

Special issue:
**Rising up against institutional racism
in the Americas and beyond**

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A multilogue for antiracism in the Americas

This special issue was inspired by the powerful anti-racist movements that surged following the police killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. George's last words, "I can't breathe", while a white police officer's knee pressed into his neck for nine minutes, subsequently became an emblematic battle cry against institutional racism. The brutality of this incident, albeit by no means unusual, caused global outrage and mobilised responses on other continents such as Europe and Asia, despite the global pandemic and lockdown. Interestingly, the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) centred its anger on institutional racism. This gave recognition to racism as constituting a key part of a system of repression and domination rather than amounting to an occasional outburst or something gone wrong in the country of opportunities and freedom. As the antiracist movements gained momentum in the midst of the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, they met with challenges that raised new and old questions. Drawing on the Afro-Pessimist claims that (US) civil society is inherently antithetical to all manifestations of Black social life (Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2016; Sharpe, 2016; Wilderson, 2010), scholars Adam Bledsoe and Willie Jamaal Wright argue that global expressions of anti-Blackness are necessary for the perpetuation of global capitalism. They go on to argue that "regardless of the particular expression of capitalism, anti-Blackness conditions the possibility of capitalist reproduction across different global contexts" (Bledsoe and Wright, 2018). In contrast to this conception, several contributions to this special issue observe an emerging multiracial composition and diversity in the antiracist uprising during the pandemic.

Nevertheless, some of the challenges the BLM and the antiracist uprising faced related to inter-ethnic conflicts that historically obscured and now revealed ambiguities arising from racialized histories of social and class difference (Maya Bhardwaj), or to discussions of how to respond to systematic police violence arguing for abolition of the police as proposed by the abolitionist movement (California Economists Collective), protest tactics and approaches among white affluent students (Maravene Taylor-Heine), the place of colourism in the antiracist movement (Robert L. Reece) which could invite further debate, and the role of international solidarity and impacts of the Palestine Boycott, Sanctions, Divestment Movement (BDS) as a viable focus for anchoring global antiracist movements (Bill Mullen). These contributions shine a light on a section of pertinent debates and challenges that the BLM movement both faced and inspired.

But what was happening in the US's geopolitical 'backyard'? What was going on in Latin America? There is a plethora of structural, political and historical reasons for anti-racism to crystallize into countless issues of contention and articulate as a movement. For instance, there have been allegations and reports of racially motivated police abuses in several countries in the region, where poverty is also racialized (see for example: Grimson and Grimson 2017; Mondon and Winter 2019; Sears 2014; Hale 2005; Guano 2003; Gordillo 2016). Indeed, the rage underpinning the rising against racism is fueled also by the connected economic injustices. The pandemic also highlights that these marginalized groups pay disproportionately with more lives for a pandemic that they have not initially helped to spread across the globe, but for which they have fewer means for protective measures and treatment. Institutional racism, police brutality and racial profiling are well-known and documented issues right across the Americas, in many countries steeped in a history of state terror and/or exploitative, and frequently violent, Latifundista social relations.

Several authors in this issue contend that we are witnessing emerging antiracist movements and a construction of an antiracist language or grammar in Latin America. As activist scholars working on and in Latin America, we believe it is not only crucial to understand their historical and political particularities but also to enable movement learning and enhance political maturity through a multilogue between these diverse sectors across the Americas, in particular, between Black/ indigenous/ mestizo and others that resist these categorizations, but also between Anglo and Hispanic America which simultaneously then bridges a 'North' – 'South' dichotomy. There is much scope for mutual learning from the respective antiracist articulations in both hemispheres and differently racialized groups precisely to keep them apart since colonialism and continued by the subsequent national states (Wade 2018). This issue attempts to bridge these historically produced political separations, and understanding and respecting differences is necessary for identifying common grounds to help formulate a shared language of antiracism as a toolkit for social movements. So the authors in this issue dig beneath surface appearances and uncover specific and generalizable characteristics of institutional racism and contribute to articulating effective responses to it.

Challenges and limitations

There are limitations that this special issue cannot overcome. Firstly, the scope. Covering in one special issue such a large and diversified region as is the Americas and within a relatively short timeframe will necessarily lead to geopolitical gaps. The stronger presence of some regions reflects the editors' geographical specialism and reach. Among important regions that are unfortunately absent here, are, among others, the Caribbean. We are also mindful that the broad homogenizing label of "Latin America" can lead to inappropriate generalisations. We can only initiate this multilogue and hope that others will further extend such debates and dissections of this issue to regions, populations and countries in the Americas not covered here.

