

Interrogating the Histories and Futures of “Diversity”: Transnational Perspectives

Damani J. Partridge and Matthew Chin

On October 16 and 17, 2017, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, we brought together scholars from around the world to collectively investigate the concept, history, and administration of the global discourse and practice of “diversity.” In particular, we were interested in how the US Supreme Court decisions in *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* had ultimately led public universities in the United States to shift away from the original intent of affirmative action, which worked to redress historical inequality, and toward the concept of “diversity.”¹ We were struck by the ways that university-led diversity initiatives have shaped our everyday lives and by the extent to which we have been called to manage them.

It is not, we argued, that diversity is new—it was already there, as a form of “integration,” at least since the 1970s (see Dresch 1995)—but that affirmative action and other legal forms of broader social redress are in many places either no longer in effect or in rapid decline. We were interested in scrutinizing how, as a consequence of this shift, inclusion has come to be theorized through diversity as an approach that systematically denies access to minoritized populations (including indigenous people, in nation-states and in the world more generally), regardless of actual demographic status. While the number of minoritized populations in the United States is moving toward the status of becoming a demographic majority, the logic of diversity assumes that they will remain in the minority at key sites

1. One should note that the universities represented in these cases, the University of California and the University of Michigan, are both key public institutions. One should also note that a critical number of the invited scholars represented these institutions. See *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003); *Regents of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 (1978).

of contestation. This point is also relevant on a global scale. At elite institutions and in high-paying jobs in various global contexts, diversity has come to mean a sprinkling of color or the contingent presence of the “disadvantaged” in otherwise majoritarian “White” or upper-class/high-caste institutions.

How, then, we asked, does diversity sustain the status quo, and how does it transform it? To what extent is it also under threat? How should one read recent student movements to change the composition of the university (particularly in the United States) in relation to their social and intellectual impact? What are other means of inclusion, and how have they worked in the past versus now? How are they working and being theorized in other global contexts?

In thinking through the global implications of diversity, we were also thinking about the extent to which a nation-state-centered discourse of inclusion has become global. In interrogating diversity, we are interrogating the means through which this discourse has spread as well as its implications in different social and geographic contexts. We consider environments in which other approaches are central and how these approaches operate in relation to diversity. Furthermore, this project considers the goals of diversity versus other forms of governmental inclusion. Finally, we consider the history of diversity discourses and the implications of their implementation.

Legal Decisions and Implications

In the United States, in the *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision, in which a White American prospective female student had challenged the University of Michigan’s admissions policy that sought to keep admissions to its law school diverse, the US Supreme Court finds “diversity as a compelling state interest.”² The argument here, though, is decidedly against social justice as the ground for diversity, at least if one defines social justice as a means for addressing historical inequality. Writing for the majority, then Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor quotes the earlier *Bakke* decision written by then Justice Powell. Recalling the decision that decided against the use of racial quotas, O’Connor writes, “We acknowledge that ‘there are serious problems of justice connected with the idea of preference itself.’ *Bakke*, 438 U.S., at 298” (341) Here, the question of justice is meant to address the equal protection of majoritarian individuals from discrimination. More pointedly, “justice” is associated with protecting the potential White (female) student.

2. *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. at 3. Hereafter, page numbers are cited in the text.

The point is that racial quotas would necessarily and automatically exclude qualified White applicants, even if they could act as a way to ensure the presence of more “Black,” Latinx, and Native American students. In having a White woman sue the University of Michigan, the court case also divides the politics of redressing gendered discrimination from redressing racial exclusion. Whiteness operates as the most significant signifier, and minoritized populations cannot be considered as minoritized groups, but only in terms of the individual applications and individual merit under the narrowly tailored rubric of diversity. Diversity becomes (as the court decision makes clear) a question of what is in the interest of the institution and its student body as a whole, not of the specific racialized (potential) student. According to the court, the university cannot reserve a specific number of spaces or admit a specific percentage of minoritized applicants, because this would impinge on the rights of (majoritarian) others.

