

# Decolonizing the University: Translating Theory into Practice

## WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Monday, October 25, 2021

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7:30AM - 12:00PM EDT

12:30PM - 5:00PM UK

7:30PM - 12:00PM Ningbo

# PROCEEDINGS

*All times below are in EDT. Follow the hyperlink to find local time.*

## 7:30 AM - WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Remarks by: **Yuhang Rong, Ph.D.**, Associate Vice President for Global Affairs, University of Connecticut, USA

**Michael Bradford, MFA**, Vice Provost for Faculty, Staff & Student Development and Professor of Dramatic Arts, University of Connecticut, United States

**Yuhang Rong** welcomed all participants detailing the partnership with the University of Nottingham and the previous years' series that addressed the question, "Is the University Colonial." Rong stressed that this group of practitioners from around the world now meets to put words into actions to decolonize universities.

**Michael Bradford** also welcomed participants as a gathering of practitioners who are deeply concerned, deeply rooted, and deeply committed to doing the work in the decolonizing space. Bradford noted that this was the time to hack a problem that has been around for a long time. He asked the group to think about how these issues of white privilege embedded in universities can be both intentional and unintentional, conscious, and unconscious. He offered hope for the group to use this workshop as a catalyst to move into action, to employ the collective energy to challenge their respective institutions.

## 7:35 AM - SESSION 1: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZATION

In this session, participants discussed what decolonization theories mean and how translating these theories into practices may vary in different global contexts. Participants shared experiences from their university's perspectives. These presentations aimed to 1) diagnose the problem(s); 2) deconstruct our understanding of what the issues are by identifying the causes and effects of those issues; and 3) gain an understanding of how we got here. This exercise in diagnostic reporting helped identify the greatest challenges and threats in our respective universities as well as national and global political, social and economic contexts.

Discussant: **Helen Williams, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor, Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham

Speakers: **Eliana Amaral, MD**, Professor of Obstetrics, University of Campinas, Brazil

**Clem Marshall, Ph.D.**, Professor, Division of Philosophy, Art & Critical Thought, European Graduate School, Switzerland

**Zulfa Sakhiyya, Ph.D.**, Research Fellow, Asia Research Centre, Universitas Indonesia and Lecturer, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

**Saran Stewart, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor of Higher Education Administration & Director of Global Education for the Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, USA

**Dr. Eliana Amaral**, an obstetrician by training, recognized that social determinants of both education and health are rooted in and intensely impacted by colonization. She noted that in Brazil, people used to say that there was no overt racism, only covert racism. In the last 10 years, she noted, the discussion on decolonizing institutions has started to evolve in academic institutions. The University of Campinas (Unicamp) is well known in Brazil and located in a wealthy region of the country. Recently, they have started an initiative to attract a more diverse student body so that it would mirror the population of the surrounding region. In 2019, the University implemented a quota system for Black, brown, and indigenous students. Amaral examined the challenges in identifying and supporting those students on campus and highlighted the need to make additional efforts to accommodate minority students, as well as to support the career growth of minority faculty and staff

including women. Unicamp is working with partners to move these efforts forward. For Amaral, one obvious solution is to begin teaching young children, particularly those from upper strata of society, about the colonial nature of the country, so that they can speed up the process of decolonizing for a new generation even before they enter the walls of the university. Amaral recognized that she lives in a place of privilege to be able to discuss these topics and move with institutional policies but noted the challenge of the pace of progress, that professors continue to live in a colonial space. It is incumbent upon group members to decolonize the university itself in all senses. It is helpful to start by examining the university internally, but the impacts are felt intensely by those outside the institutions.

**Helen Williams** thanked Amaral and commented on the importance of visible representation of different groups, challenging the workshop participants to think about the wider contexts of the societies we live in, and the need for continued discussion outside the ivory towers.

**Clem Marshall** began by introducing his personal journey of returning to the ancestral space from which his ancestors were stolen and brought to stolen indigenous land. Describing a time he lived in Senegal, he noted that the African idea of living does not happen without rhythm—reminiscing the first thing one would hear in the morning was the pounding of the millet which would soon be in sync across villages. Colonization, according to Marshall, has interrupted the rhythm of life and spirit, and has left humanity floundering in alien space. Marshall referenced Amaral's presentation, agreeing that it is important to start with teaching the children, and that it is important that this work goes beyond the walls of the university. Marshall stressed the importance of language to maintain cultural identity and humanity, that in losing languages we have lost so much of what it means to be human. In Wolof there is a saying that "humans are our own medicine bush," meaning that human beings heal other human beings. Universities can strive to incorporate a strong component of African languages to protect them. Additionally, universities can openly discuss the psychological effect of being colonized, and recapture rituals and rhythms that have been lost that can also aid in learning. Humanity has lost storytelling technology due to colonization, Marshall notes. In its place, it has fomented new and dangerous concepts such as land ownership. Marshall asked, how do we listen more closely to the land around us? He concluded by stating that colonization was an interruption, but the human ship sails on.