A second challenge as a not-for-profit journal with no financial support at our disposal for this issue is limited resources with various implications. To begin with, we are keen to make the publication accessible to activists who might not be fluent in Spanish or English respectively. For that reason and as a one-off occurrence for *Interface*, we have crowdfunded a small amount of cash to help with paying for translations (both ways, into Spanish and English) of a selection of the contributions, prioritising community spokespersons and antiracist activists.¹ The translations will be subsequently published as they are coming in, alongside the original text.

Another challenge was time in combination with pandemic related stress factors and work pressures. Given the potentially complex nature of the topic in the Americas, we had created an advisory group and are thankful for their contributions or their intentions to participate and their names are listed at the end of this editorial. Many people involved with this issue struggled to commit to it due to an array of conflicting personal and employment conditions that were compounded by the pandemic. The pandemic offered a focus for enquiry and for antiracism in the Americas, but in terms of logistics of producing this issue it had made everything a little more difficult: it was harder to find reviewers able to commit, or to engage activist scholars who were not already overbooked with tasks and demands on their time and energy; those engaged with university work found their free time dramatically reduced and their workloads increased, while others struggled with employment precarity, illness and loss. The latter is reflected, for example, in Elisabet Rasch's letters written posthumously to her friend who she had wanted to collaborate with to write for this issue but was conquered by Covid-19. He was a territorial defender of Ch'orti' territory in Guatemala, and Rasch explores the impacts of that loss on these kinds of struggles.

And, finally, we considered it was more important to initiate this bi-continental multilogue sooner rather than later, to benefit from the recent memory of the Black Lives Matter movement and how it resonated beyond the United States. Only a little more than a year on from the extrajudicial murder of Floyd George, the world has changed dramatically. Before having fully exited the pandemic a potentially nuclear conflict is knocking at the world's doors in Ukraine, an expression of the intensifying competition for world domination between the main superpowers. With Putin claiming to fight Ukrainian Nazis as a pretext for his aggression against ordinary people in the Ukraine, the anti-war protesters face the challenge to confront fascist and racist opportunism lurking from behind the flag of nationalism, without falling into Putin's trap. But reports and video footage of heart wrenching racist discrimination against none-white people fleeing the bombings that are beginning to break through the media corporations' partisan propaganda machine offer a stark reminder of the dangerous fault line of history, where war and racism are close allies. As the

¹ For details visit: https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-a-multilingual-conversation-about-racism?utm_campaign=p_cp+share-sheet&utm_medium=copy_link_all&utm_source=customer

world polarises between “good” and “evil”, not only truth but also antiracism is in danger of becoming the war’s first casualty (AMEJA 2022). It is thus paramount to keep antiracism at the forefront of any anti-war agenda today.

What has changed in the Americas since the pandemic began?

Today, at the pandemic’s exit door, political conditions are both combined and, characteristically of a general crisis, jarringly uneven across the Americas. While the newly elected president, Joe Biden, of the Democrats left Trump to battle out his list election challenge in Court, he has been vociferous, which appeared like talking up, war conflict over the Ukraine, and gradually, and in some areas such as oil imports, reluctantly, imposed more and more sanctions against Russia. In Brazil, Bolsonaro’s grip on power has significantly weakened following his mismanagement of the pandemic with devastating consequences for many Brazilians, while his government encouraged the burning of the Amazon forest, threatening indigenous lands and getting activists killed. In Argentina, indigenous families have been paying for that country’s economic crisis during the pandemic with their youngest children’s lives, more than half a dozen having died from malnutrition during the pandemic alone, while the government has agreed to repaying a highly contentious IMF loan that it had inherited from the former government, which is now the opposition.

At the same time there is hope, especially when looking to Latin America. In a historical move, the recently elected Argentine government has taken legal action against the superpowers of the police in Salta province for recurrent abuses of powers, including unlawful detentions (El Portal de Salta 2020). It is the first time for the national government to recognize the institutional nature of police violence targeted at the poor, indigenous peoples, and political adversaries such as Human Rights, social movements, and trade union actors.

Lula, after having his corruption convictions against him quashed by the High Court a year ago, has answered the popular calls by putting forward his candidacy. Bolivia’s right-wing coup and terror directed especially against the country’s large indigenous population, did not sustain itself beyond the year despite the initial US endorsement by the then Trump administration. The former MAS party, now led not by Evo Morales but by Luís Arce, was electorally restored.

