



Editorial

Katucha Bento and Tasnim Al-Ahdal

Afro-Latin American and Afro Caribbean versions of Womanhood are debated in depth by the Feminisms from the margin; and Black Feminism, Chicana Feminism, Latina Feminism and Caribbean Feminism, have a long standing anti-racist/non-Eurocentric and radical history of being in critical dialogue with postcolonial and decolonial studies and movements. Unfortunately, racialized womanhood is a topic that has not been adequately picked up by the radar of Gender Studies or Social Science Studies in general given that their canons of thought do not reflexively and critically centre the implications and affect White Anglo Saxon or European voices that have historically and until this day, dominated their academic traditions and disciplines. Black Critical Race Theory, as well as Black, Chicana, Latina and Caribbean Feminism, along with their anti-racist, decolonial implications of reconceiving power relations that affect the ways in which we produce knowledge as social researchers and students in and beyond the academy, either remain on the margins or are completely absent from the syllabus.

Furthermore, the canonization of Critical Race and Ethnicity Studies within the wider rubric of the social Sciences and the lack of racialized and nationalised references in the curriculum has institutionally and systematically contributed to the fact that out of the UK's 18,500 professors in Academia a mere 85 are Black, and only 18 are Black Females. Such statistics point to Black Bodies as occupying an 'out of place', hyper-visible/invisible position in the academy. The exclusionary power of whiteness in the academia is the reason why movements such as "Why isn't my professor Black?" and "Why is my curriculum White?" are so relevant and timely. They are a result of Black British professors, academics, activists and students congregating and mobilizing across the country to resist and refute colour blindness in our universities, academic disciplines, seminars, conferences, curriculums/reading lists, classrooms and teaching and learning spaces in and beyond the academia.



This edition is a response to this systematic erasure of Afro-Latin American and Afro Caribbean Gender Studies in the curriculum, organised by a group of post-graduate students within the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. We agreed that the School urgently needed to engage in conversations about gender from a decolonial approach, with the main goal of challenging canons of knowledge and traditional ways of establishing academic discourses and practices in the department. Our way of achieving our objective was to organise an event inspired by the International Afro-Latin American and Afro Caribbean Women's Day, annually held on the 25th of July. The event took place on the 1st of July with the title **"Challenging Academic Debates on Womanhood: A Decolonial Approach on Latin and Caribbean Identities"** and presented an array of international and interdisciplinary contributions from researchers and lecturers with different perspectives and positionalities, such as: Dr. Shirley Anne Tate, Lecturer at the University of Leeds who presented **"Olympians: Shade, Value, Nation"**, Clarice Cohn, Lecturer at the Universidade Federal de São Carlos (Brazil) who discussed affirmative actions for indigenous people in Brazil: **"Indigenous Women in Brazilian Universities: Deconstructing Gender and Scientific Knowledges"** and Lisa Palmer, Lecturer at the Birmingham City University who contributed with a paper entitled: **"OK People, this is Lovers Rock': Gender, Decoloniality and the Cultural Politics of Love"**, whilst postgraduate students presented in a panel discussion including the following topics: **"Afropussies on Cyberspace: How Black Queer 'Periférica' Women Use Nudes for Self-Appreciation and Resistance in Brazil"** by Gabriela Loureiro; **"Indigeneity and Blackness: Negotiating Identity among Brazilian Migrant Women in the UK"** by Katucha Bento; **"Herstories: Lessons of Love and Healing from the Laps of my Grandmothers"** by Leona Satchell-Samuels and **"Reading of Feminism from the Margin: A Decolonial Perspective"** by Tasnim Al-Ahdal. In addition, Mel Z (Melissa Owusu) closed the event with her poetry and rhythm inspiring us all to decolonise our minds. The Open Letter at the end of this edition is part of our activist movement at the University of Leeds, which intends to address issues about both the pedagogical agenda and the need to hire people of colour in the university, allying our decolonial positionality with movements such as "Why is my curriculum White?" and "Why isn't my professor Black?". We understood this activism as urgent from June 2015, presenting the letter on the following year, in March 2016. The conversation were received by the university

and we are still in the anti-racist negotiations about the curriculum and staff, doing the academic and emotional work as students/ researchers.

The contributions of the event are organised in this edition to bring critical attention to the joint struggles that Black, Caribbean and Latin American Feminism, as well as student movements face to claim our spaces, voices and alternative non-western/Eurocentric positionalities in an academic space that we want to build together; and they also resist traditional practices that canonize knowledge production, research and ways of conceiving the 'Other' inherent in Western universities. Our readers will be able to spot how the participants of the event found ways through their research to write about it for this edition of the GJSS, in order to establish a dialogue with the intersectional struggles and agency in the construction of Black Caribbean and Black Latin American Womanhood as validated figures of knowledge, power and strength. Due to the success of the event, we have now decided to establish a series of events on the topic of "**Challenging Academic Debates**", where each edition of each event will focus on bringing attention to alternative perspectives and voices working within and beyond the academy, followed by a publication that aims to give continuity to these dialogues.

As co-editors of this edition and organisers of the event, Katucha Bento and Tasnim Al-Ahdal would like to thank the professors, academics and students who helped make this all possible by allowing us to come together politically – whether reviewing, politically articulated as a symbol of our revolutionary power to change academia together: James Beresford, for being an essential presence as friend, postgraduate student rep, cameraman, intellectual inspiration and opening the doors of the Graduate Journal of Social Science to this edition along with Alankaar Sharma, who helped us organise and review the material.

We would also like to thank Minna Seikkula, Remi Joseph-Salisbury, LaTonia Siler-Holloman and Tiffany Holloman, whose support in conceptualising and realising our joint political effort of Decolonising Minds at the University of Leeds was and is still fundamental to us resisting coloniality and 'fighting the power'. Finally, we would like to warmly thank Sérgio Andre Rossi, who designed the logo for "Challenging Academic Debates" capturing so well our idea of moving/flying away from the white-male-European-heteronormative canons by validating knowledge from the margin.

About the editors:

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