

## CERS MANIFESTO FOR DECOLONISING RESEARCH AND TEACHING



### Preamble

The Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies (CERS) at the University of Leeds is committed to decolonising research and teaching. Whilst decolonising the university requires one to rethink wider university structures, this manifesto is geared towards outlining central principles and values in decolonising the content of research and teaching. We hope that outlining, making explicit, and embedding these values in research and teaching will decolonise and also make our research and teaching robust and rigorous.

### I. Developing a Decolonial and Racially-Literate Research and Curricula

1. We strive to think through the consequences of how the modern world is largely shaped by colonialism, empires, and slavery. We remember that the modern world and many of our social institutions, including educational institutions, were shaped by colonialism, empires and slavery, and thus have impacted our intellectual traditions, research programmes, institutions, canons and curricula.
2. We recognise that colonialism has in its core a set of political, social, economic, cultural but also intellectual hierarchies – hierarchies which have overlapped with a racialised ordering of the world.
3. We commit to developing a decolonial and racially literate research and curricula. This means we recognise the need to read and think more, and more fundamentally, about race, colonialism and empire. We recognise that we need to talk and think about race more to be able to go beyond race.
4. We identify and address racial and historical blind-spots in research and education – and therefore cast a critical eye on our own work and the traditions from which we draw.
5. We question ethnocentrism and racial biases in our theorisations, in constituting our research questions, research samples, algorithms, data sets, impact outcomes, co-production activities, in reading lists, in whom we cite, whom we leave out, and with whom we collaborate.
6. We recognise that our existing intellectual hierarchies, canons, curriculum are already racialised – prioritising White/European traditions and taking White/Europeans as the norm. When we call for decolonisation of research and curricula, we are saying that our existing programmes, canons and curricula have inbuilt colonial and racialised (as well as gendered, ableist, heteronormative) assumptions which we need to identify and unpack. We strive to remove existing biases and challenge those in others.

## **II. Going Beyond Diversity**

1. We seek to go beyond valorising 'diversity'. We seek to seriously think through the consequences that decolonisation of research and teaching should bring. We demand epistemic justice, not diversity managerialism.
2. We refuse to create 'parallel canons' but instead challenge epistemological biases and ignorance and seek to rethink existing canons to make them more reliable, accurate and valid.
3. We are aware that it is not just research and education in the Global North which need decolonising; curricula and research in the Global South can also have the same biases and assumptions. We thus seek to work with all to decolonise research and teaching and produce knowledge which can meet the needs of a globalised world.
4. Decolonisation of curricula and research should not just fall on the shoulders of some, letting 'them' do the hard work of lifting. We should all take it seriously as not to do so produces research and education which are poor and deficient in quality.

## **III. Revising Curricula and Research Programmes**

1. We recognise that our research programmes, curricula and canons are a 'social product'. They are always in need of revision to make them more rigorous, accurate and effective.
2. We strive to decolonise as decolonised curricula and research will not only deliver a more socially just world but without it research and curricula cannot be robust or rigorous. Research and curricula which ignores and erases 'others' (wilfully or inadvertently), reproduces racial hierarchies, universalises from the experiences of only some groups, or is ignorant about its own racial prejudices cannot claim to be producing global or rigorous knowledge. Such knowledge will remain partial, inaccurate and defective.
3. We commit to stay clear of valorising 'race' in our attempts to decolonise research and curricula. Bringing race, empire and colonialism into our research and teaching should not end up valorising and concretising 'race', turning it into an immutable concept. We avoid associating problems with the bodies, skins and cultures of racialised minorities and migrants. For example, we steer away from 'racialisation of disease'. We problematise the racialised organisation of society which produces racialised outcomes rather than seeing racialised peoples as problems.