Earlier expectations of a right-wing advance in Latin America following Bolsonaro’s rise to power and coup efforts in Bolivia and Venezuela, have been swiftly countered by popular and radicalised left-of-centre challenges to such a potential trend, delegitimising coup efforts, while elsewhere the Left made unprecedented electoral gains, the women’s movements have made important legislative gains on the right to abortion in Argentina, Uruguay, Chile and Colombia more recently, and LGBT in Chile has achieved legalisation of gay marriage. The election of the former radical student activist, Gabriel Boric as Chile’s youngest ever president, has raised both great expectations and at the same time, some disquiet that he panders to the centre perhaps unnecessarily

and too soon, especially when considering that the Left, working-class and social movements, have always tended to have an easier time advancing their demands at times when the US has engaged her attention away from Latin America, as is the case at present with the conflict between NATO states and Russia over her military invasion of the Ukraine. Thus, to some extent irrespective of Boric's efforts to appease the centre, taking on board that this is a country where the electorate had voted for a far-right, pinochetist, candidate who Boric defeated only in the ballotage run-off, despite these conflicting tendencies there may well be some opening for radical challenges to develop across Latin America, inclusive of antiracism as an integral and perhaps increasingly visible part.

As we had noted in the call for papers for this special issue, the Black Lives Matter uprising in the 'North' has put the struggle against institutional racism onto the global agendas, which prompts a variety of questions. Has the Black Lives Matter Movement, or more generally the antiracist uprising in the US, inspired forms of collective action against institutional racism in Latin America? In what ways would such movements re-shape the region's political landscape and could they re- invigorate the leftist social movements' agendas? Indeed, does the 'Black Lives Matter' movement offer an opportunity to unearth the institutional racism from the various origin myths and its historical legacies of slavery (Shilliam 2009)? In what ways have these legacies shaped national and ethnic identities across the Americas? How does the imaginary of a 'white' European colonial past still obscure and/or marginalise non-white collective identities? How has this been resisted? Have the nature and content of anti-racist resistance, or the conditions for such resistance changed? How does the racialisation of working-class poor articulate during the Covid-19 pandemic? What does this tell us about social, cultural and political conditions for confronting the ills of capitalism today?

We know from history that racism is a willing handmaiden of uncertainty and capitalist crisis. Antiracist movements need to grow stronger and mature to resist any racist turns as soon as racism rears its ugly head. Some useful lessons are explored here from fascinatingly diverse angles by the various contributors to this issue.

The contributions and logic behind the structure

This issue reveals the diversity of these articulations across the American continents. And while there is broad agreement that things regarding antiracist movements are stirring in Latin America as evidenced by the indigenous contributions in this issue from Argentina and Guatemala, so far large anti-racist movements as seen in the US have not emerged. The antiracist agenda is in part obscured by the history of ideas about *mestizaje* as Peter Wade and Mónica Moreno Figueroa observe, as well as, arguably, by an indigenous necessity to prioritise reclaiming ancestral lands and territories. Nevertheless, antiracism as with anti-sexism are beginning to be more clearly articulated

through the lens of territory, where the body is understood as territory, the integrity or dignity of the person, as well as the indigenous customs and practices, and more generally, rights and social justice (see the conversation between Nancy Lopez and Heike Schaumberg as well as the peer-reviewed contributions by Anja Habersang and Natalia Boffa in this issue). In short, from an indigenous perspective reclaiming territory underpins the struggle against all injustice in the post-colonial world. This is why we begin this Special Issue with the contributions exploring Latin America and conclude with those on North America.

Historically, the differences between a more feudal Spanish and Portuguese catholic colonialism and the more capitalistic protestant British colonialism play out in important ways even constitutionally, ideologically and conceptually in terms of the creation of nation states across the Americas and their respective structures of racism. Some of these historical particularities are explored comprehensively and comparatively for the case of Peru and Brazil by Luana Xavier Pinto Coelho. Moreover, there are many institutional differences, not least the experience of segregation in North America. Often, Latin American elites dismiss racism as not relevant to their countries because, generally, there was no formal segregation, some indigenous people might have played a role in the wars of independence as well as slaves who obtained their freedom through them if they survived those wars, in some countries the majority of the population are indigenous or at least mixed, and others hawk back to their own roots as migrants in ‘a country of immigrants’, albeit usually invoking implicitly (sometimes, of course, explicitly) “white” Europe as a place of origin. Any de-facto social segregation was naturalized through social stratification, private property and land ownership, where the upper echelons of the social hierarchy were always dominantly reserved for white people. The consolidation of the leading nation states in Latin America towards the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, was deeply embedded in a social Darwinist ideology that racialized notions of development and progress, leading to a preference by the governing elites of white northern European as opposed to southern European immigrants, which was strongly reflected in land distribution at that time. The penetration of this racist ideology was broad and subtle and was rarely explicitly challenged until more recently in our current century, where people of indigenous and African descent are more visibilised also in policies and census data (Tamagno and Mafia, M. 2011), but within the context of multicultural, neoliberal, narratives that also reproduce cultural essentialism, commercialisation and fetichization of traditional genres (Lamborghini and Martino 2020:81).

