City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

**Citation:** Yeh, D. (2022). Racialization and Racisms in and beyond Covid, Colour and the Global South. New Diversities, 24(1), pp. 91-101.

This is the published version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

**Permanent repository link:** https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/29302/

**Link to published version**:

**Copyright:** City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

**Reuse:** Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@city.ac.uk

# Racialization and Racisms in and beyond Covid, Colour and the Global South: An Afterword

by Diana Yeh (City, University of London)

**Keywords:** racialization, racisms, postcoloniality, relationality, epistemic justice, decolonizing knowledge

As Covid-19 unleashed a global health crisis, causing innumerable deaths and devastating communities worldwide, it also became widely acknowledged to shed light on and exacerbate stark inequalities in social life across the globe. In a historical conjuncture marked by rising nationalism and populism and the normalization of bordering practices, the spread of the virus has catalysed the literal suspension of human mobility on multiple scales, intermittently pausing international travel, closing national borders and imposing regional and local lockdowns with injunctions to individuals and communities to 'stay at home'. At the same time, the pandemic has sparked a proliferation of new social boundary-making processes, which both aggravate existing inequalities and give rise to new ones. It is not only that the disproportionate effects of Covid are experienced differently across the globe, nor that existing social hierarchies and forms of discrimination have meant that racially minoritized and migrant groups have suffered higher proportions of rates of infection and deaths or losses of businesses and jobs, as well as racist and xenophobic attacks. Rather, as this Special Issue highlights, the pandemic is producing forms of racialization and practices of social boundary making and unmaking that demand new ways of thinking about and responding to racialized inequalities and violence in contemporary social life as they intersect with and are shaped by other forms of oppression.

Despite this, however, it is evident that it is not only pandemic conditions that have given rise to a new complexity of racialization processes and their acknowledgement. In this commentary, I discuss how the articles in this Special Issue contribute to a growing body of scholarship which offers new avenues for thinking about the complexity of racialization and its complex imbrication with other social boundary-making processes. In particular, the Special Issue presents challenges to dominant ways of understanding what constitutes racialization, where it is located and who its agents are, thereby contributing new insights into work taking place at the nexus of race-migration research, in the Global South and 'beyond colour'.

I begin by situating the articles in this Special Issue in the wider field of work that seeks to decentre research on race and racisms, exploring the contributions in terms of examining new racialization processes in the Global South and how they are connected to the Global North through contemporary reconfigurations of colonial modes of racialization. I then examine questions raised by the articles in relation to the concept of racialization and its relationship to both 'race' and 'racism', arguing for a relational approach that attends to the ways in which local manifestations of racialization and exclusionary practice, including governmental techniques of oppression, may be linked and understood across different contexts. I end by arguing that



CC BY

these articles provoke a series of questions that provide directions for future research with regard to how knowledge production on race and racisms can be decolonized and how we might work towards epistemic and social justice in the fields of race and migration studies.

**Expanding the Field of Racialization and Racisms**

This Special Issue expands our understandings and deepens analysis of race and racialization and of migration studies by examining disparate cases of racialization during the Covid pandemic across Africa, Asia and South America. By investigating the racialized othering of Africa migrants in South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, of internal migrant workers in Bangladesh's garment industry, and of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in Argentina, the articles together posit racialization as a complex, multi-layered process, unfolding at the intersection of local state responses to the global health crisis and internal and external migration controls, and underpinned by the forces of global capitalism and its impact on local contexts. They join several recent publications which testify to a growth in research on racisms and racialization in a range of Global South contexts in the last few years (e.g., Bonnett 2021; Ang, Ho and Yeoh 2022; Modood and Sealy 2022). While this body of work suggests an emergent field at this historical conjuncture, this is not to say that there have not been wider histories of work both in the recent and more distant past. These include works such as Syed Hussein Alatas's 1977 work, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, examining Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia, to more recent offerings such as Frank Dikotter's 1992 work on race in modern China, as well as the ongoing work by the late Ian Law (2010) on the histories of global race thinking and on racisms in the Caribbean (with Shirley Ann Tate) and in communist and post-Communist contexts, to name but a few.

