

ARCHIVES OF THE NON-RACIAL

SAVE THE DATES | JUNE 29–JULY 11, 2014

A MOBILE WORKSHOP
IN SOUTH AFRICA

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SAVE THE DATE

The Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (under the umbrella of WISER) and the Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory (UCHRI) are joining forces in organizing a two-week Workshop on Archives of the Non-Racial.

The Workshop represents in a leading way the innovative modes of working in the human sciences. It will take place in South Africa from June 29 to July 11, 2014.

Since the 15th century race has been a central element in the making of the modern world. It has marked masters from slaves, the exploiting from the exploited, the belonging from the non-belonging, the qualified from the supposedly unqualified. Historical struggles against racism, in response, have contributed to a deepening and universalization of some of the key normative pillars of modernity, most notably freedom, democracy, and equality.

By the 19th century, the "non-racial" emerged as an intellectual, political, and ethical category, assuming a variety of interpretations. Indexed to different intellectual, social, and political contexts, at times the non-racial has stood for the idea of "a shared human nature". At others, it has gestured toward the idea of "abolition". Sometimes it has meant the erasure of "difference" and its substitution by "sameness" alongside the commitment to a set of universal moral principles. During the struggle against Apartheid, in particular, it clearly became a motivating force in global politics.

Over the past 30 years, neoliberalism has sought to restrict any use of race by the state and has constrained states from classifying and categorizing by race. At the same time, though, racial restriction and discrimination have been reserved to private expression, state protected by renewed commitment to freedom to speak no matter the consequences. This laissez-faire racism in the name of free speech has built on and extended more established forms and expressions. It has been aimed specifically at immigrants, Muslims, and Islam, and has been mobilized in Europe, on the internet, and in the US. Earlier forms of racial redress and equal access, such as affirmative action and voting rights, have come under increasing attack, legal and legislative.

Discourses of post-raciality have circulated widely in the attempt to signal racism's past, at once reordering racial expression and racist articulation for the current moment. By contrast, in places such as Brazil and South Africa renewed debates on reparations, empowerment and historical accountability have sought to undo the legacies of racisms.

THE WORKSHOP

In continuing the experimental tradition of research and intervention in the humanities and social theory for which both the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism (under the umbrella of WISER) and UCHRI's Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory are well known, the Archives of the Non-Racial Workshop will assess the possibilities and limits of the "non-racial" in terms of the politics of the modern world and its core values: democracy, freedom, dignity, equality, the human, universality, justice.

Since the 19th century, commitments to defeat racisms have ranged from abolition, non-racialism, colorblindness, racelessness, and postraciality to antiracism, anti-Apartheid, and Black Consciousness. Each has been underpinned by some version of the human. The range of investments is signaled by the fact that the "nonracial" itself is ambiguous – it oscillates between ignoring race (and so the structures of domination in its name) and conceiving socialities outside the frame of the racial.

To assess what they tell us about the project of human emancipation in our times, we will examine current struggles/alliances/coalitions/solidarities/forms of mobilization/registers of intervention, drawing relations and comparisons between various times and places.

The Workshop will also engage South African histories and landscapes of the centuries-long struggles against racism, from the Freedom Charter, Treason and Rivonia Trials to Constitution Hill, from Black Consciousness and labor struggles to political resistance, anti-apartheid to post-apartheid. In each site, and where possible at all in dialogue with local communities, we will craft critical dialogues with other traditions of racial configuration, non-racialism, and antiracism elsewhere.

The Workshop will start off in Johannesburg, South Africa, and then travel together through Swaziland to Durban, to the Steve Biko Center in the Eastern Cape, and end in Cape Town.

Instructors will include major figures in the global tradition of race critical studies as well as key figures in the critical race tradition in South Africa.

HOW TO APPLY

The call for participant applications will open in December 2013. Please visit www.uchri.org or www.jwtc.org.za for details.