Several articles indeed look for answers in how racism played out in local historical formations of institutions such as national states, governance and legal frameworks, while others explore how, despite not being named, such institutional racism is weaved through the social fabric of society and finds articulated outlets through, for example, social media such as twitter (see Erika Heredia). We shall now introduce and connect up the various contributions to this special issue one by one.

Latin America

Peter Wade and Mónica Moreno Figueroa open this special issue setting out a broad and general framework for drawing out similarities and differences between Anglo-America and Hispanic America. Informed by ethnographic research with black and indigenous organisations such as Chao Racismo, the Rede Contra a Violencia in Rio de Janeiro in Brasil against police killings, the Congreso Nacional Indígena (CNI) in Mexico, and the community of Wimbí in Ecuador, the authors observe a disconnection between explicit talk of racism and radical notions of its institutional dimensions, which leads them to question whether a clearly antiracist language is necessary as there are alternative ways of articulating antiracist struggles and movements in Latin America. While the situation is uneven between countries and organisations and communities, many of these struggles are broadly themed. While some are centred on police violence, others on racism related to land and environmental issues, while yet others are engaged in struggles for political power more generally, antiracist language might be more obscured, but their politics and objectives tackle structural racism more head on. This contribution scopes various aspects and observations from writings on Latin America, where a language of antiracism and antiracist movements appears to be in the making but is embedded more strongly in a language of class inequality and discrimination, mediated by *mestizaje*. By treating racialised dimensions implicitly, they tend to be seen as an *integral* part of inequality and hierarchy and can thus “be implicated in any challenge to the inequality, injustice and hierarchy that exist in a racialised social order”. Their main contentions are “that struggles that address structural dimensions of injustice and inequality without explicitly centring racism - but without eliding it entirely - can also be powerful anti-racist interventions” and “that naming racism without understanding it as structural can sometimes make a useful - even if limited - contribution and should not be automatically dismissed as not being radical enough or a mere distraction.” In this regard, Wade and Moreno Figueroa also connect with the closing paper of this special issue by Bill Mullen who makes the case for the Boycott and Sanctions, Divestment Movement (BDS) launched by Palestinian civil society in 2005 as offering a focus for international antiracism, even though dressed more in the language of national liberation and sovereignty and against territorial occupation, structural antiracism is an integral part of that struggle.

Luana Xavier Pinto Coelho shows in her contribution how important history is to understand these constellations. She presents a legal-historical analysis of discourses of nation and citizenship in Brazil and Peru that reveals the persistence of racial normativity during post-independence that still informs contemporary forms of racism as the afterlife of racial slavery (Hartman 1997). In so doing, she contends that class was indeed racialized in Latin America. By discussing both the cases of Peru and Brazil she shows that colonial technologies of conquest were always shared, and that racism was/is an efficient colonial tool to guarantee forced labour, expropriation, and exploitation.

Omar Acha's contribution also highlights the importance of history to understand the intersections of class, gender and racialized hierarchisations during the COVID-19 pandemic in contemporary Argentina. He shows how the quarantine imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic visibilized domestic workers as symbols of a racialized social difference. Class, culture, gender and colourism and how they played out during the pandemic centered on female domestic workers employed in middle-and-upper class neighborhoods. During the twentieth century female domestic workers became one of the most oppressed, exploited and despised sectors of the working class. Yet, during the first Peronist governments (1945-1955) which inaugurated Argentina's model of a socially inclusive state, domestic workers played an important role in the social and political life and embodied race and class struggles. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the conditions of stigma, exploitation and racism that female domestic workers endure at the historical intersection of class, gender and race, undermining the (also academic) condescending dreams of social inclusion and progressive modernization in a class society.

