

## What Do We Do with the Master's Tools? Intersectionality, Aversive Racism and the Strike against Whiteness - **Hannelie Marx Knoetze** (University of South Africa)

DiAngelo (2021) contends that progressive whites, particularly at the intersection of liberal positionalities and the academic context, often perpetuate racial harm rather than negating it. However, in contrast to explicit alt-right narratives, which is easier to identify and distance oneself from under the guise of being a “Good white” (Thompson 2010), it is infinitely harder to confront, and easier to deny, the ways in which “aversive whiteness” (DiAngelo, 2021) plays a role in racism. Lorde convincingly argued that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the masters house” and Nailah says: “We are so past white people telling us what they think and what they feel... We want to see what you do”.

The question then: Can we use the inevitable credibility and access granted by whiteness to challenge racism? Can we afford not to?

Against this background, and in the context of the South African university as a Westernised institution operating in the global South, I consider the roles white academics play and possible ways in which this can be challenged into the action Nailah calls for. My analysis is situated within a qualitative paradigm and approached from the theoretical perspective of “critical studies in whiteness” (Hunter and Van der Westhuizen 2022), an approach that seeks to “re-historicise and re-spatialise the understanding of bodies and identities as part of a global colonial world system which presently has whiteness at its heart” (xxi). This preliminary collection of thoughts and ideas, based on some recent literature, forms the start of a project I hope will grow into something more concrete. I propose DiAngelo’s theorisation of “Nice racism” and “fellow whites”, and Ratele’s (2018) call for the dismissal of “transformation as assimilation” as a starting point for active, intersectional engagement in the strike against whiteness within the South African academic context. Specifically, for the purposes of this paper, my focus is on media studies from a decolonial perspective. The end goal is to link this research, and call to action, to the re-curriculation happening within the Department of Communication Science at the University of South Africa (UNISA), and the bigger decolonial project that drives it.