**Williams** thanked Marshall and commented that she sees the internalized colonization continuing with some institutions saying that schools are only those physical places where students sit in benches facing a teacher. This idea perpetuates a power structure. Williams noted that knowledge does not come only from books.

**Zulfa Sakhiiyya** outlined her presentation bringing together her ongoing research on higher education, inclusion, and post-colonialism in the Indonesian context. Having worked at the English department for more than ten years provided her with additional insight to her current research and assessment of the Indonesian knowledge ecosystem. She explained that at the broader level, Indonesia is a post-colonial country, having endured Dutch, Portuguese, and Japanese rule. Though it has since gained independence, Sakhiiyya noted that the country still experiences multidimensional crises brought about by coloniality, ranging from electricity shortages to the ability to handle the current pandemic. The modern university maintains the legacy of the Dutch colonial government in that they were established to produce low level colonial bureaucrats to serve as instruments of the colonial government, and this ongoing feudalism is the root of authoritarianism. This suppression is evident in the way the government and stakeholders disband critical academic discussion and use of certain textbooks—thus, sustaining coloniality and discouraging critical thinking. Sakhiiyya then posed the question about how to deconstruct feudalism in higher education. On the level of decolonizing knowledge production, she offered those

universities and academics can reject curricula that focus solely on European thinkers, as well as the sole representation of English. As an educator at a teacher education institution, she instructs future teachers of English. She has successfully shifted discussions from native-ness of English to the mutual intelligibility of different forms of the language. The internet provides resources to show variations in pronunciation and structure, which she incorporates into her lessons. This is one way to decolonize her immediate environment, but Sakhiyya noted that there needs to be continued efforts in pushing decoloniality at the governance level – working with peers across universities and disciplines to give some feedback and to push policy makers to make social changes bit by bit.

**Williams** thanked Sakhiyya and noted that her presentation prompted her to think about the way we treat English as mutual intelligibility rather than a hierarchy or the “right way” to speak a language.

**Saran Stewart** prefaced her remarks with an explanation that she enters this space as a first-generation Afro-Caribbean post-colonial citizen born to colonized parents living in Kingston, Jamaica. She was raised, educated, and worked in Jamaica where she held senior management positions at an institution founded upon the very land of a former slave plantation. Stewart noted that the participants in this workshop are subject to the context of regional perspectives and the intersection of their own power and oppression in doing this work in both global north and south. Coloniality is not a thing of the past, as 2 million persons still reside under colonial rule, mostly in the Caribbean and South Pacific. Stewart also acknowledged the role the University of Connecticut played in settler colonialism, benefitting from the Morrill Act of 1862. Plantation Politics, notes Stewart, provide a bureaucratic blueprint for racist, gendered, classist stratifications in which universities and institutions continue to operate, and that workshop participants are therefore complicit to. Post-secondary institutions were built by enslaved labor, but without the intention of educating or benefitting the enslaved. Stewart further elaborated that the exploitation of Black and brown labor for the economic benefit for the university is exemplified in institutionalized hierarchy and racialized power structures, in policy guidelines and regulations that reinforce the stratification and wealth of the university, and the practice and reward of plantation pedagogy to make it impossible to decolonize the mind. At UConn, she noted, the very land stewarded by tribes are still not theirs. Indigenous students, staff, professors remain short of the mark. Stewart explained that decolonization in higher education calls for equitizing at the systemic level and requires the representational and equitable redistribution of resources to undo the capitalist design of institutions. Stewart broke down the radical changes that are necessary to decolonize the mind and the ways we know knowledge is disseminated. To decolonize pedagogy is to restructure praxis in classroom; and to decolonize academic practice overall means to dismantle the structures of the academy that benefit from the capitalist gain at the detriment and genocide of the people they took those lands from. The goal of this workshop, Stewart remarked, is to recognize our complicity in colonial and unequal systems and to push forward the necessary structures to do the hard work of making our spaces anti-colonial.

**Williams** thanked Stewart and observed common themes have come through, citing the colonization of knowledge, the way systems were put together continues to impact power structures through to today, and understanding the way universities create a specific class of collaborators at the expense of marginalized populations.

### **8:25 AM - BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

During the breakout sessions, participants discussed and reflected on the reports given in Session 1 and thought through possible objectives to bring forth as discussion items in Session 2.

**Facilitators:** **Mark Sabine, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies University of Nottingham (UK)  
**Sandra Sirota, Ed.D.**, Assistant Professor in Residence, Experiential Global Learning & Human Rights, Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut, USA  
**Candace Veecock, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Nottingham (Ningbo), China  
**Manuela Wagner, Ph.D.**, Professor and Director, German Language & Culture Program, University of Connecticut, USA

## 5 MINUTE BREAK

### 8:50 AM - SESSION 2: THE PURSUIT OF DECOLONIZATION

During this session participants attempted to identify what objectives we are seeking to meet in the pursuit of decolonizing the university. Breakout facilitators gave brief reports synthesizing their groups' discussion. Discussants guided the group in a conversation to identify immediate and long-term needs at their respective institutions.