Erika Heredia's approach to this topic explores expressions of racism among twitter users. Using a twitter data scraping tool to sample from the bigdata collected by Twitter, she employs a qualitative analysis of these exchanges presumably by white authors and she could identify in these tweets suggestive leads (such as the possession of an iPhone) that indicate a certain purchasing-power of these authors. These tweets were inspired by first, prison revolts protesting the potentially fatal conditions in the prisons as Covid-19 began to take lives, and second, the government announcing in response that it would transfer some prison inmates to house-arrest in an effort to relieve notoriously over-crowded prisons in poor conditions and limit the fatal consequences of Covid-19 outbreaks there. Many of the affected inmates were imprisoned for minor offences or still awaiting trial for them, not, as the political opposition in Congress would have it, that they were murderers and rapists. Heredia uncovers a deep-seeded racism towards, and racialisation of, essentially the poor, which she contends is a form of dehumanization, eliminationism, and white supremacy. In a sense, the author explores not only racism but how whiteness is constructed in opposition to a racialized, criminalised and dehumanised "other" that disregards any basic human rights notion of "innocent until proven guilty". Instead, they desire the death penalty for "*los negros de mierda*" associated with living in shanty-towns, the true colour of their skin which may well be what in the US or in Europe would be classified as 'white' is in fact irrelevant; for this section of the Argentine population they are black because they are poor. This has of course been a building block in Argentina's artificially and misleadingly constructed national identity as white European immigrants in Latin America 'who had descended from the boats'; an aphorism that reproduces the social Darwinist perspective that identified non-white people with backwardness who thus had to be eliminated from the national imaginary. Just how pervasive this notion is, for example in Argentina, was revealed by that country's current president, Alberto Fernández's misfortunate reproduction of this phrase. Heike Schaumberg explores some of the fallout from this with indigenous

communities in the Chaco region in her contextualisation of conversations and exchanges she has conducted about racism and antiracism for this issue with two indigenous community.

But first, based on detailed ethnographic examples from her research in the Argentine Chaco, Natalia Boffa closely traces various articulations of institutional racism in areas such as health, education and resource distribution in relation to indigenous Wichí communities. She identifies the covert nature of racism in Argentina, noting that ‘in general, the problem didn’t appear in these terms; nevertheless, the Wichí women and men denounced that “we don’t exist in this regulation”’, with reference to the alleged racial discrimination against an indigenous teacher who was not appointed as director in a local school serving indigenous communities. In other words, the racial discrimination was not only felt to be against this teacher, but by implication against the entire indigenous community. It reveals the lack of any notion of positive discrimination in Argentina’s policies and administration, or at least some stipulations that acknowledge racial discrimination, as implementing regulations to the letter facilitates precisely that, or, in Boffa’s words and similar to Heredia’s observations, a politics of elimination of this segment of the population, for example in state educational policies. The consequence is the reproduction of historical racism in subtle ways. She further explores astutely how the denial of racism that also Peter Wade and Monica Moreno Figueroa observe in the opening article, leads to some horrific treatment and inadequacies in the local health service that are clear-cut cases of unacknowledged and rampant racism, and that, importantly, the Wichí understand them precisely in these terms, as racism. She also clarifies that these are institutional structures and that not everyone working within them is necessarily racist, and some employees and professionals indeed are dedicated to fighting racism from within these institutions, but they are as of yet largely navigating uncharted waters. She further observes how resource distribution efforts favour NGOs working with, or on behalf of, these communities instead of channelling resources directly to the indigenous communities themselves. As with other indigenous groups, for the Wichí these are territorial domains of indigenous understandings, practices and customs, as well as struggles that articulate antiracism as part of a complex makeup of a collective subjectivity constructed by and simultaneously against diverse forms of discrimination. Ultimately, this pluridimensional character of racism, as the author usefully refers to it, informs the production of national identity.

Nancy Lopez, in conversation with Heike Schaumberg, explores the intersections between racism, gender and highlights the importance of understanding the history of colonial subjugation in understanding racism. Nancy, a *caciqua* (female community head) and community activist from a Wehneyek-Wichí community from the Argentine Chaco in Salta province, unearths how racism penetrates and is reproduced by groups who themselves are targeted by racism, as institutional racism goes unchallenged. She also notes changes in how groups align over the recent years. The conversation to some extent reflects how the language of racism, and analysing expressions of racism

in those terms, would benefit from clearer definition, albeit, interestingly, it centres on “difference”, not only colour but also speech and culture or customs. Such clarity, however, gets into sharper focus when a racist event involving government leaders becomes national headlines, as anonymous WhatsApp messages by indigenous protesters reveal, which were forwarded to Heike Schaumberg by a Guaraní contact who received these messages from another part of the Chaco region where protests against the racism had erupted. It is testimony to the role of social media, in particular WhatsApp, in generating a shared language and understanding of antiracism. The intention here is to offer space to these testimonies by those who are the agents of these transformations and will be shaping the emerging antiracism on the ground.

In indigenous peoples’ struggles that are directly or indirectly framed as anti-racist, ‘the territory’ plays an important role. Anja Habersang presents an in-depth case study of the ‘Indigenous Women’s Movement for Buen Vivir’ who operate on the intersection of gender and indigeneity. These Indigenous women position themselves as ‘body-territories’, which links their struggles to defend territories against extractivist resource exploitation with the struggle against intersectional discrimination, racism, and the historic violation of their bodies. They position themselves as anti-patriarchal rather than as feminists, framing the struggle against prevailing ‘capitalist-coloniality’ as one against the patriarchy. As body-territories, their resistance targets the triggers of systemic racism: capitalist, extractivist, patriarchal exploitation, and exclusion.

