

# Decentering whiteness:

## An Anti-racism Reading group

### Background/summary

The objective of the reading group is to deepen our understanding of racism and anti-racism. Our expectations of participants are that we commit to reading the book/s (or chapters) identified, we listen to the suggested musicians, and view the suggested art and film material. We would also hope that participants would sign up for one (or two?) of the secondary readings as presenters, and would also share additional readings, music/poetry/art/film from their individual experience that helps to deepen our collective experience.

Sessions will begin by introducing our keynote facilitator/presenter and exploring the key themes and arguments of the book discussed. One or two participants will then give a presentation on the secondary reading and look for intersections between the two (i.e.: how does the second text illustrate the first?). Finally, we'll look at (and share) music, poetry, art and film/video that intersects and deepens our awareness and understanding of racism and anti-racism.

Keynote facilitators/presenters are drawn from the community and are asked to share their experiences working in community-based organizations in the Lower Mainland. Their presence will help to broaden our experience away from public school contexts and foster a sense of allyship.

We are still gathering feedback from various community members and are refining our readings and process. At this point we are looking at the following readings (please see below) - and don't worry, we won't read the whole of Mbembe or Coulthard! We anticipate our first meeting will be in mid-January. Due to Covid, we will be meeting on Teams. But because it's a reading group we want to keep numbers down to 30ish. If you are interested in joining us, please email George (VSTA) ([gkanavos@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:gkanavos@vsb.bc.ca)) or Andrew (VASSA) ([aschofield@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:aschofield@vsb.bc.ca))

#### *About the organizers:*

George Kanavos and Andrew Schofield are VSB employees, both white males, both settlers, who are interested in looking at theoretical and organizational aspects to antiracist work in order to surface our own racist practices, work towards unlearning these, and also contribute to building an anti-racist and safe learning environment for our colleagues and students. We are both in extremely privileged positions of power - we work together at Magee Secondary; George is a counsellor and Andrew is the principal of the school.

## Tentative outline

### Session One: Overview

Keynote facilitator: TBD

Book discussed: Mbembe, A. (2019). Necropolity

Secondary Reading: Hochschild, A. (1998/2006). King Leopold's Ghost

Musician/artist: Mzwakhe Mbuli: Change is Pain.

Video/film: Any of the Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan depictions of Africa: Tarzan the Ape Man (1932)/Tarzan finds a son! (1939) etc. etc.

### Session Two: White supremacy and anti-blackness

Keynote facilitator: Jade Ho, Vancouver Tenant's Union and TSSU.

Book discussed: Mbembe, A. (2019). Necropolity.

Secondary Reading: James, C.L.R. (1938/1989). The Black Jacobins: Toussant L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution.

Musician/artist: Lynton Kwesi Johnson: Forces of Victory

Video/film: 13<sup>th</sup> (Dir. Ava DuVernay. 2016)

Photo activity: Over the week/end, please take 3 photos of your worksite and/or home environment and/or social event that you feel comfortable sharing and send them to one of the facilitators. We will use the photos in an activity during the session's discussion.

### Session Three: Indigenous experience

Keynote facilitator: Glenn Coulthard/Dene land schools

Book discussed: Coulthard, G. (2014). Red Skin, White Masks.

Secondary Reading: Daschuk, J. (2019). Clearing the Plains.

Musician/artist: Jeremy Dutcher: Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa. Yothu Yindi: [Tribal Voice](#); [Treaty](#); [Timeless land](#).

Video/film: Inconvenient Indian. (Dir. Michelle Latimer. 2020). SFU. (2016). [Red skin, White Masks](#): Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition: Panel Discussion.

### Session Four: Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism

Keynote facilitator: TBD

Book discussed: Edward Said (1978). Orientalism.

Secondary Reading:

Musician/artist: Oum: Zarabi

Video/film: Fauda. (Raz and Issacharoff. 2015)

### **Session five: Intersections**

Keynote facilitator: DTES Women's Center representative.

Book discussed: Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. (2017). *As we have always done*.

Secondary Reading: Martin, C. and Walia, H. (2019). [Red Women Rising](#): Indigenous women survivors in Vancouver's downtown eastside.

Musician/artist: Billy-Ray Belcourt. (2017). *This wound is a world*.

Video/film: *Amandla! A revolution in four-part harmony*. (Dir. Lee Hirsch. 2003)

### **Session six: Pathways**

Keynote facilitator: Alpha Kirabira: *Help change my city*

Book discussed: Shiva, V. (2020). *Reclaiming the Commons*.

Secondary Reading: Miranda, B. ['The way I am is an outrage': The Indigenous Brazilian musicians taking back a burning country](#). *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Oct., 2020.

Musician/artist: Victor Jara: *Best of ...*; Faruk Asvat (1987/2014). *A Celebration of Flames*

Video/film: *The Whale Rider*. (Dir. Niki Caro. 2002).