In this sense, it is not clear that the University of Michigan’s victory in the court case that allowed it to sustain its practices of admitting a diverse group of students, based on its and the court’s logic of diversity, was really a victory from the perspective of a minoritized group seeking access to the university. Diversity is framed as part of a logic that excludes reparations. Ultimately, “the Law School, too, concedes that all ‘race-conscious programs must have reasonable durational limits’” (342). In other words, the university suggests, and the court agrees, the criteria that allow for selecting a diverse student body at the time of the court’s decision should ultimately come to an end, and this end should come in the not-so-distant future. While the end should be in sight, according to the court and the university, the best methods for redressing the broader social inequities that make it more difficult for most minoritized students to gain access to elite institutions go without any significant consideration.

In the court’s discussion, it is also important to consider the stakes of the diversity decision in relation to the potential exclusion of the nearly successful White applicant. Here, the court understands diversity not as a form of (limited) social justice but as a means toward enriching the educational environment of majoritarian institutions. Justice O’Connor also links admissions to selective law schools to the potential for ending up with a high social status. Writing for the majority, Justice O’Connor reminds the reader:

Individuals with law degrees occupy roughly half the state governorships, more than half the seats in the United States Senate, and more than a third of the seats in the United States House of Representatives. . . . A handful of these schools accounts for 25 of the 100 United States Senators,

74 United States Courts of Appeals judges, and nearly 200 of the more than 600 United States District Court judges. (332)

In other words, law school admission (particularly at elite institutions) is directly connected to the likelihood of one becoming a governmental administrator who will make decisions about the future of the country as a whole.

While Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, joined by Justice Stephen Breyer, writes a concurring opinion to O’Conner’s majority opinion, adding a separate point about historical inequality and questions of redress, the question of historical injury seems to be largely beside the point in the overall decision. It is true that students of color are underrepresented at elite universities, as a result of experiences of discrimination and marginalization (the majority opinion does acknowledge some aspect of this), but the point of diversity is not primarily to redress this inequality, and decidedly not to redress the collective implications. Ginsburg’s concurring opinion, while it is not the opinion of the majority, does help its readers think about the connection between the United States and global forms of historical inequality:

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified by the United States in 1994, see State Dept., *Treaties in Force* 422–423 (June 1996), endorses “special and concrete measures to ensure the adequate development and protection of certain racial groups or individuals belonging to them, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” (344)

Nevertheless, there seems to be a mismatch between Ginsburg’s logic and the logic of O’Connor’s majority opinion, which primarily sees the question of discrimination on the side of the White woman who filed the case against the University of Michigan. It is significant here, however, that Ginsburg (joined by Breyer) references the international convention, the need for historical redress, and the persistence of racialized discrimination in the United States, which, she notes, is also linked to the history of American slavery. The logic of diversity, however, obfuscates the question of redress. Instead it sees the institution and the associated students who are also admitted as the primary beneficiaries.

Transnational Dimensions

In our call for papers for the international symposium at the University of Michigan, we asked potential participants to consider several international examples as

a basis for beginning the discussion and thinking transnationally.³ These examples could be a way to push the discussion forward and to think concretely about related institutions of power as well as the means for addressing questions of the historical absence of certain populations in particular kinds of institutions. The key examples are as follows:

1. In Indian university admissions, with numerous reservations for the socially disenfranchised, parents of wealthy and “high-caste” applicants wonder if their children will have a chance of getting in. They often end up paying high fees to send their children to the United States or the United Kingdom.
2. In Germany, affirmative action was never an option for racialized populations, but governmental institutions and political parties have official quotas for the inclusion of women, and the government offers subsidies for the sustained cultural lives of its official European ethnic minorities. More recently, though, terms such as *diversity* and *super diversity* (Vertovec 2007) have been taken up in academic discussions about the futures of European cities and academic institutions. Diversity management is becoming a formal part of university life, as the German chancellor recognizes that Germany is “a country of immigration,” and German academics and politicians look to Canada (and not necessarily the United States) as a “gold standard” for learning about immigration administration.
3. In Canada, the prime minister goes to the airport to welcome refugees, but a points system dominates a selection process that determines which migrants will find the easiest passage through Canada’s system of immigration and employment. “Canadian experience” is used as a euphemism to prioritize majoritarian Canadian job applicants (see Sakamoto, Chin, and Young 2010). And yet some children of immigrants who have grown up in Canada talk about the sense of empowerment they feel with the official acknowledgment of “multiculturalism” in their everyday school lives.
4. In South Africa, many years of legal apartheid have given way to the need to redress inequality as formal policy. And yet, many argue that political economic inequality has not been adequately addressed in the governmental language of “broad-based Black economic empowerment.” Economic differentiation and spatial segregation persist. The most elite academic institutions continue to struggle with the incorporation of Black students.

