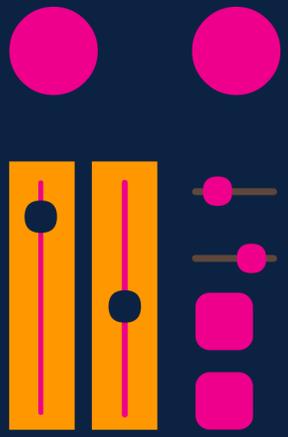


PHILOSOPHIES OF DIFFERENCE &

THE PHI RESEARCH GROUP (DEAKIN) PRESENT:

# ON ANTI-RACISM

## A CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RACE SYMPOSIUM



What is the state of anti-racism today? How do efforts to challenge racism and normative whiteness in society and in academia fare? What are some of the limits of contemporary anti-racist discourse and practices? Is a genuine solidarity in the struggle against racism possible, and what are some of the epistemological, ethical, and political considerations that pertain to anti-racist allies?

This half-day symposium will explore these and other questions through the disciplinary lens of critical philosophy of race, bringing philosophy in conversation with critical race and decolonial scholarship.

### PROGRAM

26 OCTOBER 2017

2pm Welcome

2.15pm *Don't Talk to white People: On The Epistemological and Rhetorical Limitations of Conversations with white People for Anti-Racist Purposes*  
Dr. Amir Jaima (Texas A&M University, USA)

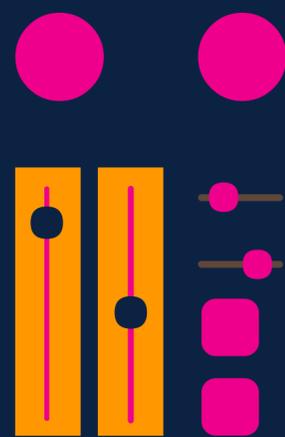
3.15pm *'Walking in the Shoes of Others': A Critical Analysis of Simulative Experiments in the Name of Anti-Racist 'Solidarity'*  
Dr. Helen Ngo (Deakin University)

4.15pm *Playing Michelle Pfeiffer in Dangerous Minds: Racist Anti-Racism in Academia*  
Dr. Bryan Mukandi (University of Queensland)

**THURS 26 OCT 2017**  
**2-5.30PM**  
**FREE - ALL WELCOME**  
WHEELCHAIR ACCESS AVAILABLE

DEAKIN DOWNTOWN  
Level 12, Tower 2  
727 Collins Street  
(near Southern Cross Station)  
Ask at reception for room details

# ABSTRACTS & BIOS



## **Don't Talk to white People: On The Epistemological and Rhetorical Limitations of Conversations with white People for Anti-Racist Purposes**

Productive dialogue with white people for anti-racist purposes is precluded by the political limits prescribed by the “principle of interest convergence,” (Bell 1980) occluded by the epistemological condition of “white ignorance,” (Sullivan and Tuana 2007) and disincentivized by the psychological burdens of “racial battle fatigue” (Smith et al. 2011) borne by you and me, the Black would-be interlocutors. Nevertheless, much popular effort is spent—dare I say wasted—in attempts to talk white people out of their racism. Analogously, much of the scholarly research under the penumbra of Africana Philosophy implicitly directs its narratorial voice toward a white readership, ultimately contributing to our “derelictical” and “methodological” crises in African American Philosophy (Curry 2011). For reasons similar to the difficulties associated with interpersonal engagement with white people, texts and figures that adopt a discursive orientation toward whiteness limit the range, rigor, and impact of their philosophical questions and conclusions. Consequently, I propose that we stop talking to white people—or as I will describe them throughout this paper, following James Baldwin, ‘those-who-think-of-themselves-as-white.’ (Baldwin 1998). This paper examines why we should refrain from engaging in such conversations, noting the difficulties and problems associated with the discursive orientation toward whiteness. In its place, I argue for an explicit effort to redirect the narratorial voice of our scholarly work.

*Dr. Amir Jaima is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Texas A&M University (USA). He received his PhD in philosophy in 2014 from SUNY Stony Brook (USA), where he focussed of the relationship between philosophy and literature. His current research examines the intersection between Africana Philosophy and Aesthetics.*

## **‘Walking in the Shoes of Others’: A Critical Analysis of Simulative Experiments in the Name of Anti-Racist ‘Solidarity’**

In this paper I examine recent anti-racist efforts that seek to simulate the lived experience of racism and Islamophobia in order to generate ‘embodied empathy’ among would-be allies. While well-intentioned, I argue that such efforts to ‘walk in the shoes of others’ offer only a ‘thin’ version of this lived experience, failing to reckon with the epistemological and phenomenological complexity entailed in the embodied experience of racism. Moreover, I argue that these expressions of ‘solidarity’ proceed on the misguided idea that first-hand experience, rather than empathic listening, is generative of meaningful anti-racist solidarity. In doing so, they make way for a different set of problems, blurring the lines between political solidarity and political tourism, re-inscribing harmful practices of knowledge-production, and enacting a version of white ontological expansiveness under the guise of anti-racist ‘activism’ – in short, reproducing the very structures and habits of white privilege they set out to challenge.

*Dr. Helen Ngo is Lecturer in Philosophy at Deakin University. She completed her PhD in Philosophy at Stony Brook University (USA), specialising in phenomenology, critical philosophy of race, and feminist philosophy. Her work explores the phenomenological and existential dimensions of racism, and the relations of self, body, and world entailed in its lived experience. She is author of the monograph, *The Habits of Racism: A Phenomenology of Racism and Racialized Embodiment* (Lexington Books).*

## **Playing Michelle Pfeiffer in *Dangerous Minds*: Racist Anti-Racism in Academia**

This paper examines anti-racism in academia by way of a close reading of popular tropes around the epistemic liberation of people of colour in academic contexts. To this end, I examine several films, beginning with *Dangerous Minds*, and deconstruct their narratives, which I argue are all reducible to a variation of ‘the white saviour’ narrative. I argue that the broad verisimilitude of these narratives reflects the dominant racist understanding of racialised people in majority white contexts. This understanding subjects the racialised as those who cannot act; those who must, as Fanon put it, ‘be acted upon’ (*avoir été agi*). With action deemed to be white, anti-racism is taken to be dependent on generous or virtuous white action. Even in academia, I argue, the dominant understanding of anti-racism is predicated on a racist white messianism - a more just future is taken to be predicated on white administration, white theorisation, white publications, white generosity, white patronage. I offer in its stead a model of epistemic justice that rejects white salvation. I examine this model by way of a reading of Spike Lee’s *Malcolm X*, Kesi Lemmons’ *Talk to Me*, and Haile Gerima’s *Teza*.

*Dr. Bryan Mukandi studied medicine at the University of Zimbabwe and interned at the United Bulawayo Hospitals. His formal study of philosophy includes a Master’s in Political Philosophy from Queen’s University in Belfast, and a PhD at the University of Queensland. He works in Continental European philosophy, African philosophy, black thought more broadly, the health humanities, and community health.*