national identity is discursively linked to an unmarked white racial identity with foundations in Christian theology. Using the theoretical lenses of critical race and whiteness studies, I argue that the manifestation of Islamophobia in Australia is distinctly racialised, and can be conceptualised as “racism without race.” Interviews with white converts to Islam indicate that the racialization of Islam on a discursive level translates to racialised interactions between individuals, including explicitly racial vilification. Participants describe experiencing slurs such as ‘black slut’ and ‘f---ing wog.’ Accusations of race treason are also common. Some participants encounter disappointment from people who feel that they should ‘know better’ than to adopt a backwards faith. Others are outright told that they are no longer white. Participants describe feeling that their whiteness was diminished when they adopted a religion that is popularly constructed as culturally and morally incompatible with white norms and values; that they are now ‘in between’ races. White converts provide an ideal test group to examine the racialization of Islam on a micro-level, as they can relate their experiences of whiteness pre-conversion to the more ambiguous whiteness that they embody post-conversion.

### **Ryan Al-Natour**

#### *The racial constructions of Bolt’s ‘Political Aborigine’ and facebook’s Aboriginal memes*

In April and August 2009, conservative commentator Andrew Bolt published two articles about ‘fair skinned Aborigines’. In these articles, Bolt attacked a number of famous activists and accomplished professionals, claiming they were examples of ‘the political Aborigine’ (an offensive term he coins). Later in 2012, several images appeared on a facebook.com group called Aboriginal Memes. These images contained pictures with texts which racially vilified Indigenous people, sparking outrage across Australia. Using the literature on ‘race’ and critical race theory, this paper examines how these cases exemplify the contemporary ways that non-Indigenous Australians classify Aboriginal people as a ‘race’. Bolt’s construction of ‘the political Aborigine’ and the images on the facebook.com page are both produced in a context of normalised old and new racisms. Together, they illustrate the ways non-Indigenous Australians have drawn on modern day racist stereotypes in marking out the ‘race’ of those they continue to colonise.

### **Sohail Daulatzai**

#### *Black Star, Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and the Black Radical Imagination*

As the figure of the Muslim continues to shape and even haunt contemporary debates around citizenship, democracy, rights, security and even who is human, this talk will explore the roles that the struggles in the Muslim Third World have played in shaping the Black radical imagination throughout the 20th century and the global struggle against imperialism. Whether it be through Malcolm X or Muhammad Ali, the poets of the Black Arts Movement or jazz musicians, Black Power activists or filmmakers, novelists or hip-hop artists, this talk will tell the story of how Black artists and activists linked discontent and unrest in Harlem, Los Angeles and Chicago to the anticolonial revolutions in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, and elsewhere, frequently looking to the anti-imperialist movements of the Muslim Third World for inspiration and solidarity in their struggles for social justice. As Malcolm X said in 1962, “the same rebellion, the same impatience, the same anger that exists in the hearts of the dark people in Africa and Asia, is existing in the hearts and minds of 20 million black people in this country who have been just as thoroughly colonized as the people in Africa and Asia.” In resurrecting this past when Black artists and activists imagined themselves not as national minorities but as part of a global majority, this talk will explore the significance of this forgotten history for contemporary debates around race, cultural politics and the logic of “terror.”

### **Nigel Eades**

#### *Moving from ‘Other’ to ‘Another’: How the media frame asylum seekers.*

Over the past few years print media headlines repeatedly profile asylum seekers arriving on boats to the shores of Australia. The volume of articles is unprecedented, reflecting a political charged topic of greatly invested interest. This paper will explore the way the print media often frames the asylum seeker as the ‘Other’ (Poynting, 2004) and marginalises their experience. Asylum seekers in the Australian community are seldom portrayed as people with skill and a possible asset in their contribution to the community.

Instead they are seen as desperate, poor and unskilled, who need charity. I contend that discourses on migration in the broader sense have to move beyond viewing migrants or migration as a social problem and a possible threat to society's foundations. In reframing the lens from seeing mainstream versus migrant culture as a social disruption, migration is able to be viewed in terms of providing alternative productive sites of community alliances.

### **Sherene Idriss**

*Researching Arab-Australian youth from the perspective of an Arab-Australian youth*

Ethnic minority and youthful subjects can be studied in a multitude of ways. In this paper I reflect on the methodological approach – in-depth, open ended biographical interviews – I used in my study of the career aspirations of a small sample of Arab-Australian youth. The post-race question is an important one for my research as it challenged me to consider the kinds of questions I asked informants, careful not to force them into the position of an ethnic representative or to encourage them to view moments in their lives through the lens of race and stratification. Nonetheless, in the retelling of their lives and their future aspirations, themes of racism, prejudice and 'brownness' emerged prominently. I outline the kinds of strategies these young men used to overcome the disadvantages associated with being marked as 'brown'. I also consider how their reflections about race, ethnicity and identity emerged as a result of my own positionality as a young person from the same ethnic background.

### **Christopher Kyriakides**

*Post-racial Pessimism*

'Post-raciality' encompasses seemingly antithetical positions: victory or utopia. However, one could argue that both are constitutive of a moment missed, the moment being that which comes after the 'end of history'. An understanding of the post-racial requires that 'it' be situated within the paradigms which rejected 'the conservatism of Left or Right' and which branded the present as one of 'no alternatives', and consequently for many offered 'no future'. Understood thus, the post-racial becomes an anti-utopian tool which validates the absence of alternative or big 'P' politics. Political elites aim to make us feel better about ourselves in the absence of solution. This is no cynical ruse; post-raciality is not a neo-liberal construct. Rather, post-racial pessimism is the logical outcome of the collapse of the emancipatory politics which defied modern oppression. This paper offers a meta-analysis of post-raciality and argues that therapolitics presents us with a line of continuity predicated on 'safety' and 'trust' which connects Clinton's One America initiative, the establishment of the Other Than Mexican migrant category under the Bush administration, and Obama's response to immigration and 'hate'.