This importance of the territory in rising up against the discrimination and exploitation of indigenous peoples, also comes to the fore in Elisabet Dueholm Rasch’ article, in which she explores how COVID-19 shapes the defense of territory in Latin America, and especially in Guatemala, and at the same time reveals and deepens the axes of exclusion and inequality that territory defenders are struggling to transform. Although the defense of territory as a movement is not firmly rooted in an anti-racist discourse, it questions structures that are rooted in the racism that came to the continent when it was colonized by Europeans, and it often builds on an indigenous identity that is constructed vis-à-vis a ladino or mestizo identity. The article explores how the defense of territory is rooted in a past characterized by racism, colonialization and exploitation, the different forms of violence that territory defenders face, and how these issues have become even more manifest during the pandemic. Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil, in a conversation with Elisabet Dueholm Rasch also makes the point that the colonial past is still very active in the present and becomes manifest through institutional racism. The pandemic, he argues, affects the indigenous population more, because of its marginalized position and, as consequences, deepens structures of exploitation and racism.

North America and beyond

While configurations of class seem to feature more prominently in understandings of racism and antiracism in Latin America than they do

particularly in black antiracism in North America, Maya Bhardwaj nevertheless shows how none-white racial intersections during the antiracist movements in the midst of the pandemic of 2020 bring to the fore underlying class constructs. This author homes in on how South Asian Americans in general, and South Asian Queers in particular, related to, and integrated with, the Black uprisings in 2020 and the ways in which the conformist “model minority myth” was contested. She skilfully unpicks historical and cultural facets that underpin her discussion of “transformative solidarity” and “allyship”, as well as the contradictions that South Asian Queer and working-class activists end up confronting in their political lives and identities, struggles that inform their antiracist activism and interactions with radical Black queer and feminist politics. Contrasting the Afro-pessimist view regarding the inevitability of anti-Blackness, Bhardwaj concludes that this current of South Asian political radicalism holds hope for mounting truly multiracial challenges to structural violence and oppression “to usher in abolitionist futures”.

The California Economists Collective (CEC) consisting of Ian Ross Baran, Kenton Card, Grecia Perez, and James Sirigotis, explored through interviews with Brianna Byrd, Camilla Hawthorne, and Dylan Rodriguez the 2020 events in the US. Part of a larger multimedia project, the CEC presents here the interviews that evolved around six overarching questions but largely centred on the abolition movement. They explore the experience with, and role of, police and state surveillance as a way of maintaining a racial capitalist hegemony. The conversations pick up on the importance of 2020 because it highlighted the anti-blackness focus of policing and questioned not only the police or police violence but the entire logic of policing, and enabled new visions of organising communities. While Hawthorne highlights the police’s relationship to the protection of private property, Rodriguez, suggests that the institutional role of policing is in response to a kind of “domestic war” that should be recognized as such in order to better inform activist and community organising, and that war needs to be abolished. The interviewees note that the idea of abolition has gone mainstream during the 2020 uprising and opened up new horizons of imagining different futures. Nevertheless, this also calls for a close analysis and problematisation of what is meant by abolition, what are the objectives. The critical explorations of abolishing the logic of policing does not stop with prisons and police but extends to other institutions in society. It is proposed to imagine abolition as a “collective creative pedagogical tendency”. Questioning what space there is within a university institution for radicalism, whether pedagogy can still be transgressive and radical, Hawthorne emphasizes the importance of political education for the antiracist movement and activism in general, but notes the idealisation of that radicalism and the contradictions that arise when students are met with violent crackdowns when they attempt to enact some of these ideas. Exploring various connections and intersections between gender, race and politics, the historical legacies of colonialism and slavery, neoliberalism and protest, the interviewees conclude that abolition is not only about reparations but also about liberation, and that disruption as method is necessary in order to denaturalize, for example, racism and other structures of

oppression. These interviews offer a sense of the various debates that the 2020 antiracist uprising had harnessed in the US.

Maravene Taylor-Heine explores the ambiguities of what came to be known as the opt-out movement, where high school students opted out of tests. Their liberal egalitarian intentions, however, are questioned as the opt-out movement is largely located in “figured worlds” that reveal backgrounds of white privilege. Instead of furthering equity and egalitarianism, the movement ends up creating obstacles for the collection of vital statistical information, and poorer, non-white parents do not have the same ability to have their children opt out from tests because they will be facing quite different consequences for doing so in the long run. Based on a close analysis of protest data, the author explores “emerging identities of privileged students engaged in a protest for education reforms”. She discerns the pervasiveness of ideologies of whiteness even in protests such as these that consider themselves as antiracist because of the racism implicit in these tests. The author explores the contradictions that emerge from these “figured worlds” of relatively white privileged persons and the change they are able to effect but also the limitations especially with regards to racism and class.