**Discussants:** **Lewis Gordon, Ph.D.**, Professor & Department Head of Philosophy, University of Connecticut, USA  
**Onyeka Nubia, Ph.D.**, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society Teaching at University of Nottingham (UK); Visiting Research Fellow at Edge Hill University and University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

**Candace Veecock** noted that her breakout group discussed the need to unpack the term “decolonizing” and what it really means, and to explore the nuances of this unpacking. A key point was made to recognize and understand nature of participants’ own complicity as professors and people. The colonial power structure has been a matter of survival, while being acted upon, participants have also been actors in certain spaces. The group addressed imbalances of power that puts Black experience at the extreme. In addition to race, they asked, what else can they do to look at the multiple and interconnecting factors such as class, and how can those be addressed at the same time? Group members also need to see how they themselves are colonized while they enact change in institutions and in lives. How can they connect and recapture indigenous forms of knowledge and relationships to nature, to people, to healing, all things that have been taken away or destroyed?

**Sandra Sirota** remarked that her breakout group focused on questions such as what counts as education and knowledge? How to think beyond the university in a global context? They acknowledged that knowledge not limited to classrooms. The group discussed the political context on a global and national scale – that in the United Kingdom, with regards to philosophy and political curriculum, universities have left out colonization, but that it is considered anti-patriotic to look critically at history. There is an international struggle over the purpose of education, that can be aided by efforts to link global institutions to fight fascism. The group also explored connecting decolonizing their respective universities with their personal lives, and others globally. They stressed the need to change university spaces particularly in white universities to make sure there are spaces where people of color can get together to be equipped to face hostilities in larger spaces.

**Manuela Wagner** conveyed that her breakout group posed further questions spurred by the discussions. What is a university? The answer for some is the student body, for others it means the institutional structures, and it is important to

define. The group was interested in different ways of decolonizing the university, and they would like to know more about going toward anticolonial thinking and doing. The primary theme of their discussion was the need to start decolonizing the mind in every way that can be interpreted. What does it mean to open universities? The group looked at cases in history where this work was attempted. They thought about how to challenge colonial complicity in places where it is least expected.

**Mark Sabine's** breakout group sought to answer the question of what defines a university. They agreed upon the idea of an institution that unites many different knowledges, but one that is also predicated on the idea of a single voice with the obvious implication of many of those different knowledges becoming marginalized or under appreciated. They tried to focus on where the learning takes place, and how they can work to push the university beyond the walls and scriptures of the modern institution. The group identified the problem that the preponderance concern for certification, accreditation, and for the marketing of knowledge as a product has come to constrain and diminish the recognition and act of learning. This acknowledgement is fundamental to decolonial work. The group also discussed the issue of language that were raised by speakers in first session and talked about the way in which power structures impact differently on people in different backgrounds. **Yewande Lewis-Fokum**, a lecturer at the University of West Indies in Jamaica, added that the group discussed the difference between "elite" and "elitism", that they are opposed to the latter in terms of institutional structures, but don't reject the pursuit of excellence regarding the former.

Following the presentation of the breakout groups, **Onyeka Nubia** began synthesizing the information and offering a reflection on the session title, "The Pursuit of Decolonization". Nubia began by framing the nature of decolonization, which presupposes the act of colonization, meaning several actions have taken place to create a distortion that alters one's perception. Since the modus operandi of colonization is self-preservation, what colonization does is reorient one's vitals to work for the preservation of somebody else. This other person becomes master, employer, benefactor, or the leader in each context, and the colonized individual is now internally operating in an unnatural way, along with the structures and systems in which they are placed. What decolonization does is acknowledge the fact that someone has attempted to denature an individual and denature the cultures and systems in which they exist. The goal of decolonization is to reorient the individual to a natural state of being that is in harmony with world in which they exist. Nubia noted that this work is difficult because those who are attempting to do work have themselves been colonized. The most powerful tool in the hand of the powerful is the mind of the powerless. Colonization represents this constant feeding process, and doing this work requires the recognition that humans are imperfect tools looking to render themselves in a position where they can be functional. Nubia summarized his path forward in three points: understanding and appreciation for the fact that we have been colonized; understanding and recognizing the structures that perpetuate a colonial mindset; and developing a pedagogy that must be radical, functional, and practical. This pedagogy must push the agenda forward by deconstructing the physicality and emotional capacity of the colonial structure. Nubia stated that he is more interested in focusing his work on the emotional aspect. Emotion governs reason in a stronger capacity than we are willing to admit, therefore we must work in an educational way to develop an emotional intelligence that helps to deconstruct and decolonize. The development of that emotional intelligence must be fed with an idea that it is possible to be colonized. One needs a disciplined program that works on logic and on the emotion and intellect of students. This emotion is linked to decoding and decolonizing key precepts that undermine our capacity to see the world in which we live. It takes away from the fundamental ideas we may have about everything from gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and gives us a blank sheet. This path forward needs to incorporate new knowledge, and continuously put emphasis on the fact that the educator is a

constant student. It must also question bastions of automatic authority. These are lessons that can be drawn from the past going forward into decolonializing spaces.