Like much of this growing body of scholarship, this Special Issue seeks to decentre western notions of race and racisms. While racism is often seen as originating in western colonialism and thus commonly assumed to be a uniquely Western project (Bonnett 2022), there is a general consensus of the necessity to examine racisms and racialization in plural forms. Although this Special Issue focuses on the Global South, the editors are careful not to reify the North-South binary and have gathered papers that extend beyond identifying a specific model of South-South racialization. Rather, the contributions are alive to the salience of indigenous concepts in contemporary racialization processes, but they also point to the interconnectedness of racialization across the Global South and North. In contributing work to the wider field of Global South racialization, the papers in this Special Issue also develop work on Covid racialization in new directions, as well as on the complexity of racialization itself, as it unfolds along multiple axes of inequality. Importantly, in most of the articles, these themes are brought together through a focus on the continuing significance of European colonial legacies of racialization, which are reconfigured in contemporary postcolonial / neo-colonial contexts during Covid to produce new forms of otherness, exclusion and oppression, as discussed next. This is significant as, in the growing body of scholarship on Global South racialization and racisms beyond colour, a focus on indigenous concepts and the impact of non-European empires risks leading to a disavowal of the continuing global effects of European colonization in shaping contemporary racialization and inequalities, whether in or beyond postcolonial states.

**Covid-19, Racialization and Postcoloniality**

While most of the scholarship in the Global North has focused attention on the racialization of Covid-19 as a 'Chinese' virus, attention has also been paid to the proliferation of racialized discourses suggesting that the virus is the result of a Jewish or Muslim conspiracy. In this Special Issue, while Baumann and Denardi relocate an examination of the racialization of Covid as Chinese to the Global South by examining its impact

in Argentina, the other contributions further expand our understandings of the ways in which Covid has been racialized in other ways. In both the papers by Vaughn, Kiconco, Quartey, Smith and Ziz and by Musariri, Covid is constructed across different African contexts – South Africa, Kenya and Ghana – as a 'colonial virus' brought into Africa by (neo)colonial powers and a rich, predominantly white migrant's disease. Here, too, the Chinese are constructed as a racialized source of the virus and as posing a greater risk of spreading it. Unlike in the Global North, however, this does not take place through a process of inferiorization, but rather in response to both China's position as a neocolonial power in African contexts, and racist practices towards Africans within its own national borders. While further analysis could have been provided comparing the specific ways in which Chinese as opposed to white racialization takes place in the chosen fieldsites of South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, the papers' key concerns lie rather in the devastating impact of the racialization of Africans – as both Self and Other.

Leona Vaughn et al. take research on the Covid infodemic in new directions by examining the Black immunity myth. In doing so, they highlight the continuation of global racial ideologies and the legacies of colonialism in the infrastructure, institutions and logics of decision-making across South Africa, Kenya and Ghana and in the racialization of the risk narratives regarding Covid-19. Yet, they argue that the most colonial aspect of all this lies in the 'monument of biological or scientific "race"', perhaps because, as their article demonstrates, it not only delimits contemporary forms of resistance, but also actively endangers the lives of those who are racialized as Black. For Vaughan et al., the myth of African people being innately immune to Covid-19 is based on 'the eugenicist, racist belief in "biological race" '. Accordingly they frame the impact of racialization and notions of racialized risk explicitly as a 'colonial project'. Despite the differences in the ways in which the myth unfolds across the three states, Vaughan et al. nonetheless argue for an acknowledgement of the ways in which colonialism and coloniality continue to scar human relations in these different contexts.

While Musariri also acknowledges the Black immunity myth, her analysis examines the shift in South Africa from a racial to a national discourse of othering as specific nationalities among migrant Africans become scapegoats for the ills of the pandemic and are constructed as economic parasites who should be excluded from the nation's borders. Despite this, her paper confirms the centrality of European colonial racial ideology in devastating the lives of these migrant Black Africans, especially those perceived to be in poverty or from poorer nations. In South Africa, she argues, their categorization 'as non-citizens and less than human cannot be divorced from western racial ideology, which is premised on white supremacy'. Here, as in the Global North too, as acknowledged in the wider bodies of literature, while particularly poor, racialized migrants are to be expelled from the nation-state as interlopers, white migrants from rich nations are rarely viewed as foreigners but instead enjoy the privileged position of being constructed as 'tourists', 'expatriates' or 'travellers' who pose no threat to the nation state. In the case of South Africa, however, it was during colonial rule that white settlers identified themselves as 'true' South Africans and racialized Black South Africans as 'foreign natives'. In the contemporary context, this colonial racial discourse is reproduced to racialize black African migrants from poorer countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Somalia and Ethiopia as 'foreigners'. Thus, although Musariri posits xenophobia as a new form of racialization that is not based on phenotypical difference, but located at the intersection of class, nationality and immigration status, she nonetheless highlights that this occurs in a particular context of power defined by former colonial rule. Unable to target whites, Black South Africans instead target poor Black migrants. In this scenario, as she summarizes, 'white South Africans and white migrants remain unscathed and their foreignness unquestioned,