Robert L. Reece argues that colour stratification in black American communities buttresses racial inequality and therefore it merits considerably more attention by racial justice organizations and anti-discrimination policy makers than it has been receiving. The author traces differences between light and dark skinned to the history of colourism stratifications from the times of slavery to the early census categorisations that differentiated between Blacks and Mulattos. He contends that the elimination of the category of “mulatto” from the census, the consequence of a political prioritisation of race over colour in the early twentieth century, finally helped facilitate racial stratification. It was underpinned by white people experiencing a racial crisis after the “mulatto”, which previously acted as a buffer category in a rigid and, thus secure, racial hierarchy, was removed following emancipation and black people gaining more political power. He takes issue with WEB DuBois from an exchange with Marcus Garvey, showing that colourism indeed has played a historical role in the US, and thus sides with the latter against what subsequently came to be known as “strategic essentialism”, the flattening of identity differences in pursuit of shared collective goals. Arguably, Reece draws our attention to the penetration of the history and institutionalisation of colourism in society and how it impacts on legislations, policies, subjectivities and identities and racial justice movements and organisations.

Nevertheless, such a focus on colourism especially when making the case for it to be included for data collection for policies and legislations to combat racial discrimination, could be a hostage to fortune that ends up reproducing instead of challenging the paradigms upon which racism rests. This author’s main tenet is contrasted in this special issue by Bhardwaj’s opening paper of this section that centres on unravelling hidden class attributes that underpin social, historical and identity difference in relation to Blackness and their relationship

to the anti-racist movements of our time. These discussions reflect the spirit of this special issue, which is to generate a platform for discussion and learning from the diverse topics from strata from diverse ancestral backgrounds targeted by racism, and that influence the conditions in which we shape our antiracist movements, a diversity from which we can learn and shape a shared language of struggle.

In this regard, Bill V. Mullen concludes this special issue with an exploration of the Boycott and Sanctions, Divestment Movement (BDS) launched by Palestinian civil society in 2005. The author contends that by naming Israel as a white supremacist state, Palestinians qualified for recognition as a racialized subaltern population with important consequences for antiracist movements in the West. Based on examples in the US such as the USACBI (The United States Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), boycotts by several academic professional bodies but also solidarity by indigenous groups because Palestine brings into view the settler-colonial contexts of the past but also the present. Mullen thus makes the case for BDS as offering an organising principle and a political focus for Afro-Palestinian and Afro-Arab unity as well as for a global antiracist and anti-imperialist movement, inclusive of campaigns such as Jewish Voices for Peace. The article demonstrates how BDS, following the anti-apartheid campaign model in South Africa, insisting on grassroots organization, self-determination struggle, and internationalism, has become an effective weapon against racism, police violence, and imperialism in the world. The author identifies the discursive challenges that BDS faces in a world that has returned to classical Zionism and ethnonationalist states. Yet, he also demonstrates that BDS has been quite effective in denting popular support for Israel in opinion polls in the US. As Mullen concludes, “the Palestinian BDS movement has helped to foster and regenerate a new global antiracism still seeking its final expression in the defeat of Israeli settler-colonialism, Occupation, and Apartheid.”

The current climate of a renewed threat of nuclear warfare and an exodus of Ukrainian refugees, with fascists exploiting broad sympathy for an ethnic-nationalist turn, the importance of the BDS movement and the centrality of international antiracism are very clear. The white skin tone of these refugees is uncomfortable, according to many Western media outlets, ‘they look just like us’, but the point they were inadvertently making was that they *were not* like us even though they were white. Arguably, Eastern Europeans have always been Europe’s “Blacks” just as were the Irish to England for generations, or as were white Jews to Fascism, or, as we have seen in this issue, the working-class poor to the upper strata in Argentina. Racism goes beyond skin-colour as difference racializes the social hierarchy of capitalist exploitation and oppression. As uncertainty, conflicts and systemic crises advance in the world, so do opportunities to change it, but that can only be done if international antiracism leads our movements.

