

Why De-colonial? Why the Humanities?

For many of us investigating the different faces of the growing imperial control of Western countries (from Spain and Portugal, to England, France, Germany and Holland to the US), the Humanities that shaped the Renaissance and the Kantian-Humboldtian universities) were willingly or not part of the imperial/colonial enterprise. Humanists and humanities during the European renaissances were responsible for giving a particular meaning to the concept of Man and taking it as the prototype of The Human. However, the very concept of Man as model of Human, in the European Renaissance, served also as the model to evaluate and classify Humanity around the globe. Racism, as we understand it today, has its foundation in the European renaissance. Patriarchy, as we know it today, has its foundation also in the European renaissance. The renaissance concept of Man was the model for both the prototype that justified the disqualification of people who did not conform to Western Christianity, to Greco-Roman languages and categories of thoughts, rationality and knowledge; to political and economic organization, and to the sociological status attributed to gender roles both in Christianity as well as in its subsequent translation into secular liberalism.

If then, the Humanities were involved in the formation of Western imperial reason, De-colonial Humanities describes a project oriented toward unveiling the racial and patriarchal principles behind the foundation of the Humanities and to contribute in building a non-racial and non-patriarchal future. Common calls for “changes in the disciplines,” “advancements of knowledge”, “economic growth” etc., are not necessarily “good” in themselves and not necessarily beneficial for all. “Improvements” as well as “development” are all double edges-swords. De-colonial Humanities is a scholarly project (epistemic and political) that has its roots—not in Greece, not in Rome, not in the European enlightenment—but in the life, histories, memories, wounds, indignities of colonial histories in the Americas, South and East Asia, the Middle East, the Mahgreb and Sub-Saharan Africa but also in Europe (Ireland, Southern Italy); in the experiences and memories of ex-Russian and ex-Soviet colonies in Central Asia and Caucasus. De-colonial Humanities and De-colonial projects in general, are one of the options to imagine and build global and cosmopolitan futures.

THE CENTER FOR GLOBAL STUDIES AND THE
HUMANITIES (DUKE UNIVERSITY)
in collaboration with
THE INSTITUTE FOR TRANSCULTURAL AND POST-
COLONIAL STUDIES (INPUTS), UNIVERSITY OF BRE-
MEN, GERMANY and THE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY
OF DUTCH SLAVERY AND ITS LEGACY
(NiNsee), AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND

announces a symposium on

REFLECTIONS ON THE DE-COLONIAL OPTION AND
THE HUMANITIES: AN INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

February 21-22, 2008.
Room 240, Franklin Center

Sponsored by: African and African American Studies
(Duke Univeristy)

<http://www.jhfc.duke.edu/globalstudies>

