Afro-futurist Resistance at Queen's

An interview with Dr. Philip Howard by Sylvia Grills, PhD candidate, Sociology

I recently spoke with Dr. Philip Howard from the Integrated Studies in Education Department at McGill University to find out more about his Arts Against Post-Racialism (AAPR) project which is coming to Queen's October 25th. The project focuses on instances of Blackface and it includes speakers, video, sculpture, performances, and a workshop. Go to McGill.ca/AAPR for more information.

What is post-racialism?

Post-racialism brings together racial expression with the denial of the significance of race and racism. The social relations of race are erased; post-racialism assumes race is no longer worth thinking about and that there are no racial issues while simultaneously reinforcing race through expression. A good example is a costume from a Halloween party in Peterborough where an ex-police officer wore Blackface and was led into the party with a rope around his neck by a friend of his in KKK robes. That costume was given an award. The perpetrator and his friends and family insisted that he was not racist.

What is the significance of Blackface in Canada?

Blackface minstrelsy has a long history in Canada and it is tied up with the commodification of Black bodies. That history is erased in post-racial discourse. Every time a Blackface event happens on a Canadian campus people act like its new-that we couldn't have been prepared. This is part of the pedagogy of racism, post-racial discourse teaches people how to be racist in relation to educated liberal subjectivities divorced from history.

Photo: www.McGill.ca/AAPR

What can people do to challenge post-racialism?

They can hear more of the voices of resistance and discourse about the histories of anti-Blackness in Canada. Resistance is an ongoing process, Black people have been resisting anti-Black racism their whole lives. Black people resist by existing in university spaces. Non-Black people can re-think what is at stake for them as national subjects who occupy university spaces. They can explore and challenge the ways that these subjectivities--that is, as tolerant, liberal Canadian subjects, are forged through racialized social relations that are manifest in ritual performances like blackface.

What can people expect from AAPR?

AAPR is a pedagogical project, it imagines a different future for Black people and it acknowledges how people are making alternative futures now. The project is a reassertion of Black presence that is not parodied, ridiculed, commodified, or appropriated. It is a space for contemplation and imagining what resistance looks like. AAPR creates spaces for healing and discussion for those negatively impacted by blackface and other forms of antiblackness.

Roots and Wings: Because Representation Matters

A commentary by Marsha Rampersaud, PhD candidate, Sociology

Scrolling through my Instagram feed a few months ago I was captivated by a trending hashtag: #FirstTimeISawMe. Across social media, thousands of women and people of colour are using this hashtag to respond to @BlackGirlNerd's call for stories about the first time they saw someone who looked like them represented in mainstream media. An online community has since emerged as people share their stories and bond over the emotion they felt when they saw a black princess; a Middle Eastern family; or a biracial protagonist represented on television for the first time. The truth that underscores all of these stories is that representation matters.

When you are not used to seeing people who look like you, in media and elsewhere, it can be a powerful experience when you do. The **#FirstTimeISawMe** in academia, I was shaken by how affected I was, because until that moment I had never realized how much I needed it. As a junior scholar, it is inspiring and encouraging seeing another woman of colour who has claimed space for herself in the world of academia, and has achieved much success therein. It makes me believe that there may be room for me too, one day.

Equity Talk

The #FirstTimeISawMe was in the Culture Shock episode of The Proud Family. I'll never forget how emotional it made me at age 10.

Michelle LaMarche and Lulama Kotze feel passionately that representation matters, and want to ensure that their daughters see women who look like them in their everyday lives. Inspired by a similar organization in Oakland CA, the two collaborated with women in the community to create **Roots and Wings** in Kingston. The R&W mission is to create a space for young girls of colour so that they can share their experiences, form friendships, celebrate their identities, and learn about ways that they can contribute positively to their communities, both locally and globally. In its short tenure the program has received overwhelming support from community members who want to lend their expertise and run workshops; has become a working group of OPIRG Kingston, and; has also established a student placement partnership with the Gender Studies Department here at Queen's.

R&W programming combines fun activities with social justice education. There are eight workshops scheduled this fall covering a broad range of topics such as tree identification, nutrition and food security, and visual arts and identity. A volunteer from the Sexual Assault Centre of Kingston facilitated the program's kick off workshop earlier in September by guiding an age-appropriate conversation about consent. The girls then made incredible signs displaying their original poetry and slogans, based on their understanding. The following week, the girls proudly carried their signs at the annual Take Back the Night rally, which they attended as a group with their parents. Similar to the online #FirstTimeISawMe community, it is clear that the girls in the program are building their own R&W community together, bonded by their shared experiences. It is exciting and moving to watch. I am eager to see where Roots and Wings goes next!

Gender Matters Speakers Series

A review by Kim Atwood, PhD candidate, Sociology
Photo: Mariela Libedinsky

The Gender Matters Speaker Series hosted a discussion panel chaired by Dr. Samantha King titled, "Strategy Share: Responding to the Queen's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Task Force, and the Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion (PICRDI) report." The six member panel discussed a variety of equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination initiatives at Queen's University. Teri Shearer (Deputy Provost) discussed the university's five-year plan to implement the recommendations of the TRC and PICRDI. She highlighted the newly created Office of Indigenous Initiatives, and the changes that will support equity-seeking groups at the university. Kanonhsyonne Janice Hill (Director of Indigenous Initiatives) discussed initiatives to recruit and support indigenous students at the university. Laura Anderson (Arts & Science Undergraduate Society's Equity Commission) discussed the initiatives to increase diversity and indigenous representation within the ASUS. She highlighted the creation of a 'Reflection Room' (Kingston Hall 213) a study space that will acknowledge the effects of colonization and promote indigenous voices on campus. Dr. Mark Green (TRC Co-Chair) discussed the need to keep the momentum going to promote a continual process of change. He stated that all courses at the university are now required to include content that addresses equity, diversity, inclusion or anti-discrimination issues. Dr. Beverley Mullings (Geography & Planning) discussed the challenges at the departmental level for compiling with these course requirements. In some courses, adding the required content is easy, but in other courses finding the equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-discrimination connections is challenging but still possible. Vishmayaa Jeyamoorthy stated that since writing, "A brown face in a white place" for The Queen's University Journal (October 16, 2015) significant changes regarding diversity and inclusion issues are not noticeable, but she is hopeful that change will occur within the next five years.