3. While it is clear to us that diversity initiatives are often formed and framed in various national contexts, the discussion and practice of diversity and diversification exceeds the nation-state. By bringing together discussions from key sites across the globe, we were able to collectively think more transnationally about how diversity might be shaping the future and also how one might think about potential alternatives.

Overall, we use the current discourse of diversity as a lens to think about questions of economic disparity and social justice. Putting diversity in a transnational frame has helped us think more about how diversity claims and practices work in everyday life. The transnational frame also leads us to consider the following additional questions: Who benefits from diversity, and who might be forgotten? Who does the work for diversity, and what are its effects? How does it work in relation to multiculturalism, quotas, or reservations? What happens when the need for it is denied? Can it ever be in systematic alignment with social justice, that is, the kind of social justice that redresses historical inequality and oppression? Furthermore, what does it mean to interrogate diversity in the time of Donald Trump, Brexit, xenophobic violence, right-wing populism, and polite liberal racism? Finally, who is advocating diversity? Even if institutions such as universities have come to it out of necessity, where has the call for diversity left the possibilities for advocating for social change?

The University of Michigan's own Scott Page (2007, 2017) argues that cognitive diversity in the workplace is more efficient and leads to better outcomes. But the fact remains that diversity is being used as a management tool. Sometimes at points in university life one observes diversity fatigue. Some academics act as if diversity is at odds with excellence. For people of color who are pushed into diversity management (Ahmed 2012), there is also the sense that working in this arena might stigmatize them. It might lead their colleagues to take their intellectual contributions less seriously, to value them less. This is especially the case in the United States but, as Sara Ahmed (2012) suggests, perhaps also in the United Kingdom and Australia. On the other hand, in countries like Germany, even Black Lives Matter activists want diversity to be established in major institutions such as German universities, where it often seems as if there are no Black faculty or faculty of color more broadly.

Interrogating Diversity, Institutional Establishments, and Fear

It is also useful to think through the affective dimensions of the implementation of policies and practices of diversity. What are the affective consequences of the incitement to engage in critical debate around diversity? What kinds of affects are produced in the call to interrogate diversity at the institutional and individual level? At the individual level, how are affective responses patterned differently among differently positioned subjects? Marginalized groups may be granted entry into academic institutions on the basis of seemingly apolitical diversity discourses, but the extent to which the framework that has facilitated their entry

clashes with their political alignments has consequences, including affective ones. We were struck by the apparent fear and anxiety that the call to interrogate diversity produced among potential participants.

In putting this symposium together, we took note of the fear we found in potentially interrogating diversity in public. In private, colleagues told stories of egregious disparities between the progressive ideals touted by those in their fields and the resistance they witnessed when it came to actually hiring even one Native American or African American faculty member in their departments. Why, we wondered, is there so much fear around interrogating diversity? Are tenured faculty also vulnerable? To take a US example, is it always a question of articulating one’s politics as Barack Obama (as one who can and does easily appeal to White majorities) versus Cornel West (who seems less afraid of direct confrontation concerning issues of social justice), or Angela Davis, versus the Black establishment?

How does diversity work in relation to the demand for “equal pay for equal work,” we need to ask? When one takes on the challenge and tasks of “diversity work,” is one taking on the politics of the institution as opposed to the politics of social transformation? Will speaking truth to power actually change existing arrangements of power, or will this speaking also lead to suppression?

Identity Politics?