making it a battle against the black minorities: native minority and migrant minority.' New processes of racialization, then, leave the power of whiteness intact: Musariri's paper confirms previous research that the racism directed at Black South Africans during apartheid has given way to racism towards migrant Africans in the post-apartheid era (Matsinhe 2011).

In their article, Siddiqi and Ashraf further expose the ways in which colonial modes of othering and exclusion are reconfigured in the Covid era by examining the ways in which migrant garment workers in Bangladesh are racialized as dispensable labour as part of wider racialized geographies of supply chain capitalism. In doing so, they make a significant contribution to work on the troubled category of the 'essential worker' and the politics of expendability that has been reinvigorated by Covid-19 but remains largely focused on the Global North. By locating their study within a framework of racialized capitalism, they also contribute to wider research on globalization, gender and development, which has by and large erased questions of 'race'. While the question of gender remains relatively invisible across the other papers, Siddiqi and Ashraf adopt a transnational feminist lens. Through a multi-scalar analysis, they demonstrate that government techniques and practices draw on colonial constructions of submissive, oppressed Muslim women, which intersect with local indigenous concepts of class/caste, gendered nationalist ideologies and global racial hierarchies in apparel supply chains to make garment workers expendable. Here, they point to the significance of the category of *bhadralok* in reinforcing middle-class boundary-making during Covid. This self-ascribed identity among a largely English-educated middle class, a mainly Hindu upper caste, emerged in colonial Bengal in the nineteenth century and was deployed as a form of distinction from the labouring *chotolok*, who were further constructed through racialized colonial 'myths' of the lazy native. In contemporary Bangladesh, such tropes are reconfigured to construct working-class bodies as 'non-agentic' and 'animal-like' with no rights as workers or subjectivities as human beings. The article thus speaks to the 'robust afterlife' of colonial racialized and gendered distinctions. However, while positing that racialization has always been a deeply gendered process, and while highlighting the dual construction of female garment workers as saviours of the nation and as sexually lax lower-class others, what they find to be distinctive under Covid is that, in the logic and discourses of disposability, both male and female labouring bodies are affected in ways that are only minimally inflected by gender or sexualization.

While the three articles discussed so far emphasize the ways in which colonial modes of thinking survive in present-day forms of racialization, the article by Baumann and Denardi makes relatively scant mention of the enduring significance of European colonialism beyond its initial shaping of racialized dynamics in Argentina. Here the colonial myth that 'Argentines "descend from the boats"' constructed indigenous people, and racially minoritized immigrants and their descendants, as 'others' and continues to shape state racism. Nonetheless, the article provides a contribution to the study of racism in Latin America and the Caribbean, which they argue is defined by its disavowal, the scarce research focusing on indigenous people and *mestizos* rather than immigrants from abroad.

However, unlike the other articles, Baumann and Denardi focus specifically on how new forms of racialization generate new forms of anti-racist mobilization, in this case, the ways in which the racialization of Covid has led to the digital empowerment of a new anti-racist movement among the Chinese in Argentina. Their work thus also contributes to encouraging analysis of the interconnectedness of racialization in the Global North and Global South in terms of the experiences of Chinese diasporas under Covid. While the histories of the Chinese in Argentina and in Britain cannot be compared, given the Chinese presence in the latter dating back to at least the seventeenth century, there are similarities in the catalyst Covid has provided for anti-racist mobili-

