LOCATING AFRICAN STUDIES IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: FOSTERING NEW DIRECTIONS AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITIES
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Black Lives Matter, Police Abolition and Digital Technologies

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Considerations for Police Abolition in the Global South

In recent years the abolitionist movement has gained traction, steered into the public sphere alongside the Black Lives Matter (BLM) campaign. At the BLM's height in 2020, following the murder of African American man George Floyd by a USA police officer, calls were made to abolish – or defund – the police, and instead reinvest resources back into the community for welfare and crime prevention at its roots. BLM took up space in other countries through the Global North, such as Australia, where First Nations people suffer at unproportionally high rates at the hands of police. In the same year, the ENDSARS campaign reignited in Nigeria, with calls to abolish the corrupt and heavy-handed Special Anti-Robbery Squad. However, this Squad is but one unit within the Nigerian Police Force. This paper outlines the considerations which would go along with police abolition in the Global South, with a focus on Nigeria and South Africa as case studies. It asks whether there is a need for police abolition, whether there is a desire for police abolition, and what police abolition might look like in practice. Abolitionists state that we cannot be successful unless the carceral state (i.e., police and prisons) is abolished across the globe. This paper shows that whilst there are similar rationales present to those used to call for police abolishment in the Global North, the Global South may present distinctive considerations.

Bio:

Leighann Spencer is a criminology academic who specialises in formal/informal policing and justice, identity, and human rights. She has written extensively about these topics in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and teaches the Australian context at La Trobe University and Charles Sturt University.

Round Table: Black Africans in Australia: Stories, Identities and Activism

This roundtable brings together feminist scholars working at the intersections of critical race, gender and digital media studies. Together we talk through the intersections of our research projects that centre Black African experiences in Australia. We draw on our decades of research expertise as well as lived experiences to critically discuss how Black Africans navigate life in Australia, with a particular focus on their digital engagement in racialised movements and discourses such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement, and the hashtag #BlackQueens. We argue that Black African people use digital technologies to engage in counter-hegemonic ideologies, to find spaces of healing, solidarity and support, and to build upon social movements and advocate for meaningful change. We argue that for Black Africans who have been excluded and silenced within normative white, settler-colonial Australian spaces, digital sites – such as social media – and digital movements – such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement - are important sites in which Black African Australian stories, identities and activism can be collectively (re)made and (re)claimed.

'Racism isn't getting worse, it's getting filmed': African Australian youth and the #BlackLivesMatter movement

Claire Moran (Monash University) and Kathomi Gatwiri (Southern Cross University)

The murder of African American man George Floyd by a white police officer in May 2020 – captured on a smartphone and shared on Facebook - sparked a resurgence of the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement globally. Social media played an instrumental role in shaping BLM discourse, with social media users sharing, hashtagging and liking BLM content across platforms. In Australia, Black African young people engaged extensively in the BLM movement, using their social media platforms to share their own experiences of anti-Black violence and racism. This paper explores these practises, drawing on a social media ethnography and multiple participant interviews with Black African young people in Australia (n=15). Our findings indicate that participants used the BLM movement as a discourse upon when they could build their own narratives and experiences of racism and violence. Participants' social media posts challenged the criminalisation and problematisation of Black African bodies in Australia and called out white privilege, white silence and performative allyship.

Unfollow, Block & Delete: How interracial relationships were affected by the upsurge of BlackLivesMatter in Australia

Kathomi Gatwiri
Historical, political, cultural and social factors influence the context of interracial relationships in Australia. The duality of whiteness and Blackness produces a racial dynamic that plays a significant role in the relationship. At the height of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement (BLM) in 2020, interracial relationships were tested by the racial destabilisation summoned by the Movement. Put simply, interracial relationships are not 'racially empty', so while they experience similar challenges to same-race relationships, those involved must also work through their own internalised and external racial narratives and stereotypes imposed upon the relationship by a profoundly racialised society. In this paper, I probe how Black people navigated these tensions at the upsurge of the Movement and argue that the political significance of race enters interracial relationships and theoretically transforms them into racial battlegrounds. The research found that relationships were affected significantly if white people within the interracial context refused to acknowledge the reality and the impact of racism as well as the relevance of the Movement. To this end, Black people chose to 'suspend' some relationships while others were blocked, deleted or unfollowed.

#BlackQueens and Black Bodies on Instagram: Perspectives from young Black African women in Australia

Claire Moran and Virginia Mapedzahama (University of Sydney)
African Australian diasporic literature has drawn attention to the highly racialised experiences that Black African women encounter living in bodies that are raced as Black in settler-colonial Australia. Within their (in)visibility – they are looked upon in suspicion and yet also ignored, silenced and excluded. Using a multiple method study design involving social media ethnography and the 'scroll-back' interview method, this paper explores the everyday social media practices of nine young, Black African women in Australia. Through the critical race lens of (in)visibility, we centre the racialisation of the Black African body as crucial to their digital practices and experiences on social media. This paper argues that social media is used to visibilise and (re)claim contemporary Black African womanhood, amongst a global digitally mediated

community of Black African women. These, Black female-centred empowerment digital communities are important spaces in which young, Black African women in Australia can unlearn, resist, and reject the harmful racialised ideologies that they have endured (and continue to endure) in settler-colonial Australia.