In fields such as anthropology, there has been a historical tension among the analysis of race as a social construction, fights for antiracist justice, and the articulation of an identity politics. Identity politics gets read in terms of a strategy for articulating a political position that ultimately essentializes the position from which one is fighting. If race does not exist biologically, why should race be used as an organizing strategy? Does identity politics prevent solidarity? On the other hand, one might argue that for White people in majoritarian situations, identity politics often works as standard practice without being named as such. When one attends informal events such as graduate student parties or student faculty social gatherings, we think that participant researchers should plot distribution graphs of who spent how much time where and with whom. How might distribution graphs reveal the everyday informal social dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexuality? Where would we see clusters? Who would be alone? As someone recently noted in a discussion about the Black table in the high school lunchroom, “As if there aren’t any White tables in the lunchroom” (see also Tatum 2017).

One might argue that “strategic essentialism” (Spivak 1988: 129) is not nec-

essary. Identity politics could be an interest-based politics premised on shared everyday social realities. It does not need to be essentialist, but it does need to be strategic.

While a person of color or other minoritized subject might (in theory) actually be against identity politics, the fact is that there is a White identity politics that goes unmarked, even in left and left-leaning institutions. There is a tendency for individuals within academic institutions to maintain their own sense of familiar camaraderie while (in effect) disrupting the institutional possibility for the camaraderie of others. In fact, the very reason for identity politics to emerge in the first place is to counter the effects of marginalization on the basis of processes of racialization, class/caste, and gender formation. Of course, it goes without saying that these formations also produce and include problematic social hierarchies.

Critical Mass

The logic of constituting a critical mass is important to the discussion of diversity and its limits. In her majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, Justice O'Connor notes, "Erica Munzel, who succeeded Shields as Director of Admissions [at the University of Michigan], testified that 'critical mass' means 'meaningful numbers' or 'meaningful representation,' which she understood to mean a number that encourages underrepresented minority students to participate in the classroom and not feel isolated" (318). In keeping with the law of equal protection, in this case the protection of majoritarian and other highly qualified students who might otherwise face automatic exclusion at the time of admission, O'Connor goes on to note that "Munzel stated there is no number, percentage, or range of numbers or percentages that constitute critical mass" (at 209a). In other words, the notion of a critical mass recognizes the need to have more than one underrepresented student in the law school class at the university. On the other hand, the notion of critical mass also reveals a persistent and thorny problem. Minoritized subjects will remain minorities at these kinds of institutions, potentially in such small numbers that critical mass could become a means for saying "just more than one," and definitely not, in the foreseeable future, the majority.

While the presence of a critical mass is essential to the survival of the minoritized subject (noting that surviving is not the same as flourishing), the court and the university are not allowed (and do not allow themselves) to make the incorporation of minoritized subjects systematic. There is here no language of minimal presence. The notion of a mass is fleeting.

The need for a systematic shift, however, is revealed in examples such as the

following. One of us, Damani Partridge, witnessed a chair of an apparently liberal department at one faculty meeting speak about a suspicious tall Black man who had been seen in the department. She/He asked the faculty to get in touch with the appropriate authorities if they saw him. Partridge wanted to say something, but he was only a junior faculty member at the time and did not feel it was wise to do so. The awkwardness and embarrassment that his saying something might create might end up harming him even more. Given Partridge’s physical characteristics, such a vague description could also apply to him. Sitting there, he could not believe that this was not obvious, but it appeared not to be. There were not even any uncomfortable glances in his direction. This kind of story reinforces the reality that critical masses do make a difference. But how does diversity work in relation to the need for a critical mass? Is there not the need for a reconstitution of the very (racialized, gendered, and classed) means through which the institution gets established in the first place?

Interrogating Diversity: Public versus Private

A consideration of the difference between interrogating diversity in public and interrogating it in private leads to the following additional questions: What is one willing to say, where, and to whom? What does one say in private that seems much more dangerous to say in public? By *public*, we are thinking, in particular, about academic and other employment or job-training arenas. People who do not have academic jobs at stake might be willing to say things about diversity in academic settings that those who already have those jobs are not.

Then there is the question of choosing one’s battles. But how does one choose? In many ways, this argument about choosing battles might seem like a cop-out. If the battle over social justice is not important, then what is? Are those who have already obtained positions of privilege the best advocates for those who have not? What are the conditions under which diversity can be interrogated and among whom? What do we need to do to make people comfortable enough to talk about diversity? Is this “making comfortable” also a part of diversity work? The emotional labor that goes into this kind of project cannot be overstated. Furthermore, one is unavoidably implicated in the analysis. Of course, the politics and stakes shift across geopolitical contexts, and we learn a great deal by thinking in and through these contexts together.