zation among Chinese groups across these Global North and Global South contexts. In my own work, I identify a historically significant moment for anti-racist mobilization among Chinese and wider East and Southeast Asian communities in the UK, especially among university-educated younger generations. As in Argentina, this activism occurs in response to an absence of state intervention to protect communities from the rise in racial violence that is not limited to 'spectacular' physical attacks but also to the loss of jobs, forms of discrimination and the widespread racisms that circulate in the media and political discourse. Like those studied by Baumann and Denardi, Covid-19 has sparked an emergence of racial consciousness among many of the individuals and groups I work with, who also find inspiration in transnational influences, particularly in the US. In Britain, however, what is also notable is that Covid-19 has contributed to the growth of wider pan-ethnic anti-racist mobilizations, leading to a new significance of the 'ESEA' (East and Southeast Asian) category (Yeh 2021 and 2018). I therefore argue that scholars must acknowledge the ways in which our perspectives can no longer be contained within the colonial borders of an area studies that is defined by "Chineseness" (Yeh 2020). The extent to which this claim might pertain to Argentina depends in part on forms of anti-racist mobilization on the ground. However, a reading of Baumann and Denardi's work in the context of my own, and the wider issues raised by the Special Issue, also raises questions with regard to relationality in theorizing racialization and racisms, as well as to how we might decentre our studies and in doing so contribute to the decolonization of knowledge production. These I discuss in turn in the next two sections.

**Racialization, Racisms and Relationality**

Taken together, the articles in this Special Issue, as well as the wider body of research on racisms across the globe, continue to raise enduring questions about what constitutes racialization, its conceptual clarity and flexibility, and its relationship to both 'race' and 'racism'. While the proliferation and new visibility of research in this area is providing a rich, complex mix of studies across a wide array of local contexts, its widespread use as a catch-all term may mean that it is under-theorized and therefore risks losing its analytical power. Further, Gonzalez-Sobrino and Goss (2019: 507), also arguing that 'the concept of racialization is applied to every type of racial process, often without specificity', remind us that, 'while scholars discuss the effects of racialization on varied people and circumstances, a precise understanding of the mechanisms by which it functions is still lacking from the conversation'.

While, in the emerging research, many claims about the 'newness' of current forms of racisms and racialization are based on the idea that they unfold 'beyond colour', longstanding debates have identified a lack of clarity in the ways in which racialization is used in contexts where racial meanings are inferred through ethnicity or culture. As Murji and Solomos (2005: 4) state: 'It is not always clear what the race in racialization refers to – a specific and narrow discourse of biologically distinctive races, a process of cultural differentiation, or a code in which the idea or language of race is not manifest at all.' While scholarship has often focused on racialization processes that are based on phenotypical difference, scholars such as Miles have long suggested that we 'must not restrict the application of the concept of racialisation to situations where people distinguish one another by reference to skin colour' (1982: 121). Ideas of 'new racism' (Barker 1981) have also focused attention not on biological or phenotypical difference, but rather on cultural difference.

In the emerging body of scholarship, we see in racialization processes a 'fracturing' of race (Ang 2021) in, for example, the concept of 'co-ethnic racialization'. As discussed above, this does not involve making distinctions based on phenotype, but rather, as we have seen, and as Lan, Sier and Camenisch argue, on 'a multitude of factors such as ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, language and culture'. Erel and Murji (2016) also identify a growing body of research that examines 'dif-

ferentialist' racialization processes that involve hierarchies of legal status, gender, culture, class and social space. However, Anthias and Yuval-Davis have long argued that an analysis of racisms requires 'addressing the ways in which the categories of difference and exclusion on the basis of class, gender and ethnicity incorporate processes of racialization and are intertwined in producing racist discourses and outcomes' (1992: 2-3). This also requires examining how exclusion and subordination intersect with state and nation, as demonstrated by several of the papers in this Special Issue. What is key here is that, for them, 'the specificity of racism lies in its working on the notion of ethnic groupings. It is a discourse and practice of inferiorizing ethnic groups. Racism need not rely on a process of racialization' (1992: 12).

The question then remains to what extent are the distinct and diverse processes described across specific global contexts in the emerging literature captured by the concept of racialization and to what extent this aids our understanding of the dynamics of different forms of racism. As the papers in this Special Issue demonstrate, this complexity arises in part due to the specificity of local historical, political, legal and cultural contexts and the need to be alert to the specific mechanisms at work in differently shaped contexts. The necessity, called for by Musariri, of attending to the nuanced understandings of difference and 'foreignness' within specific historical and contemporary socio-economic and political contexts across different sites also destabilizes the translatability of the meanings of central concepts.