**Lewis Gordon**, began his remarks thanking participants and acknowledging the Wampanoag land upon which his home institution, UConn, currently sits. Gordon provided the context of previous discussions of colonization, racial and ethnic origins, misrepresentations of people, coloniality of norms, and market commodification. Coloniality, said Gordon, is not just about guns, weapons, and taking land, nor is it only the epistemological closing off ways of thinking, but an act that makes humans willing agents of their exploitation. Gordon noted that colonization has never been a completed effort because there has been resistance throughout. This resistance can lead to a transformation of colonizers because the intelligibility of relationships is open and builds upon one another. For those doing work in the decolonizing space, there are several short- and long-term goals which may seem impossible, but this forum is a start. Gordon alluded to the problem of ethnocide, the effort to erase a culture while the physical bodies remain, describing the process of whitening the institutional structures in Latin America. Gordon described the tension of colonialism in that it creates a moment of an absence of exigency for one group, and the constant imposition of it upon another. If colonized people have no room to think about who they are and how they would like to live freely, then colonialism is an effort to suspend the humanization process. Part of decolonization is to rethink those concepts of humanity. We are living in a period of right-wing effort to valorize and misrepresent the past. What we term universities are dominated by liberalism, a worldview that naively treats the present situation as a matter of speech and toleration in the face of current right-wing forces actively trying to impose fascism. The focus of decolonizing work should be to think about what it is to be a part of communities in which we all have something to contribute. People of color are treated as if our taxes and labor and resources are not contributing to the services we are asking for. We have services for what we contribute to the polity, in a double system in which the affluent or hegemonically racialized superior receive the benefits of everyone else's resources. Transforming this system is part of the project to come. Gordon opened the remaining time to questions and further discussion.

**Wagner** agreed with Gordon that there is a need to acknowledge the work that has been done before, that this work needs to be student-centered, but asked how to position research in the current pedagogy?

**Stewart** raised the point about the cost and risk to doing this work. The fact that this group can meet on these campuses is because of previous rebellions including the Walter Rodney riots. There are multiple ways in which the amoeba of the microcosm of the university is expelled out into the streets and vice versa, interlocked, and interwoven. To continue to do this work we need to acknowledge the risk that is taken as we attempt to decolonize the very institutions, we reside in. Stewart asked that the group consider the hefty prices paid by those previously in this space as the conversations continue and the group develops pedagogies to disrupt and push against systems.

### **9:30 AM - SESSION 3: GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES**

Speakers shared tools and practices already being implemented at their institutions, the successes, challenges and resulting adaptations. Understanding that many ideas of decolonization have not originated within institutions, the intention was to identify best practices that have originated both inside and outside institutions of higher education. The goal being to evaluate whether mainstreaming is as important as creating exemplars and/or whether both requirements can be equally incorporated simultaneously.

**Discussant:** **Robert Mokaya, Ph.D.**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Global Engagement, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity, University of Nottingham, UK

**Speakers:** **Gerrick Cooper**, Senior Lecturer in Maori & Indigenous Studies, University of Canterbury, New Zealand  
**Yewande Lewis-Fokum, Ph.D.**, Lecturer in English Language & Literacy and Teacher Training & Development, School of Education, University of West Indies, Jamaica  
**Rozena Maart, Ph.D.**, Professor and Director of the Centre for Critical Research on Race and Identity, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa  
**Inaya Rakhmani, Ph.D.**, Director, Asia Research Centre, Universitas Indonesia  
**Mary Tupan-Wenno**, Executive Director, ECHO Center for Diversity Policy, The Hague, The Netherlands

**Robert Mokaya** thanked participants in his comments and reiterated sentiments of appreciation for the close partnership between the University of Nottingham and the University of Connecticut. Mokaya introduced this third session on the practices of decolonization, posing the question of whether there is a universality to tools of decolonization or differences for different settings. Mokaya offered that the experience of those coming behind us will be different because of this ongoing work.

