

Henry, Frances & Tator, Carol (Eds.) (2009). *Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Pages: 224. Price: \$24.95 CDN (paper).

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The contributors to *Racism in the Canadian University: Demanding Social Justice, Inclusion and Equity* provide a compelling and biting account of the pervasiveness of racism in Canadian universities. Utilizing both empirical data and narrative examples, the authors weave contemporary issues related to faculty representation, tenure and promotion processes; governance and decision making; and the experiences of graduate students into a tapestry that highlights an unspoken, unpopular, and perhaps taken-for-granted notion: the people of Canada can be infected by the insidious nature of racist attitudes, behaviours, structures, and processes.

Henry and Tator spend nearly 60 pages providing the necessary contexts for this examination of racism in Canadian universities. Importantly, the authors explain the genesis for the focus of this text, as both scholars have spent their careers examining the intersections of race with social institutions and the resulting impacts to individuals and their communities. They also highlight the historical emergence of the university as a Euro-centric and colonial institution, but contend that important shifts need to occur in the university for it to continue to address the varied needs of multiple and diverse communities.

To further situate the significance of racism in Canadian universities, Henry and Tator review three specific instances at different universities to suggest that the power of whiteness and racialized experiences are still very evident in different parts of the university. In addition to providing extensive context to this text, they elucidate theoretical frameworks and a quasi-typology of racism to enable a variety of readers to understand some of the arguments and vocabulary that are inherent to these sorts of analyses. The authors offer the lenses of critical race theory, critical pedagogy, and narrative inquiry to explore issues of racialization and whiteness as evidenced through different forms of racism, such as, institutional, systemic, democratic, everyday-life, and epistemological. The result is a powerful set of tools and constructs to situate the issues and dynamics as highlighted by the other contributors to this text.

For example, Kobayashi documents her experiences in the education system, thus revealing the complicated and resounding power of the intersection between race and gender. She recounts her feelings of *difference* and *otherness* at a very early stage of her life and relates these feelings to the saliency of whiteness in Canadian society. Kobayashi is reflective in her gaze, both at her personal and her professional development, but highlights the significance of reflection to the struggles and realities of female academics of colour. Specifically, she writes, “[women of colour in Canadian universities] find themselves most marginalized not by those who practice overt racism, but by the majority of white faculty who simply cannot see, feel, or understand the ways in which Others are marginalized” (p. 69). She continues to emphasize, “the subjective process of understanding oneself as racialized, then, is a significant part [of enabling cultural/institutional change]” (p. 69). Importantly, Kobayashi provides some critical parameters to her notion of whiteness, which include, “the construction of dominant discourses and the mobilization of power according

to standards set within a white cultural framework...the creation of difference by subtle cultural means...[ranging] from speech patterns to body language, from social distance to etiquette, and from friendship to collective action” (p. 70). This emphasis on reflection and whiteness are both accessible and imperative to the arguments in the text, and more importantly, to the broader political movements of social justice and institutional change.

To further explore the power of whiteness in the academy, Monture, a professor of Native Studies and Sociology and a member of the Haudenosaunee community, recounts her struggles with the tenure and promotion process. These struggles highlight the rigid and specific parameters that constitute knowledge as well as the particular contexts within which *valid* research is authorized and legitimated. These tensions are illuminated due to the notion of significance and importance of knowledge to her Aboriginal community and its members and to her scholarly community. Monture noted that the lack of a mentor to provide valuable institutional guidance as well as to help acclimatize her to some of the processes of academe was particularly difficult to overcome. Interestingly, she stated “I had never really considered that peer reviewed journal articles are an essential element of the phrase ‘publish or perish”” (p. 81), which made me reflect on my own experiences and internalized norms of academe as well as the saliency of racism in the processes of transparency.

This reflective gaze on my own trajectories and assumptions was also invoked by the chapter by Hernandez-Ramdwar, who conducted interviews with undergraduate and graduate students of colour who possessed various Caribbean heritages. The students noted the importance of family responsibilities and financial debt in their university experiences. An understanding of the embeddedness of racism is not really articulated by the undergraduate students, but the graduate students are adeptly aware of racialization processes. For instance, curricular emphases that highlight the experiences and voices of particular cultural groups are found by some graduate students to be extremely exclusionary. Also, noting a lack of diversity in his program, one doctoral student lamented over the perception that he is the voice of that particular group/community to his white student peers. This chapter forces me to assess my own interpretations and trajectories of my undergraduate and graduate years. Again, the reflective imperative is one of the most powerful elements of this text.

The beginning of the chapter by James highlights an important dimension to higher education literature and discussions. James emphasizes the multiple opportunities in the US where racialization and the improvement of the conditions of academic work for faculty members of colour are discussed and uses this dynamic as a backdrop to illustrate the marginal and recent emphasis on Canadian campuses. While American higher education is still fraught with racial tensions and systemic inequities, James’ assertion points to the need for focused conversations and changes about racial inequities (and other inequities) in Canadian higher education institutions. James examines the culture of academe as a powerfully rigid and unforgiving enterprise where various processes and structures police the boundaries of legitimate knowledge and authority. Importantly, he employs social categories of culture and religion to further his critique of the ivory tower. Noting that the academy is rife with power and exclusionary dynamics, he continues by exploring the multiple dynamics related to the hiring of faculty members. Importantly, James reveals that members of selection committees often do

not ask about an applicant's race. Yet James astutely states, "this failure to explicitly talk about race or the identities of faculty members is related to the notion that to raise questions of race or identity is to be prejudiced or backward" (p. 141). Fundamentally, James argues that the appointment of racially diverse faculty members needs to move beyond *bean-counting*, to recognize that a diverse faculty complement relates to a diversification of research questions, methodologies, epistemologies, and pedagogies.

Despite this increasing attention to issues of racialization, an important element to institutional change is the policy implementations that reflect the imperatives of social justice and inclusion. The chapter by Dua offers empirical data on the mission statements and policy contexts of various Canadian higher education institutions. In conjunction with these documents, Dua interviews various staff personnel in diversity and equity offices and raises the questions about the extent to which anti-racist policies have been developed and the efficacy of their implementation. The findings from this study suggest that numerous limitations prevent the construction and implementation of these policies, and these findings map on to a notion from Monture's chapter, that is, she finds "universities are equity literate, meaning that they can write equity down but still struggle to practice or live equity" (p. 89). In many ways, the demand for social justice and equity falls on this very complicated but salient reality: in what ways, can individuals committed to this imperative develop and create mechanisms that promote a more just future?

While the pervasiveness of racism is evident on multiple levels in the universities, I was struck by the crushing despair in each chapter as it related to the experiences and trajectories of people of colour in Canadian academe. What of the faculty members, administrators, community advocates, and graduate students who suffer the racialization, but still operate within the academy without the oppressive consequences of these regimes? Have these individuals internalized the colonial tendencies of the historic university? Have they committed cultural suicide and adopted hegemonic forms of knowledge production, assessment, and pedagogy? To what extent have they balanced (or compartmentalized?) the competing professional and personal demands that exist in academe? I raise these points as important contexts to further situate how to create and implement institutional policies with social justice imperatives.

Overall, this text is invaluable reading that addresses the taboo topic of racism in Canadian university. Importantly, it offers cogent theoretical frameworks and multiple analyses, all communicated through accessible language, to require a committed reflection and investment by individuals concerned about the future of the Canadian university. ♣