

Race (and Racialization) and the Analytical Study of Religion

SORAAAD 2018

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“(The ideas) of Racecraft govern what goes with what and whom (sumptuary codes), how different people must deal with each other (rituals of deference and dominance), where human kinship begins and ends (blood), and how Americans look at themselves and each other (the gaze). These ideas do not exist purely in the mind, or only in the mind. They are social facts - like six o’clock, both an idea and a reality. Because Racecraft exists this way, its constant remaking constantly retreats from view. This, “now you see it, now you don’t” quality is what makes racism - the practice of a double standard based on ancestry - possible.”

Karen E. Fields and Barbara J Fields, “A Tour of Racecraft,” *Racecraft*

“Evidence of the changing and inconsistent composition of racialized groups, and definitions of racial difference in the course of modern history, suggests that "race" must be recognized as at least as unstable, at least as contingent, as subject to the same historical contexts that have continually reproduced and reconstituted class, gender, and other social formations. Evidence for the inextricability of racial formation from other historical processes emerges in the frequent observation that the "new racism" of the late nineteenth century accompanied rising antisemitism, including pogroms, and the Dreyfus Affair, and enhanced class stratification in Europe. Yet how do we comprehend the relationship between race and other historical processes? “

Laura Tabili, “Race is a Relationship and Not a Thing.”

How do we design research and collect data on race, the processes of racialization, and religion? How do we trace their intersections with disability, gender, orientation, and class while also challenging the idea that race or phenotypic preoccupation is a universal mode of human aggregation? How do we rejoin attention to these issues along with different scales of social and political aggregation and power? To address these issues and more, we are pleased to announce that Rudy Busto, Kelly Baker, Jolyon Thomas, Chloe Martinez, Jens Kreinath, and Kevin Gannon will share their work and insights.

SORAAAD asserts that all discussions of race, racialization, and religion necessarily factor into larger social scientific discussions regarding principles of representation and responsible uses of evidence. At the same time we recognize that research on race and religion needs to integrate other facets of human existence and modes of aggregation, such as politics, economics, culture, and organizations, and these at varied scales. Multiple disciplines are working now to decolonize themselves, and yet such efforts exist often alongside—and sometimes overlap with—others to defend empire. How do we construct studies of race that are not trapped in narratives of white supremacy or the impacts of colonialism retrojected over time? And how do we construct studies of race and religion that capture these categories as discursive sites and constructive processes?

In its 8th annual workshop, SORAAAD is happy to host an alliance of scholars to discuss the state of different initiatives to correct public and scholarly understandings of race. Drawing on research from across the humanities and social sciences, and noting also new advances in the digital humanities that provide unprecedented access to primary sources, we ask together: How do we revisit the data of human history?

- Ipsita Chatterjea, David Walker, and Jamel Velji for the SORAAAD workshop committee.

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