**Gerrick Cooper** began his presentation reflecting on decolonization efforts in New Zealand, stating that there is no coherent program amongst indigenous scholars under one banner, but that it doesn't mean they haven't engaged in resistance or critique. Since almost all New Zealand universities are publicly funded, they are complicit in the Treaty of Waitangi, which was signed between the Māori and British settlers in the 1840's. Current discourse within New Zealand often conflates a conversation about continuing the commitment to the Treaty with decolonization; though Cooper views these as quite distinct, but often intersecting, programs. Using the Treaty as a tool to push for change, Cooper noted, Māori have been successful at getting structural change within universities, with some Vice Chancellors that are Māori, and that all universities have Māori studies departments since the 1980's. Cooper identified two approaches to New Zealand's commitment to the Treaty. The first is continued advocacy for cultural appropriateness and responsibility. This approach views educational disparities as a result of cultural disjunctions. A possible resolution for this has been more widespread learning of the Māori language, which is popular and palatable to the white community. The other approach, and the one that is more concerning to Cooper, is that universities have an imperative to engage in partnerships with local Māori tribes. Cooper notes that this approach centers on "developing" the Māori, advocating for existing colonial tools and structures within society rather than liberation and sustained critical engagement with capitalism, ideas of what is knowledge, and challenging racism. One area of hope for Cooper is that there are a greater number of Māori scholars in a vast range of disciplines, which creates the potential for us to develop a more coherent decolonial agenda.

**Yewande Lewis-Fokum** echoed Stewart's previous comments regarding the oxymoron of the University of the West Indies Mona Campus having been built on a former plantation that educates the descendants of the former enslaved. Lewis-Fokum outlined the University's three goals of access, alignment, and agility. She noted that access to university education has increased for first generation college students, but there continues to exist a tension between elitism in university management, and the pursuit of academic excellence. She described the strides that have been made concerning language – that the Jamaican language department has given serious consideration into integrating Jamaican Patois or Creole, the most widely spoken language on the island, into instructional usage. In her research interviews, she uses the language and orthography to document exactly how the interviewee uses Creole rather than to translate over it as if they were speaking English. Other linguists are adapting the teaching of English language into early childhood classrooms where most students

are native Creole-speakers. Further, there is a movement to recognize West Indian Literature and African Literature, and the University has changed the name of the Department of Literatures to include the plural, rather than focusing solely on English literature. Lewis-Fokum noted that there is still a long way to go in ensuring students are experiencing quality education as a part of inclusive pedagogy.

**Mokaya** commented on the power of language and how it can be used both positively and negatively. Growing up in Kenya, he was aware of a program that allowed for older folks to go to school. A group of ladies in their 50's and 60's who were fluent in local languages were herded to school because they were considered uneducated. As it turned out, they figured that they didn't need to learn English, and left the school. They had the education that they needed to do everything without having learned English.

**Mary Tupan-Wenno** described her herself as a product of colonization, having been born in Dutch New Guinea, and experienced colonization that is very much integrated into the fabric of modern Dutch society. While her organization doesn't talk about decolonization directly, their focus is to promote ethnic and cultural diversity and inclusion policies within their university partners. They do so by raising awareness and engaging with communities whose voices are not heard or not included in developing policy and practice. In 2001, Tupan-Wenno noted, Dutch newspapers referred to the country's increasing multiculturalism as a "drama", with negative implications. Students coming from multicultural or multiethnic backgrounds were described as problematic. Even though ECHO is a small organization, Tupan-Wenno started a program to highlight the strengths those students brought to the university, and the country at large. She sent letters to the presidents of all universities and asked them to send nominations of the top three students from a migrant background, who had high academic marks and were involved in community volunteer work to be considered for an award from ECHO. The government and private companies have since come to embrace this award. ECHO has had many conversations with students who were nominated and are using this award as a platform to change the national discourse around multiculturalism in the Netherlands.

**Mokaya** thanked Tupan-Wenno for giving her example as a practice of increasing diversity and inclusion and asked if there might be an opportunity to understand the impact of the program.

**Rozena Maart** began by responding to comments from Nubia's presentation that this conversation would have been impossible twenty years ago, adding that at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference of July 1967, activists did not want to talk about racism and violence, and offered a complete refusal to address the issues we are talking about in this workshop. She continued that as a first-generation student to go to college, these were lessons she began to learn in the 1970's and is now facing this process in her role as a professor. Maart described the challenges coming face to face with Black colleagues and peers who are a part of the colonized class, but who have taken the prerogative as the new colonizers. According to Maart, these colleagues are setting up an identity where they are instructing other Black people on how to be South African. Echoing a theme from previous presentations, language continues to be a point of contention in South Africa. At the University of KwaZulu Natal, where isiZulu is the language of instruction, Maart noted that it has been interesting to see the parents of her students arguing against that policy because they see their children as not being equipped enough to exist or compete internationally if they are not being taught in English. Maart herself has been subject to discrimination against the backdrop of colonial hierarchy. Since she did not take her degree in a Philosophy Department, she was unable to receive a tenured track position in Philosophy at her University. As a part of her work in decolonizing the university, she noted that knowledge must be accessible, but also generated by the students who can then press for changes to the

institution. Her focus on what those students bring to the decolonial table has been seen as radical by a generation of her colleagues in university leadership who want to maintain their position of leadership, power, and authority within the established colonial hierarchy.

**Mokaya** thanked Maart for her great points, particularly noting the juxtaposition between colonizers and those who are colonized. He summed that those in universities need to work within the wider context of society because decolonization does not take place in isolation.