In particular, Vaughan et al. identified Kenya and South Africa as sites of research due to challenges made by government officials about Black immunity, while treating Ghana as a comparator where no such statements were made. While in their analysis more attention was in fact required to elucidate the comparative angle across different African countries, their paper nonetheless raises a broader methodological question with regard to the value of comparativism in the study of race, racialization and racisms. As Goldberg (2009) has argued, comparative studies depend on the possibility of geographical discreteness and are unable to account for the ways in which racial conception and practice are relational and interactive. Notably, he highlights that the interactional, relational method of theorizing race and racisms is tied to the work of scholars such as W.E.B du Bois, Ruth Benedict, Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, who linked racial conceptualization and expression to the colonial condition. The point for Goldberg is not to reduce racism to colonial oppression but rather to highlight the way in which the colonial has provided the 'horizons of possibility' for race-thinking. Thus, although the papers in this Special Issue do focus on postcolonial states, their emphasis on the continuing effects of coloniality on contemporary inequalities has wider significance. Baber (2022: 161) recently makes a similar argument when noting that a specifically modern form of racism was spread globally and that, 'depending on the specific conjunction of historical, structural and political circumstances … various ideologies of racism are interpreted, reformulated, internalised and selectively deployed by the dominant classes and elites of these societies to pursue their own interests and hegemonic projects that produce new forms of racialised class inequalities.' This recognition is vitally important given the rise of post-racial discourses and analyses (Erel et al. 2016) that seek to undermine the continuing effects of racism in contemporary social life.

Such a relational approach also enables us to recognize that local manifestations are always connected to wider sets of extra- and transterritorial arrangements, as several of the papers in this journal, particularly that by Siddiqi and Ashraf, so vividly demonstrate. By adopting a transnational, multi-scalar analytic, Siddiqi and Ashraf are able to understand what appears to be a local or national Covid crisis within the global dimensions. It also crucially provides a framework for understanding how different racist and exclusionary practices in any given locality

are shaped by those elsewhere, and how state histories, logics and techniques of oppression and exploitation are linked across different contexts (Goldberg 2009). As I have argued here, across the papers authors highlight the legacies of colonization and colonialism in contemporary racialized state responses to the pandemic and in the shaping of policies, the ways in which they were implemented and their impact. The pandemic has been shown to provide governments with fertile ground to reinforce nationalism and neoliberalism, with campaigns in the Global North and South both shifting responsibility for the health crisis away from the state and on to the individual, who is imagined as 'an able-bodied citizen with a rooted sense of territoriality, domestic stability and equally distributed infrastructural access' (Orgad and Hegde 2022). Vaughn et al. show that in Kenya, as in multiple places across the globe, government campaigns requiring people to social distance and 'stay at home' were racialized and classed, protecting the White and wealthy. Meanwhile, essential key workers, the undocumented and imprisoned, largely made up of racialized minorities and migrants who are unable to comply, are placed at risk of falling ill and dying from Covid and are disproportionately targeted by the new special police and military powers brought in to enforce the new laws (Human Rights Watch 2020)

Authors across the papers further highlight how the pandemic has legitimized anti-immigrant discourses, providing justifications for states to tighten borders under the guise of a public health response. Siddiqi and Ashraf point to the ways in which the outbreak of Covid-19 has intensified biopolitics and enabled multiple boundary-making projects to flourish in both Global North and South contexts. As Wemyss and Yuval-Davis (2020) point out, similar biometric technologies are being used by authoritarian and liberal governments across the Global North and South in the management and surveillance of people, including those usually reserved for counter-terrorism. It has seen the expansion of grey zones, where racialized, migrant and/or undocumented workers and refugees, such as those identified by Vaughan et al., Musariri and Siddiqui and Ashraf, attempt to live, though increasingly denied regular civil, political and social rights. As the articles across the Special Issue demonstrate, the ways in which these impact on particular groups of people across local contexts are vastly different; however, a relational analysis requiring a sustained analysis of the specifics of the proliferation of racialized borders helps to avoid creating hierarchies of oppression and falling into relativism. It is in this spirit, perhaps, that in their recent Special Issue journal, 'Some Forms of Racism and Anti-Racism in Asia and the Middle East', Modood and Sealy (2022: 5) employ Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblances' to bring a range of phenomena under the rubric of racialization and asks us to explore racialization through 'connected conversations'. Yet the extent to which this interconnectedness enables us to challenge Euro-Americancentric forms of analysis remains unclear, as discussed next.