Surveillance Studies Centre Seminar Series

A commentary by Ozge Girgin, PhD candidate, Sociology

Surveillance Studies Centre (SSC) Seminar Series have been organized bi-weekly for over 10 years (under the leadership of David Lyon), hosting speakers from Canada and abroad to share their surveillance-focused research with Queen's students, staff, faculty, and the Kingston community.

Our personal details, Google searches, tweets, cellphone records, and purchase histories are recorded and analyzed. We are profiled, sorted, and categorized into groups based on these personal details by state agencies, corporations, and other public and private institutions. Categories and profiles that we are placed into based on our race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, consumption habits, digital traces (and on much more) may affect our life chances in the long and short term, with or without our knowledge. The seminar series provides attendees with the unique opportunity to hear speakers from a wide array of disciplines discuss these surveillance practices, their broader social and political implications, and their effects on individuals and groups in Canada and all over the world.

Some of our speakers recently focused on: the reproduction of historical racial disadvantages in contemporary higher education system in South Africa; the ways in which children's privacy and interactions are impacted by corporate data collection; the role of "Anonymous" on the public disclosure hacks; the surveillance programs that targeted First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples in Canada over two hundred years; the ways in which radicalization indicators reproduce discriminatory police practices; and many more. Please join us every second Wednesday at 12:30pm.

For more information, please visit http://www.sscqueens.org/events/seminar-series or contact Ozge Girgin (14og@queensu.ca) for questions.

Going deep with DEAP

A commentary by Cynthia Levine-Rasky, Sociology

The School of Business is doing it. So is the Faculty of Law. While academic units like Engineering joined in 2015 and 2016, the university's largest faculty, Arts and Science only recently adopted the Diversity and Equity Assessment and Planning Tool (DEAP), an intervention and self-assessment program created by the Equity Office in 2015. Designed to assist units to better understand their environment related to equity, diversity and inclusion, the program is recommended in both the Principal's Implementation Committee on Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Task Force final reports of 2017. DEAP consists of twelve indicators—Strategic Planning, Policies and Procedures, Committee Representation, Admission and Selection of Learners, Support Programs for Learners, Faculty Recruitment, Staff Recruitment, Library Collections, Communication and Community Relations, Curriculum Development, Accessibility, and Consulting Aboriginal Communities. Each unit chooses the indicators that are consistent with their own goals and uses them to conduct a self-audit in twelve months. At the end of that period, units have to complete a progress report. Completed DEAP progress reports are sent to the Equity Office where they are collected and collated in an effort to identify areas of success and areas where barriers may continue to exist. Information collected with DEAP is confidential and will not be made public. Potentially, DEAP can be used to understand the demographic profile of their staff, faculty, and students, to assess their inclusiveness; to identify areas in need of improvement, to support requests for resources, to modify commitments to equity and diversity, and to develop an action plan and timeline to enhance equity goals. The tool is also designed to complement administrative responsibilities such as strategic planning, the cyclical review process, and Queen's University quality assurance process, hiring and appointments processes, and implementation of the academic plan. Erin Clow of the Equity Office explained that the adoption of the tool by 90% of Arts and Science departments this year reflects a "general sense on campus that there is more we could be doing to correct the equity problems that we know are not new at Queen's." While she is encouraged by DEAP's popularity, Clow sees a challenge in sustaining department's commitment to implementing their goals. "Things often start with strategic planning and then they go from there," Clow explained. "Building in equity language in a unit's strategic plan is a foundation for the rest. From there, departments will often look at the accessibility indicator next, and some of the others in the DEAP tool, especially the mid-term ones that are easier to achieve." DEAP includes built-in elements to ensure follow-up. And since the Equity Office is kept informed about a department's progress, they are there to provide support and accountability. With this new tool, and with the support of the Equity Office, departments' plans to improve equity measures have suddenly taken a significant step forward.

Upcoming Talks

Thursday, Oct. 26th, 1:00-2:30pm
"Disrupting planning education and practice through settler-Indigenous relationships" by Leela Viswanathan, Geography and Planning, Queen's
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D214

Friday, Nov.3rd, 12-1:00pm
Policy Speakers Series with Bob Watts, Adjunct Professor, School of Policy Studies
Robert Sutherland Hall, Room 138

Monday, Nov. 6th, 4:30-5:45pm
"The Politics of Disease: Indigenous Health Care, A Genocide by an Other Name"
Author Talk with Gary Geddes
Athletics and Recreation Center, Main Gym

Wednesday, Nov. 8th, 12:00-1:00pm
"Queer Histories/Contemporary Currents"
Gender Matters Speaker Series with Nancy Butler, Tamara Lang, Steven Maynard
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D214

Thursday, Nov. 30th, 1:00-2:30pm
"After the Apocalypse: Decolonization and Reparations" by Molly Kane and Firoze Manji
Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Room D214