**Inaya Rakhmani** attributed the current decolonizing debate within Indonesia to the inherently problematizing structure of capitalism. She noted that structures of colonial power are reproduced through leadership positions within universities because they prioritize neoliberal interests that casualize labor and academic interests, while simultaneously making it difficult to maintain and nurture knowledge. What these structures produce are quick fixes to research and development operations that follow international university rankings, which mean that universities compete against each other for donor and government funding, as well as student candidate pools. Rakhmani noted that the Indonesian university system was inherited from Dutch, and during the movement toward independence and anti-imperialism, those intellectuals and communist-leaning artists who banded together in support of this movement experienced state suppression and genocide. After 30 years of authoritarian rule, universities still uphold the imperialist structure, and continue to suppress student activism through intimidation and imprisonment. New market-driven forces have opened new opportunities for students to ally with each other, but they have also created competition for stable recruitments, employment, and tenure within the university structure. Rakhmani concluded by stating that any effort for decolonization needs to go beyond the conversation of representation and diversified backgrounds, but how we manage and fund research, treat participants, and how people's lives change because of university research. We too are tools of the university structure.

**Mokaya** thanked Rakhmani for her perspective, noting that the requirement to decolonize remains constant, but the context changes all the time. He acknowledged that while he is passionate about the work of decolonizing the university, he also holds a leadership position within that structure, and understands that not everyone in his position is able to see both sides of this equation.

**Cooper** added that there are opportunities for conversations across groups of academics and acknowledged an increasing number of scholars engaged in theory and in decolonization. In New Zealand, he noted, the word is being spoken about in a broader sense more recently over the last couple of years, and that scholars are currently engaged individually but not collectively.

**Mokaya** closed the session with a plea to focus on how the group can take this conversation to the next step, to translate and to challenge those who need to be making the decisions to change colonial structures

## **10:25 AM - BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

During the breakout sessions, participants will discuss and reflect on the objectives and global best practices discussed in Sessions 2 and 3, and think through possible tools and assessments to bring forth as discussion items in Session 4.

**Facilitators:** **Mark Sabine, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies University of Nottingham (UK)

**Sandra Sirota, Ed.D.**, Assistant Professor in Residence, Experiential Global Learning & Human Rights, Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut, USA

**Candace Veecock, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Nottingham (Ningbo), China

**Manuela Wagner, Ph.D.**, Professor and Director, German Language & Culture Program, University of Connecticut, USA

### **5 MINUTE BREAK**

## **10:45 AM - SESSION 4: BUILDING A TOOLKIT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

Breakout facilitators reported back ideas during this guided discussion with the objective of conceiving a means of assessment, tools, and a set of questions that institutions can use for evaluating needs, identifying problems, and effectively decolonizing the university at a systemic level down to the classroom. As decolonization is an on-going living process, participants were asked to identify how to embed this process in academic and institutional infrastructure for consistent application in the future.

**Discussants:** **Maria Arruda, Ph.D.**, Head of Researcher Development, Researcher Academy; Chair of the Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff Network, University of Nottingham (UK)  
**Jane Gordon, Ph.D.**, Professor of Political Science, University of Connecticut

**Sandra Sirota** summarized her breakout group's rich discussion thinking about who bears the cost of colonization, and who benefits from it. The group noted that those who can bear the cost of decolonization should be stepping up to do so. They talked about the risks associated with doing this work and recognizing and acknowledging those who have risked and lost much in this process. They acknowledged this work is important, even if they do not know what the result will be. They discussed the complex issue of oppressed people entering university leadership and becoming the oppressor, and that to reverse this continued colonization, it is not just about reversing leadership roles but reimagining structures within the university.

**Veecock's** group discussed that it must be acknowledged that there is a cost to doing this work, and that the work of decolonizing pedagogy might be small, but where we can, the development of one module or one lecture, or one item on a reading list can be a start. Some universities are receiving funding for this work, and the group sought to determine what is happening now that made this work prescient? From her position at Nottingham Ningbo, Veecock reflected on the context of Sino-foreign education being in a colonizing space. She posed the question of how can we change the nature of this work, acknowledging the complicity of the existence of international branch campuses as colonizers.

**Wagner's** breakout group discussed the conversations group members have with themselves to examine conscious and unconscious processes they undertake. Education is often described as tool for self-improvement but going to a university

often removes an individual from their community. This creates a complex issue when universities are not seen as benefitting their local community. Wagner's group also considered self-reflection to be an important tool in engaging in anti-racist strategies that challenge institutions, which includes understanding individual member's acts as beneficiaries of the colonial structure. Language, they noted, is another important factor, with English being the most widely used language. Institutions should therefore consider practices that de-center English and enable colleagues to use other languages, while centering other cultural touchpoints in developing tools for international engagement. This can include increasing importance of service learning, experiential global learning, and focusing on sustainability efforts to reduce institutions' carbon footprints.