**Decolonizing Knowledge Production: Towards Epistemic and Social Justice**

Modood and Sealy (2022) point out that claims to racism have unfolded in diverse contexts – among for example, the Rohingyas in Myanmar, the Uyghurs in China and the Dalits in India – inspired by and drawing on the discourses of the Black Lives Matter protests. Emerging shortly after the Rhodes Must Fall campaigns in South Africa in 2015, the Movement for Black Lives has also reignited renewed interest in the decolonization of knowledge, as well as heightened concerns over the dangers of work that reproduces coloniality within knowledge production under its guise (Dar, Dy and Rodriguez 2018; Appleton 2019). In examining the legacy of the racial hierarchies of empires and the development of new forms of racism outside the West, Modood and Sealy (2022) argue that emerging works in the field 'very much have decolonising logics at the heart of their intellectual and conceptual thinking and approaches'.

In this Special Issue, as already noted, the different papers identify the significance of indigenous concepts of race, class and other social distinctions as central to racialization processes (for example, the Chinese concept of *suzhi* in the Introduction by Lan, Sier and Camenisch, or the concept of *bhadralok* emerging in colonial Bengal in the article by Siddiqi and Ashraf). Another inquiry into the ways in which racialization and racisms are localized is offered by Oh (2022). Focusing on South Korea in the context of its postcolonial and neocolonial relationships, Oh points to the distinctive forms of discourse that are identified by the term *injongchabyeol*. While often translated as 'racism', according to Oh (2022), *injongchabyeol* is more accurately translated as 'anthrocategorism', since it refers to discrimination based on any kind of 'human category' and is used discursively to label simultaneous ethnic, racial, national and regional discriminations. For Oh, *injongchabyeol* is therefore able to capture local discursive terrain around difference in Korea, being part of a decolonial move to privilege indigenous meaning-making and decentre Western frameworks. Despite this, Oh recognises the affective power of the term 'racism' in challenging oppression and makes the necessary claim that the identification of a local concept in no way constitutes a dismissal or disavowal of racism in either the local context or elsewhere. Baber (2022) makes a similar point with regard to a range of racial projects in India, where speakers use a range of terms to refer to both caste and casteism, as well as race and racism respectively. He thus cites Sivanandan (1981: 193) that, 'it is practice that defines terminology, not terminology the practice'.

Beyond the identification of racism 'beyond Euro-Americancentric forms' (Modood and Sealy 2022), however, the decolonization of knowledge production requires a radical questioning of dominant epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies shaped by coloniality and the exploration of alternative means of centring the lives of those whose voices have previously been excluded from knowledge production. It also requires a recognition of the ways in which marginalized Black, indigenous, racialized, migrant, queer, women, disabled and trans scholars from all over the globe have contributed to knowledge production and of the specific racialized hierarchies that still determine how that knowledge is valued. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021), for example, points to the erasures of work and concepts developed by African scholars even in work that takes place within a postcolonial and decolonial frame. This is despite the fact that key thinkers such as Walter Mignolo have acknowledged their intellectual debt to African intellectuals such as Samir Amin, Kwame Nkrumah and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

In this Special Issue, Vaughan et al. further argue that work by African scholars has often been sidelined to the margins of knowledge production as 'area studies', rather than being deemed central to intellectual endeavours to understand racisms and colonial power. Their article also raises important questions regarding the ways in which the decolonization of knowledge production may take place. Citing Sylvia Tamale, they remind us that '[i]t takes conscious unlearning and relearning to "shake off" the colonial filters through which we view the world' (2020: 58). While they emphasize that this active unlearning is a necessary practice for scholars in the Global North, it is also recognized to be of significance to those the Global South (Ndlovu 2018). For Vaughan et al., their attempts involve collaboration between scholars in the Global North and South (in this case with a clear majority of Global South scholars), as well as attending to local knowledge by engaging with multiple forms of narrative data and actively seeking to address coloniality within research theories and tools. Fundamental to these attempts to centre African scholars and African communities as legitimate producers of knowledge has been the practice of 'co-production' throughout the research process from initial design through to dissemination. Despite these, the question remains to what extent such practices do in fact decentre dominant epistemologies,

ontologies and methodologies, and regimes of value.