The symposium was described as a workshop, and yet it was also public. For some (for many?), this presented a problem. Would it be a safe space? Could a safe space be public? What did it mean that the symposium was receiving funding from

the university? Was it getting diversity funds? Then were the participants being put onstage? Were they being instrumentalized? What did it mean that university administrators were present at the symposium? Would critiques be taken as critiques of them? Would the lead administrators retaliate by talking to their friends at the participants' institutions? At a public institution, would it be legitimate to have a private transnational symposium?

Tokens and (Social) Change

The issue here is that different kinds of work are being done under "diversity." Even as *interrogating* was in the title of the symposium, we could not escape the consequences of dominant diversity discourses. Participants may have feared being used (as a token) to fulfill institutional needs. Some people are, after all, being paid a lot to administer the university's goals.

There are also competing interests between individual career goals and a broader commitment to social change. Whether or not one is actually being used as a token, the belief that one might be seen that way or could be used that way already has social effects. Whether or not the faculty visiting for the symposium were being used to make the home institution look good, this also has effects (that many wanted to resist). On the other hand, in managing this project, there was also a lot of fear. Faculty at prominent institutions, some of whom ultimately did not participate, feared exposing their colleagues. If we live and grow up in societies where racism is the norm, we should not be surprised when some of our best friends and closest allies also take on racist positions. These positions may be racist in effect, even if they are not stated that way explicitly. Of course, it should also be noted that minoritized populations are not immune from participating in racist and racializing practices. Even if they are not directly responsible for the racial conditions that lead to the racialized effects, minoritized populations also need to stay alert and be aware of their potential participation.

Needless to say, if we are really thinking about change, we need to do more than diversity.

Personal and Local, Everyday Realities

One is constantly negotiating pity and microaggressions. What are the specifics of anti-Black racism, and how is it working in relation to microaggressions here? One recognizes that the risk is marginalization at the same time that one is being asked to do this work (see also Ahmed 2012). One wants to do this work well, and

yet one is put in an impossible position. How does one diversify without institutional transformation? Other realities of those chosen to diversify the institution are self-isolation; the lunchroom effect, often without the possibility of a Black table; high blood pressure; the zoo effect (“Am I on display”); new questions, for instance, is it healthy for POCs (people of color) to exist primarily in HWIs (historically White institutions)?

Diversity Resources: Political Economies of Diversity

The political economy of the university is such that diversity initiatives are never properly funded and resourced (in terms of time, human power, and money); thus diversity initiatives either are pulled together in a scrambled, on-a-shoestring kind of way or do not happen at all. But why can't initiatives like this be considered *the* work within academia instead of just the service side project? The very conditions that facilitate the creation of diversity initiatives as side projects work against the success of these projects.

Ahmed (2012) makes a distinction between diversity work and the work of diversity. But do we need to get beyond diversity? To what extent do we need to develop new terms? Furthermore, who gets to do diversity work without fear? Does engaging in diversity work necessarily mean also engaging in the labor necessary to deal with the emotions that arise from doing this work?

The international symposium that arose from our initial call is also a manifestation of what it means to pull together this kind of event under the current racialized, political, economic academic regime in which faculty of color are asked to engage in diversity work and feel compelled to try to work against racism. The question is the extent to which they can do this by working within the already existing institutional forms and to what extent they need to eschew them altogether and develop new forms of investigation, interrogation, and social change.

Organization of the Special Issue

This volume is organized around the key themes outlined below. While many of the contributions are relevant to more than one arena, we found the following themes helpful in thinking about the contemporary administration and future of diversity in relation to the articulation of alternative possibilities of inclusion and social transformations: (1) “Academia” (with contributions by Jessica Cattelino and Seçkin Sertdemir Özdemir, Nil Mutluer, and Esra Özyürek); (2) “‘Diversity’ and State Governance” (with contributions by Mayanthei Fernando

and Ajantha Subramanian); (3) “Decolonization and ‘Diversity’” (with contributions by Anneeth Kaur Hundle, Matthew Chin, and Ciraj Rassool); (4) “‘Diverse’ Futures?” (with contributions by Gloria Diaz, Gabrielle Cabrera, Carla Moore, and Laura Yakas; and Rinaldo Walcott).

