

Who is afraid of anti-racism?

Racism has been a contentious topic in anthropology. While cultural anthropology is often perceived in its historical foundation as a progressive response to scientific racism, recently various critical voices have called attention to the blindspots of the Boasian liberal anti-racism as well as to the overall need to address the many legacies of racism in anthropology. Essentializing conceptualizations of difference, Eurocentric biases, the colonial imprint in our methodology, and the lack of diversity among scientific staff are examples of persistent matters of concern in our discipline. Furthermore, the current global political context calls for an increased analytical attention to racism. In Germany particularly, the political mainstreaming of anti-migration discourses as well as the rise of anti-Muslim racism and its affectively loaded interlocking with anti-semitism demand serious anthropological engagement – if anthropology is to be response-able vis-à-vis political and societal concerns. However, initiatives to align anthropology with anti-racism often face reticence or even resistance by some in our scientific community, at the same time that critical scholarship on racism and colonialism has been increasingly targeted by reactionary currents.

To question such difficulty, this roundtable convenes practitioners of anthropology (including SKA and EE) to discuss their experiences, strategies, and hopes in regards to the critique of racism (with)in anthropology. We will ask: How did/does/can or should anthropology respond to racism? How can we anthropologists build a more inclusive community of practice and anchor our discipline in an anti-racist path? Further, how can anthropology contribute to intersectional justice?

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