These critical questions have not yet been sufficiently addressed in the emerging research on Global South racisms and racisms 'beyond colour', but which are inseparable from questions of resistance and liberation. As Smith (2021: 285) argues, 'critique is not enough'. Scholars working in this area do often point to the interconnections between theorizing race and anti-racist politics and the need to draw on the former to inform the latter (see, for example, Raghuram 2022). Yet work in this area has not yet developed fully and needs to engage more deeply with the wider literatures on decolonization as praxis. In doing so, it may draw on the knowledges produced by the Global South and other marginalized scholar-activists. In this Special Issue, the question of resistance is addressed in ways that highlight how, as argued by Aboagye (2022: 6) – whose own work examines connections shared between First Nations and African diasporic peoples in Australia and throughout the Black Pacific – 'Racialisation as the primary unit of social analysis is not enough on its own for the liberation of our minds and our spirits.' As discussed in the papers focusing on South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, the racialization of Self and Other by Black Africans constitutes a form of resistance that endangers Black lives and occurs in the absence of power to disrupt the White-Black racial hierarchy. The analyses offered are vital and important. What is powerful, however, in Aboagye's work is an attempt to build an indigenist sociological theory that is grounded in *healing* settler-colonial constructions of racial hierarchies of Blackness, recognizing that these do not mirror Black ontological experiences, and aiming to attend to the entangled liberations of Black and Indigenous people globally.

From this perspective, it is apt that this Special Issue ends by focusing on anti-racist mobilizations as a response to racialization in the article by Baumann and Denardi. In the context of Covid-19, it is perhaps unsurprising that the authors explore 'digital anti-racism' as a tool for anti-racist work. Siddiqi and Ashraf likewise show how the voices and resistance of Bangladeshi garment workers have been most visible online, in Facebook pages set up since the pandemic. In both articles, but particularly the former, the authors seek to restore the agency of those who are subject to racialization by identifying emerging moments of resistance that have the potential to enact social and political transformations. However, in Baumann and Denardi's article, the scale and impact of that resistance, and its participation by and benefits to different groups of Chinese people in Argentina, in terms, for example, of citizenship status, gender, generation and position in the labour market, need to be pinpointed more clearly. This is particularly important in the context of their focus on digital activism, which raises questions about which groups are able to use social media and in communication with whom, given the restrictions of language, age and the economic means to name but a few. This is necessary to avoid a celebratory discourse that both understates the gravity of the challenges faced by different sections of these communities and overstates the power of digital anti-racist activism. On their own, the examples given of the media visibility granted to several individual second-generation Chinese immigrants provides insufficient evidence that the 'institutional change at the macro-level' that the authors hope for is being effected. As Lan, Sier and Camenisch rightly point out, the role of digital media is highly contradictory. Scholarship in this area widely points to the ways in which, in digital spaces, modes of anti-racist resistance can be, to cite Sutherland (2017: 33) 'appropriated to reinforce systems of white supremacist power and racial inequality, re-inscribing structural and systemic racism'.

A final note of consideration arises in relation to the question that Vaughan et al. raise about the dissemination of research and the ways in which scholars need to remain accountable to 'the communities of knowers from which these knowledges emerge' (Aboagye 2022: 13). In this case, one might pause to consider the ways in

which we as scholars might be complicit in reproducing and recirculating racialized and racist media imagery as we critique it in our texts, and in doing so, contribute to the emotional distress experienced by the communities we seek to serve. This is part of a broader point with regard to reflexivity on the part of researchers, and the necessary unlearning and relearning to shake off not only the colonial filters through which we view the world, but also those practices through which we do research and share knowledge. Scholarship on racism and racialization needs to be linked to imagining alternative models of thinking, epistemic freedom (Mbembe 2016) and, above all, emancipatory action in order to move us towards social justice.

**References**


Aboagye, K. 2022. Restoring Black/Indigenous Relations in Australia: An Indigenist Sociological Theory for Bla(c)k Indigeneity in the Global South. *Journal of Global Indigeneity 6*(1): 1-24.

Ang, S., E.L.E. Ho, & B.S. Yeoh. 2022. Migration and New Racism Beyond Colour and the 'West': Co-Ethnicity, Intersectionality and Postcoloniality. *Ethnic and Racial Studies 45*(4): 585-594. **https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1925321**

Appleton, N.S. 2019. Do Not 'Decolonize'. If You Are Not Decolonizing: Progressive Language and Planning Beyond a Hollow Academic Rebranding. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, February 4. **http://www.criticalethnicstudiesjournal.org/blog/2019/1/21/do-not-decolonize-if-you-are-not-decolonizing-alternate-language-to-navigate-desires-for-progressive-academia-6y5sg**

Alatas, S. H. 1977. *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and Its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass.

Baber, Z. 2022. 'Race Might Be a Unicorn, but Its Horn Could Draw Blood': Racialisation, Class and Racism in a Non-Western Context. *Critical Sociology 48*(1), 151-169. **https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920521992093**

Barker, M. 1981. *The New Racism*. London: Junction Books.