For this special issue, we have encouraged authors to write in a way that is accessible to other academics, graduate and undergraduate students, and social activists. The point is that the results of the symposium should be available not only to United States–based participants but also to broader communities in diverse international social and political contexts.

Academia

The original symposium also included Aimee Cox, a scholar who has engaged in what Ahmed (2012) calls “diversity work,” but who also wants to rethink that involvement and the extent to which one can use the university to effect change (perhaps a kind of change that cannot be encapsulated in the terms of diversity and its associated administrative tools). She spoke to some extent about her embarrassment about having participated in these initiatives in the past. But her insights provided grounds on which one could begin to imagine a different future.

Cox (2017) pointed out: “We are always creating space where there is no space. . . . You’ve just got to try to figure out spaces to live.” Cox also observed the everyday dynamics from the perspective of the diverse person: “To be in a department when nobody spoke to you . . . [to] navigate spaces that weren’t meant for them to be there in the first place. . . . Mentoring students when they themselves did not have any mentoring.” “How,” she asked, “do we support the spaces we have already created? . . . How do we steal from the university so that we can support the spaces we have already created anyway? What does it mean to refuse the choice that is being offered? . . . A project that is policing us through policy.” In speaking about diversity work, Cox spoke of the “shame around the [diversity] work I have done in the institutions” she has inhabited. Finally, she asked, “How can you transform the mechanism that has been part of the problem?”

In her contribution to this special issue, Jessica Cattelino examines the performative dimensions of law and the potential attentiveness of cultural anthropological analysis to the everyday interactions that produce and reproduce a chilling climate, that is, a context in which Native American and other minoritized scholars and students are policed out of the elite university in the name of legal restrictions that are regularly evoked without having to be argued in formal legal

arenas. Informally, in faculty meetings and other arenas of university administration, legal decisions are interpreted and enforced against inclusion and against other potential interpretations. She holds out the promise of a potential cultural anthropological attentiveness while realizing that the current direction is likely fraught.

Seçkin Sertdemir Özdemir, Nil Mutluer, and Esra Özyürek are self-imposed exiles from Turkey working in European and UK academia with various statuses; they are under investigation for opposing the Turkish government’s violence against its Kurdish populations. Using Hannah Arendt’s (1958) understanding of plurality as opposed to diversity, they seek equality in their European environments as opposed to temporary humanitarian hospitality that offers temporary academic space in response to the exiled status but not a persistent recognition of their potential long-term contributions. They ultimately experience the realities of precarious labor in their new places of residence.

While German universities with funding from key state and political party and state-sponsored foundations have become a central site for the possibility of temporarily funding Turkish exiles, the authors also think of the possibilities and contributions made by German, Jewish, and German-Jewish scholars in the World War II era fleeing war and genocide in Europe. Major institutions were established that contribute even now to the possibilities for a major rethinking. Exiled scholars are in a unique position to make major contributions to the university and thinking about citizenship and social change more broadly. They, however, need institutional space and security to make these kinds of contributions.

Diversity and State Governance

In her contribution to this volume, Mayanthi Fernando offers an approach to questions of citizenship, universality, recognition, and difference that leads to a politics of indifference as potentially a more liberatory kind of politics. Indifference no longer relies on the recognition of state actors and institutions. It also gets beyond logics of democratic participation in which participants are ultimately called to recognize institutions that refuse to attend to their experiences of everyday discrimination and social marginalization. In France, discrimination and marginalization are often couched in the language of secularism and universalism while also reflecting attempts to exclude everyday Muslim practices. A politics oriented around recognizing difference (as the language of diversity also implies) refuses to see the extent to which these practices are produced in France or the ways in which Islam might be universal and French republicanism particular.

In her contribution, Ajantha Subramanian examines a quota system in India, or “reservations” that were set up as a temporary means of addressing caste as a persistent form of structural disadvantage. In response, just below 50 percent of the spaces to study at India’s elite Institutes of Technology (IITs) are granted to Dalits and lower-caste Indians.