Acknowledgements

The editors are grateful for the support and guidance offered by the anonymous reviewers, and the especially created Advisory Collective. The latter consists of diverse activists and activist-scholars or professionals who act as representatives of, or are involved with, or are spokespersons for, indigenous and Black community or social movement activism from different regions in the Americas, some of whom have also contributed with articles in this issue (in alphabetical order):

Natalia Boffa, Ajamu Dillahunt-Holloway, Bill Mullen, Irma Alicia Velazquez Nimatuj, Mara Puntano, Vitor Queiroz, and Samuel Urbina, in addition to the Special Issue editors.

General pieces

As always, this issue of *Interface* also contains general pieces from and about social movements around the world.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Mapuche regions of Chile, Rogelio Luque-Lora's piece explores the extent to which the process begun by the 2019 uprising engages other-than-human beings and processes, in struggles over issues like water and land but also in complex debates over the rights of nature, indigenous worldviews and law. Méliissa Blais' article discusses the impact of masculinist anti-feminism on the women's movement in Quebec, and how this counter-framing has impacted feminists' framing work around the identification of violence, the solutions proposed and the deradicalisation of feminist discourse.

In his contribution, Mark Halley looks at how the experiences of American Sign Language / English interpreters in a key 1988 protest has affected their perspectives on interpreters and deaf people, as well as the personal and professional benefits gained through protest participation. Talia Velez' article discusses the struggle of the General Assembly in Coyocoán, Mexico City, to protect a local aquifer, and how netnography made it possible to bridge the distance between academia and subjugated groups. Silvano de la Llata's piece explores the "square movements" of 2021-2 in five cities and the importance of going beyond reactivity and outrage to creative resistance.

Cleovi C. Mosuela's article discusses the collective resistance of Temporary Protected Status migrants in the US against the threat of this status being removed, highlighting how this mobilization made connections between non-citizens and citizens. Jeff Yaremko and Kevin Walby's piece covers social movement groups in 21 countries using freedom of information legislation and discusses the range of frames and techniques used by these groups. Janna Klostermann and Chris Hurl's practice note looks at what can be learned from the history of AIDS activism in Toronto for contemporary struggles around essential services, drawing on the work of the late activist George W. Smith.

Lastly, we have a wide range of book reviews about popular struggles around the globe. Benjamin S. Case reviews Judith Butler's *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*, while Chuck Morse reviews Benjamin Heim Shepard's *Sustainable Urbanism and Direct Action: Case Studies in Dialectical Activism*.

Irmgard Emmelhainz reviews Thea Riofrancos' *Resource Radicals: From Petro-Nationalism to Post-Extractivism in Ecuador* and Isaac K. Oommen reviews Pankaj Mishra's *Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Beyond*.

Maria Vasile reviews Susana Narotzky's *Grassroots Economies: Living with Austerity in Southern Europe*, while Jeremiah Gaster reviews three recent books on Venezuelan social movements: Dario Azzellini's *Communes and Workers' Control in Venezuela: Building 21st Century Socialism from Below*; Geo Maher's *Building the Commune: Radical Democracy in Venezuela* and Cira Pascual Marquina and Chris Gilbert's *Venezuela, the Present as Struggle: Voices from the Bolivarian Revolution*.

Interface issues

Apologies for the late publication of this issue, due to issues beyond our control. Our next call for papers (deadline 1 July 2022) is for an open issue.

Finally, we are happy to welcome Rose Brewer, Genevieve Ritchie and Peter Funke to our editorial spokescouncil. They are joining Lesley Wood and Todd Wolfson with particular responsibilities for movements in the USA and Canada.

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Heike Schaumberg (PhD, University of Manchester) is a Latin Americanist and Social Anthropologist with extensive fieldwork based research on the neoliberal crisis and its discontents, as well as on economic and environmental impacts on various communities in the Argentine Chaco region. She has argued for politically engaged and committed research in some publications, benefitting from varied experiences as an activist on the Left and having worked with various social movements both in South America and in Europe. She is currently affiliated to the Instituto Ravnani (UBA, Argentina) and co-edits *Interface's* Latin American section.

Elisabet Dueholm Rasch is associate professor at Wageningen University. Her research topics include (indigenous) mobilization toward neoliberal policies and extractive projects, and energy production in Latin America (Guatemala) and the Netherlands. Her contemporary fieldwork in Guatemala focuses on how territory defenders experience violence and criminalization.

Dr. Layla Brown-Vincent, an Assistant Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology and African Studies at Northeastern University, has joined us as Guest Editor for this Special Issue. She is an activist-scholar of the Pan-African Social Movements in the Americas with a particular focus on the Black Lives Matter movement. As an anthropologist, she has been working and publishing on popular resistance to racism's manifold expressions that she both observes and experiences, and on emerging collective challenges to racism not only in the US, but also in Venezuela and Cuba among others (see her list of publications: <https://laylabrownvincentphd.academia.edu/>)