**Sabine**'s breakout group likewise address the problem of language and how the imposition of a hegemonic world language is inevitably a vehicle of marginalization and hierarchization. The group recognized the value of multilingualism and learning that incorporates a focus on languages. The group noted a need to find new tools and communicative practices to affect wider change in response to new technologies and the current social and political organization of the world. They also noted that decolonial initiatives need to be aligned with concerns for the environment and the climate crisis. **Gordon** added that one of the consequences of modern colonialism has been a set of norms that are locked in a period when we lived on a much larger planet. With the technologies we now have, we can traverse space and time more quickly, which means our planet has shrunk in social terms. Therefore, it is urgent that we develop a set of norms that can address what it means to live on a smaller planet, and what kind of issues we need to link to the value of life in these new circumstances.

As a pharmacologist by training, **Maria Arruda** offered some reflections in the form practical questions more aligned with her STEM background. Arruda reiterated Veecock's earlier question of the motivation for this workshop. She questioned the nature of universities addressing this issue, as a matter of optics or of appeasing academics and community members who are uncomfortable with ways of doing things. She noted that the world is currently designed for 10% of the population, and the growing awareness and recognition that current solutions are not adequate. Current diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations can come across as bourgeoisie when they don't recognize the insurmountable barriers for someone from an underserved background to prosper in an academic space. Therefore, a practical toolkit must address the many layers of intersectionality that affect historically oppressed populations. Arruda offered that a transformative practice would be a significant increase in participation from those populations to reach a critical mass of voices that are heard in determining processes. In her experience in Brazil, where 56% of the population is Black, she was the only person of color in her Ph.D. program. She recognized her own position of intersectionality as the head of Researcher Development, which provides funding for the continuance of the colonial model of the university, while also chairing the BAME network. She urged the group to consider what can be done to implement change in the short, medium, and long range that are sustainable and radical.

**Jane Gordon**, opened the floor to other participants in the workshop who were not included as speakers or discussants in previous panels to offer additional comments.

**Rosaria Franco**, an assistant professor of modern history at the University of Nottingham – Ningbo, noted that, as a parent, she was struck by the fact that the generational shift impacts both students and their parents who are sending their children to be colonized. She appreciated the conversation as giving important substance to this process by understanding the values behind this change. She noted the urgency of this conversation, particularly how it overlaps with class and economic status.

**Sandy Grande**, a professor of political science at the University of Connecticut, asked the group to continue to think about the incommensurability between the decoloniality and anti-coloniality movements and what often gets subsumed in diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations within institutions. Grande wondered about how this moment of an influx of funding in diversification as a mode of assimilation is reminiscent of the 1900's efforts to "kill the Indian and save the man," albeit on a different register. She underscored this moment of conflict and pressure of student movements galvanizing over issues like student debt, Black Lives Matter, and climate protests, and asked participants to think critically about the response of influx of dollars in this project.

**David Kiwuwa**, the acting head of the School of International Studies at University of Nottingham - Ningbo, was struck by the notion of workshop participants as the purveyors of colonialism, particularly his own complicity when he himself is in the position of reviewing scholars who are not publishing. He found it worth noting that scholars who publish in Portuguese or Italian are not often seen or are dismissed because of the linguistic dominance of English.

**Giovanna Comerio**, a French Language Tutor at University of Nottingham - Ningbo, explained that as a language teacher, she recognized that she instructs students who pay to be colonized by the institution she represents. While she has a set of pedagogic principles she implements to decolonize those students, she has gotten pushback from those students. Comerio acknowledged that the work must be done in small, incremental steps. She expressed uncertainty about how the cost will impact the future of a campus like hers, but she acknowledged her complicity, and welcomed additional pedagogical tools to address this risk.

**Jane Gordon** thanked participants for their thoughts, and shared concrete challenges and successes she has experienced in doing this work. The moments where Gordon was most proud to work at UConn included when it recently became a distribution center for vaccines, providing not only students and faculty with lifesaving aid, but also to wider members of the rural community around the university. Another example is when UConn announced free tuition to students whose families made under a certain amount of money, and then when students petitioned the university to extend that benefit to indigenous students. During the early months of the pandemic, UConn implemented a co-taught course on anti-Black racism. UConn sought two new hires, one in Native American and Indigenous Studies, and one focused on anti-racist and decolonial work, with a response of over 400 applicants. Gordon was encouraged by the fact the search committee was actively looking for people who did not fit UConn's current structures, who forced those within the academy to build a different university for these new individuals to feel welcome. Gordon highlighted this as a practical example of a university pushing the boundaries of its own inadequacy and outmodedness so that it could be the place that attracts these new ways of learning. Gordon noted the immediate dangers associated with these tools, such as the backlash and lack of senior faculty to support those new hires. One challenge Gordon discussed was the refusal to do this decolonial work in face of uncertain outcomes, noting that academics are sometimes the guiltiest. Gordon was further encouraged by this workshop and the infusion of Afro-Caribbean voices, increasingly more reflective of the student body at UConn. She concluded noting how much the United States relies on outsiders to do anything remotely progressive or humanistic.