Bonnett, A. 2021. *Multiracism: Rethinking Racism in Global Context*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Dar, S., A.M. Dy and J.K. Rodriguez. 2018. Is Decolonizing the New Black? *Sister of Resistance*, July 12. **https://sistersofresistance.wordpress.com/2018/07/12/is-decolonizing-the-new-black**

Dikötter, F. 1992. *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*. London: Hurst Publishers.

Erel, U., K. Murji and Z. Nahaboo. 2016. Understanding The Contemporary Race-Migration Nexus, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (39)8: 1339-1360. **https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1161808**

Goldberg, D.T. 2009. Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts On Method, Ethnic and Racial Studies 32(7): 1271-1282. **https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870902999233**

Gonzalez-Sobrino, B. and D.R. Goss. 2019. Exploring the Mechanisms of Racialization Beyond the Black-White Binary. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42(4): 505-510. **https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1444781**

Mbembe, A.J. 2016, Decolonizing the University: New Directions. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15(1): 29-45. **https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022215618513**

Miles, R. 1982. *Racism and Migrant Labour.* London: Kegan Paul.

Modood, T. and T. Sealy. 2022. Beyond Euro-Americancentric Forms of Racism and Anti-racism. *The Political Quarterly* 93(3): 1-9. **https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.13138**

Ndlovu, M. 2018, Coloniality of Knowledge and the Challenge of Creating African Futures. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 40(2): 95-112. **https://doi.org/10.5070/F7402040944**

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. 2021. The Cognitive Empire, Politics of Knowledge and African Intellectual Productions: Reflections on Struggles for Epistemic Freedom and Resurgence of Decolonisation in the Twenty-First Century. *Third World Quarterly* 42(5): 882-901. **https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1775487**

Oh, D.C., ed. 2022. *Mediating the South Korean Other: Representations and Discourses of Difference in the Post/Neocolonial Nation-State*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. **https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11938487**

Orgad, S. and R.S. Hegde. 2022. Crisis-ready Responsible Selves: National Productions of the Pandemic. *International Journal of Cultural Studies 25*(3-4): 287-308. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F13678779211066328

Raghuram, P. 2022. New Racism or New Asia: What Exactly Is New and How Does Race Matter? *Ethnic and Racial Studies 45*(4): 778-788. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2021.1951319

Sivanandan, A. 1981. Race, Class and Caste in South Africa – An Open Letter to No Sizwe. *Race and Class 22*(3): 293-301. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F030639688102200305

Smith, L.T. 2021. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London/New York/Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing/Zed Books.

Sutherland, T. 2017. Making a Killing: On Race, Ritual, and (Re)Membering in Digital Culture. *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture 46*(1): 32-40.

Tamale, S. 2020. *Decolonisation and Afro-Feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press.

Wemyss, G. and N. Yuval-Davis. 2020. Bordering during the Pandemic. *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture 75*(75): 13-17.

Yeh, D. 2018. How Young British East and Southeast Asians are Engaging in a New Politics of Belonging. *The British Academy*, June 22. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/how-young-british-east-southeast-asians-engaging-politics-belonging/

Yeh, D. 2020. Covid-19, Anti-Asian Racial Violence, and the Borders of Chineseness. *British Journal of Chinese Studies 10*. https://doi.org/10.51661/bjocs.v10i0.117

Yeh, D. 2021. How the UK's East and South-East Asian Communities are Fighting Covid-related Violence. *Open Democracy*, 23 November. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/pandemic-border/how-east-and-south-east-asian-communities-are-fighting-covid-related-violence/

Yuval-Davis, N., G. Wemyss and K. Cassidy. 2019. *Bordering*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

## Note on the Author

Diana Yeh is Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Culture and the Creative Industries at City, University of London. Her project, 'Responding to COVID-19 Anti-Asian Racial Violence through Community Care, Solidarity and Resistance' (https://www.eseahub.co.uk/), is funded by Resourcing Racial Justice and the SASS HEI Fund. Recent articles: 'Becoming "British East Asian and Southeast Asian": Anti-racism, Chineseness, and Political Love in the Creative and Cultural Industries' (2021) and 'COVID-19, Anti-Asian Racial Violence and The Borders of Chineseness' (2020).
Email: diana.yeh@city.ac.uk