In response, Subramanian argues, Brahmins and other upper-caste Indians are invoking meritocracy to protest what they see as their exclusion. Not being admitted to the IITs sometimes results in suicide. For many of the upper castes, the United States’ institutions of higher education become a possible alternative where, they argue, meritocracy is still in effect.

Meritocracy, democracy, and social justice are central components in a dynamic in which diversity, plurality, participation, and citizenship become important elements in the politics of social change and the demands for a more just future. Reservations and lower-caste and Dalit consciousness lead to a very different kind of case than the one made for diversity. The combination of a majority status and a court decision leads directly to a definitive number of spaces being set aside for those experiencing systematic disadvantage. This is not only the result of court and policy decisions, as Subramanian makes clear, but also a result of activism.

While one might make the case for poor Brahmin inclusion (even under the rubric of diversity), if one is thinking seriously about the systematicity of historical exclusion and marginalization, the majority status of lower castes and Dalits produces a very different kind of politics of inclusion. This type of politics, though, is not available in the same way to minoritized subjects in countries in Europe, the United States, or Canada. Even in South Africa, as Ciraj Rassool’s contribution to this volume makes clear, persistent differentiation under apartheid and even earlier has made the articulation of a Black majority nearly impossible, at least in the immediate future. Black consciousness as a mass movement is obfuscated by the persistence of apartheid politics of differentiation, including the production of tribes, coloreds, Asians, Afrikaners, and Whites. What one learns from these examples and others is that democracy, by itself, will not produce justice. Activism, however, seems to be critical to any politics of major social change.

Decoloniality, Decolonization, and Diversity

Anneeth Kaur Hundle, in her contribution to this volume, develops a call to “decolonize diversity.” Through an examination of diversity in three differ-

ent institutional contexts—the University of Michigan, Makerere University in Uganda, and the University of California, Merced—she raises questions about the extent to which diversity can mean more than exposing majoritarian students, administrators, and faculty to minoritized colleagues and fellow students. To what extent, though, can it lead to social transformation and end the effects of racial and other forms of injustice? To what extent does diversity in its various institutional forms work to legitimate the status quo? Hundle takes up examples based on her professional and graduate experience in Michigan, California, and Uganda to unpack the contemporary condition of diversity versus what she imagines as its future possibility.

In his contribution to this volume, Matthew Chin examines the conditions under which the emergence of a politics of same-sex desire becomes possible in postindependence Jamaica. In his analysis, he focuses on the formation of the gay freedom movement (GFM), the first self-proclaimed gay activist organization in the anglophone Caribbean. Chin illustrates how the GFM came into existence through its relationships with both Jamaican postindependence social movements and “gay” organizations and individuals outside the nation-state. The contribution responds to the evacuation of subjects of same-sex desire from dominant narratives of Jamaican cultural nationalism at the same time that it works to situate Jamaica within global histories of sexuality (thereby working against the consigning of Third World histories to local as opposed to universal histories). In so doing, it lays bare the terrain on which subjects of same-sex desire were compelled to articulate political projects as well as the contemporary conditions under which the writing of such a history becomes possible.

While the articles in this special issue are oriented around the interrogation of *diversity*, the term as a politicized form of governance did not exist in the same way in early postindependence Jamaica. Rather than diversity, GFM’s work was oriented around liberation. Liberation offers another approach to possibilities of inclusion and is linked to concerted activist effort. Here, as in Hundle’s contribution, the distinction between projects that promote independence and those that work to systematically undo the social, political, and philosophical hierarchies associated with coloniality is helpful. As Walter Mignolo (2007: 455) points out:

While “emancipation” was the concept used to argue for the freedom of a new social class, . . . “liberation” provides a larger frame that includes the racialized class that the European bourgeoisie (directly or indirectly) colonized beyond Europe . . . and, thus, subsumes “emancipation.” What

remains still unsaid and un-theorized is the fact that the concept of “emancipation”—in the discourses of European enlightenment—proposes changes within the system that [do not] question the logic of coloniality. . . . Both “liberation” and “decolonization” [point] toward conceptual (and therefore epistemic) projects of de-linking from the colonial matrix of power.

