



African Studies Centre
Oxford School of Global and Area Studies
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

3RD JULY, 2019.

Statement by the African Studies Centre on the ‘Racialisation and Publicness in Africa and the African Diaspora’ held at St Antony’s College, University of Oxford, 27th-28th June, 2019

On 27th and 28th June, 2019, a Conference on ‘Racialisation and Publicness in Africa and the African Diaspora’ was convened by Professor Wale Adebani, the Rhodes Professor of Race Relations under the auspices of the African Studies Centre.

As stated in the call for papers, the Conference was convened to ‘address the contemporary problem of racialisation in Africa and the African Diaspora.’ The CfP in full adds that ‘The conference organisers are particularly interested in how to approach and analyse racial phenomena ... in public life and how people of African descent are racialised ...[and] why and how racial identities and categories are constructed, imagined and inscribed (in)to the social, political and economic processes, practices and relationships in Africa and the African Diaspora—with significant consequences and implications for human life as well as for what Achille Mbembe describes in *Critique of Black Reason* (2017) as the global “in-common.”’

Two of the Conference’s 18 panels saw papers presented by participants associated with the Institute of Global Anti-Semitism and Policy (ISGAP) based in New York, USA. During the course of the conference, some other participants expressed reservations about these panels and questioned whether ISGAP had been involved in their organisation. This group then signed a statement criticising the assumed connection of the Institute with the Centre and condemning what is described in the statement as the ‘hijacking of the conference’ by the Institute. These participants have also requested a response from the African Studies Centre.

The Centre is happy to make clear that the conference was not planned in concert or coordination with or with the support of ISGAP or any other organisation or interest group outside of the University of Oxford. The proposal for the panels in question was submitted by an individual on behalf of the panel members and not on behalf of the Institute. This panel proposal was subjected to academic peer review as were all the others. The co-sponsors of the Conference within the University are committed, as is the Centre, to promoting African Studies, within Oxford and beyond, providing platforms and opportunities for Africanist scholars and students, both from the continent and the diaspora. We are committed to promoting an anti-racist approach to scholarship and teaching and as far as possible within the broader public sphere. It is to this end that this conference was organised so that contemporary racialisation may be better analysed and understood.

We note the concerns expressed by the signatories to the statement issued at the end of the Conference. Views expressed by any presenters or participants at the conference should not be taken as representing the views of the African Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, other units of the University and the University of Oxford. However, the conference was planned as a forum for the exchange of ideas about ‘why and how racial identities and categories are constructed, imagined and inscribed (in)to the social, political and economic processes, practices and relationships in Africa and the African Diaspora.’ All sessions, including the panels, were planned to support this free exchange of academic ideas from a wide range of views and perspectives. The African Studies Centre hereby reiterates its commitment to free exchange of ideas and the pursuit of academic freedom and will continue to provide a forum for the expression of different views about Africa and the African Diaspora.

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