### **Suvendrini Perera & Joseph Pugliese**

*Colonial Institutions and Post-Racism in Australia*

In mid-2013 Australia's newly appointed Race Discrimination Commissioner announced the initiation of a "new conversation" focused on "casual racism" and "cyber-racism" (<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/race-discrimination-commissioner-dr-tim-soutphommasane/4895264>). In this paper we consider how this "new conversation" works within a larger discourse of "post-racism," one that sees much of the anti-racist work of previous decades as accomplished. In the face of the discussion of "casual racism," we turn to the continuing force of *institutional racism*, in particular that directed at Indigenous peoples in this settler state. Through the stories of two deaths in custody, those of Eddie Murray and Peter Clarke Senior, we evidence the ongoing violence meted out to Aboriginal people by the entrenched and interconnected racism of legal, medical and prison institutions. The paper builds on our two of our previously published essays: Perera and Pugliese, "White Law of the Biopolitical," *Journal of the European Association for Studies on Australia [JEASA]* 13.1 (2012): 87-100, and Perera and Pugliese, "Death in a Dry River: Black Life, White Property, Parched Justice," *Somatechnics* 1.1 (2011): 65-86.

### **Sherene Razack**

*Histories and Technologies of Terror: Three Teenagers*

Kinew James was a 35 year old Aboriginal woman who, at the time of her death in January 2013, had spent half her life in jail, beginning as a teenager. She was often kept in solitary confinement and had threatened multiple times to hang herself. On the evening of her death, she reportedly cried for help for an hour about pains in her stomach. Ignored, she died of a heart attack one hour later. At a court appearance in 2011 when she pleaded guilty for damaging prison property and assaulting a guard, a judge compared her to Ashley Smith, another teenager who had a similar history and who died in the same prison in 2007.

Ashley Smith, a white teenager who had been imprisoned since 15, tied a ligature around her neck and strangled herself as several guards watched and the event was captured on video. The inquest (ongoing) has begun to establish that Ashley was a 'hard to deal with' inmate who tried to kill herself several times a day, secreting anything that might be used as a ligature. In their dealings with Ashley, Corrections personnel often wore combat gear, of the kind familiar to us in military encounters, and treated Ashley as detainees are treated in the 'war on terror.' A video captures the bound and duct taped teenager being transported by plane to yet another prison. When she arrives, eight men and women wearing protective suits and combat clothes tie her down and forcibly inject her five times with anti-psychotic medication. Smith was then left on a stretcher in her own urine for nine hours. The image of a bound and duct taped Ashley Smith recalls another teenager, also hooded and bound, Omar Khadr, a Canadian of Muslim/Arab origin. Held since 15 at Guantanamo and now incarcerated as a teenager and each endured torture and a systematized indifference and brutality defended as necessary. In this paper I want to theorize the power imprinted on the incarcerated body, considering race and gender. The technologies of violence in these three cases are the same, their histories are interconnecting, and for each person, the prison is a space of terror and death. In each of these contexts, violence, far from being exceptional, seemed integral to the social order. I reflect on what this violence holds in place, and, in turn, what gives birth to, and sustains, it. Does the torture and everyday violence directed at one group have anything to do with the other? Is the role of law (or more often law's abandonment) the same in each context? Am I trying to say something about the relationship between Black, Brown and Indigenous bodies in white supremacy and under neo-colonial and colonial regimes? Where would I place the increasing violence directed at inmates of North American prisons, and the continuous violence authorized against those classified as mentally ill, and the war on women that Andrea Dworkin referred to a few decades ago?

#### **Shannon Said**

*Decolonising the Institution: New ways of knowing and measuring through Kaupapa Māori*

**Abstract:** Utilising *Kaupapa Māori*, or a Māori way of conducting research, challenges inherent notions of objectivity, validity and reliability in Western research culture. In order for the institution of the university to accurately and respectfully engage with Indigenous ideals and concepts, new ways of knowing and measuring ontological realities of Indigenous peoples must be appreciated and encouraged within its context. This paper will investigate the creation of a methodology that seeks to adhere to Māori ways of doing and being, within the research context of Calvary Life Outreach church in Minto, South West Sydney, which is a predominantly Māori congregation. The methodology is being used to create a bilingual (English-Māori) worship album, drawing from Bishop's (1997) *Whakawhānaungatanga* - establishing and maintaining family ties, and Heshusius' 'participatory consciousness' (1996) as key relational and research strategies. These concepts allow research to transcend the institution and actively interact with the communities that surround them, giving autonomy and self determination (*tino rangatiratanga*) to the community, while engaging my position as researcher-composer throughout the process.

#### **Annette Tzavaras**

*At the intersection of Patriarch Avenue, Flower Street and Neo-Imperialist Lane: A transnational crossroads*

As the third millennium moves into the second decade, there is a new wave of raced-gendered exotic commodification focusing on the concept of the 'other'. Racism analysed in the context of contemporary immigration and the 'war on terror', intersects with terrorists, Muslims and asylum seekers. Bringing to the fore a new racism in Australia that focuses on Islamophobia, 'boat people', and 'illegal immigrants'. Racism is often veiled by structural and representational intersectionality and aided by political rhetoric that influences public opinion, thus perpetuating racism in Australia. Decades of extreme fundamentalism juxtaposed with western warfare exposed the duality of violence experienced by Afghan women. Their stories were concealed under the camouflage of retaliation by the west. The aim of this paper is to reveal the complex xenophobic issues that intersect and challenge Afghan Muslim women living in Australia.