In his approach to the possibilities of decoloniality, Ciraj Rassool outlines the specific and deep historical construction of race through the importation of laboring subjects, the creation of tribes, as well as the constitution of Afrikaners as White in South Africa. Nonracialism becomes a political goal that he sees as necessary to producing a decolonial future.

Rassool points to the ways in which diversity-incorporation practices also contribute to the persistent production of difference, a production that shows up as a critical component of colonial administration. In this sense, his analysis is in direct conversation with Anneeth Kaur Hundle’s call to decolonize diversity.

Diverse Futures?

In the final section of the special issue, we feature a joint contribution from symposium participants who were asked what they thought was missing from the discussion. These contributors had come as prospective applicants, those finishing PhDs, those who had just begun graduate school, and more generally those not yet fully ensconced in established university positions.

In the symposium and in their contributions here, they ask, “Are we on the margins or the cutting edge?” The stakes of getting the analysis of diversity right were, they said, survival. But who is being left out of the discussion? Can we make decisions for those who are not here with us in this discussion, already primarily featuring elite institutions? Will we cut off access even more if we just advocate burning down the institutions that seem to marginalize so profusely, even while waving the flag of diversity? Since many of us have already “made it,” is it fair for us to try to shut down the system entirely and close off the possibility for any more access? On the other hand, can we survive if things stay as they are? The above are the kinds of questions these contributors ask, understanding themselves as often tokenized, in some cases undocumented, made to be flexible noncitizens. In their combined query, the future is at stake. Through their voices, we get a glimpse of what that future might be from Canada through the Caribbean, including the United States.

In the final contribution to this special issue, Rinaldo Walcott brings us back to the possibility of decolonial futures, going beyond what he calls the restorative logic of modern/humanist projects that maintain the logics and practices of White supremacy even while claiming universal inclusion. In his call to envision a decolonial future, he also asks readers to think specifically about the effects of anti-Black racism.

In the end, our call to interrogate diversity has also led us to collectively think beyond, outside, and in spite of diversity. It is not that we are against inclusion, but we cannot justify forms of inclusion that necessarily (even systematically) limit access. This includes forms that do very little to create possibilities for those who have systematically faced barriers that deny entrance. Interrogating diversity cannot mean sustaining existing institutions as we already know them. This process must be engaged in an activist, collective, and participatory project of social transformation.

References

- Ahmed, Sara. 2012. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cox, Aimee. 2017. Presentation made at the “Interrogating the Histories and Futures of ‘Diversity’” Symposium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, October 16, 2017.
- Dresch, Paul. 1995. “Race, Culture, and—What? Pluralist Certainties in the United States.” In *The Pursuit of Certainty: Religious and Cultural Formulations*, edited by Wendy Brown, 61–91. London: Routledge.
- Mignolo, Walter D. 2007. “Delinking.” *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3: 449–514.
- Page, Scott. 2007. *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Page, Scott. 2017. *The Diversity Bonus: How Great Teams Pay Off in the Knowledge Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sakamoto, Izumi, Matthew Chin, and Melina Young. 2010. “Canadian Experience, Employment Challenges, and Skilled Immigrants: A Close Look through ‘Tacit Knowledge.’” *Canadian Social Work Journal* 10, no. 1: 145–51.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and*

- the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271–316. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. 2017. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race*. New York: Basic Books.
- Vertovec, Steven. 2007. “Super-Diversity and Its Implications.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 6: 1024–54.

Damani J. Partridge is associate professor of anthropology and Afroamerican and African studies at the University of Michigan. He has published broadly on questions of citizenship, sexuality, post–Cold War “freedom,” Holocaust memorialization, African American military occupation, “Blackness” and embodiment, the production of noncitizens, the culture and politics of “fair trade,” and the Obama moment in Berlin. In 2012, he published *Hypersexuality and Headscarves: Race, Sex, and Citizenship in the New Germany*.

Matthew Chin is assistant professor at the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University. He is currently conducting an ethnographic study of the history of sexuality in Jamaica in the second half of the twentieth century, with a focus on the politics of same-sex desire.