## **11:20 AM - CLOSING DISCUSSION: CHARTING A PATH FORWARD**

**Speakers:** **Sarah Speight, Ph.D.**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience, University of Nottingham, UK  
**Franklin Tuitt, Ph.D.**, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, University of Connecticut, USA

**Franklin Tuitt** began his remarks stressing the importance of disrupting the colonial gaze embedded in all of us, noting that many participants have been trained by the very institutions we're trying to decolonize. As a Vice President for Diversity & Inclusion, he stressed the need to ensure that our anti-colonial work does not decenter our anti-racism work, that they need to be merged. By this token, Tuitt noted, anyone attempting to translate anticolonial theory into praxis with the goal of decolonizing the university has already been contaminated by socialization. Tuitt asked the group to consider how each of us are navigating this space as both insiders and outsiders. A part of that is understanding the various intersections that exist within individual identities. How can this group empower BIPOC and indigenous communities? Audre Lord's quote of using the master's tools to dismantle master's house was mentioned previously, Tuitt suggested that the tools must also be turned on themselves as well as the house so that they do not reinforce the same practices we are looking to decolonize. Tuitt reflected on further efforts to create policy that is both anti-colonial and anti-racist, noting that participants must continuously dismantle racist policies, must become more comfortable centering ways to counter racism, and need to recruit, retain, and respect BIPOC students, faculty, staff, and administrators in our institutions. Tuitt offered the practical examples of investing in knowledge production for, by, and about BIPOC students and faculty. This would create infrastructure allowing for inclusive and affirming environments where positive relations and interactions within and outside differing communities can occur. Tuitt urged the group to continue to seek out authentic experiences that enhance our ability to move from theory and performative commitments to transformative praxis. To do this, we must acknowledge there is more to learn than to be unlearned, that current diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings are often tactics to avoid litigation and public scrutiny and not to affect social change, and the continued colonial nature of the university therefore limits the possibilities of these efforts. To establish lasting change, this group must be creative. Otherwise, BIPOC communities will remain on the outside of institutions, looking in.

**Sarah Speight** opened her comments recognizing that as a university leader, she enters this conversation from a position of ignorance and white privilege. She remains conscious of the fact that leadership needs to be distributed and rest with everyone within the university structure. Attempting to answer the question of why universities are engaging in this work at this time, she noted that Nottingham must go beyond saying nice things and be committed to going beyond the narrow horizon in which we are viewing the efforts to decolonize and more broadly to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is incorporated into the institutional structure. Speight reflected on her own route to academia and journey to dismantle the colonizer within. She cited the need to work with others in positions of leadership who are willing to challenge institutions to make those decisions on the institutional level. Speight offered additional thoughts on the centrality of curriculum to decolonizing the university. She noted that universities recruit students and staff to curriculum, that it is something developed by staff and consumed by students, that it is funded by income. How can leadership look at these individual pieces and design curriculum that incorporates global perspective at its core principles? Speight concluded that she leaves this workshop reflecting on how leadership and those with privilege can set institutions to be the proactive advocates of decolonization rather than the remedial fixers and promised to keep learning.

**Tuitt** opened floor for additional concluding thoughts.

Vice President for Global Affairs **Daniel Weiner** thanked everyone for the important discussions. He agreed that anti-racism needs to be at the center of decolonization movements, but wanted to ask: how does this discussion keeps a door open to those who have political trouble with this frame, but are simultaneously victims of colonial exploitation and mentality without being aware of such?

**Lewis Gordon** offered a short answer to Weiner's question that so long as people step into a normatively colonial university, they will come out with a reinforcement of blindness. People will only grow by producing different kinds of learning and ensuring that those kinds of learning are accessible to all. Gordon shared his concern of a right-wing investment against democracy that would have populations like those in rural Appalachia function outside the norms of citizenship. Gordon noted that faculty of color work hard for all our students, especially those not from their same backgrounds, so that they become good custodians of our highly jeopardized planet.

**Onyeka Nubia** added a comment about strategy, noting institutions of power may not buy into the belief systems that have been advocated in this workshop. He offered one strategic method that one can use to push forward agendas would be to convince the colonizers of a benefit to themselves in allowing a space for decolonizing work.

**Tuitt** offered a concluding thought that change is incremental or is reclaimed after a period. How can this group ensure a strategy that results in sustainable, long-term substantive change? Tuitt reiterated his appreciation for the insight into this workshop topic, and that he looks forward to continuing the conversation.

**Zahra Ali**, Director of Global Partnerships & Outreach at the University of Connecticut, thanked participants for joining and for the very interesting and engaging discussions, noting that the organizing committee will follow up with everyone with draft proceedings. They will also pose next steps to continue the conversation and engagement.

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