

‘Shut the f* up’, ‘you have no rights here’: Critical Race Theory and Racialisation in post-7/7 racist Britain**

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Abstract

The London bombings of 7th July, 2007 (7/7) were a pivotal moment in British society, not only because of the loss of life and injury, but because it was the first time Britain had been attacked by non-white British citizens. This point was underscored by Chancellor Gordon Brown when he stressed that ‘the uncomfortable facts’ have to be faced that the bombers were ‘British citizens, British born, apparently integrated into our communities, who were prepared to maim and kill fellow British citizens’. Here we assess competing explanations for the role of ‘race’ in contemporary society: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Racialisation. Two central tenets of CRT are critiqued from a Marxist perspective, and the Marxist concept of racialisation is put forward as having most purchase in explaining manifestations of intensified Islamophobia and xenoracism in post 7/7 Britain.

Keywords: Critical Race Theory, Racialisation, Imperialism, Terrorism

Critique Of Two Tenets Of Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is grounded in ‘*the uncompromising insistence that “race” should occupy the central position in any legal, educational, or social policy analysis*’ (Darder and Torres, 2004, p. 98). Given this centrality, “‘*racial*” liberation [is] embraced as not

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

only the primary but as the most significant objective of any emancipatory vision of education in the larger society’ (ibid.) Here we focus on two tenets of CRT: the first is that the concept of *white supremacy* better expresses oppression in contemporary societies based on ‘race’ than does the concept of *racism*; and the second tenet is the belief in the pre-eminence of ‘race’ rather than social class. We have this focus quite simply because, while CRT is virtually unknown outside of the USA, these aspects of it have recently been adopted *in toto* by arguably the most influentially ‘race’ theorist within education in Britain, David Gillborn [2]. We will critique each of the two tenets in turn.

White supremacy is not merely a feature of far-right political organisations but inherent in contemporary society

Gillborn (2005, p. 491) argues that ‘white supremacy’ is now mainstream and not the preserve solely of ‘white supremacist hate groups’. Furthermore, he claims that ‘white supremacy’ is useful in explaining oppression based on ‘race’ in western capitalist societies in general:

[c]ritical work on race in the US has moved beyond ‘commonsense’ superficial readings of white supremacy as solely the preserve of obviously extreme racialized politics. Some scholars ... argue that mainstream political parties, and the functioning of agencies like the education system itself, are actively implicated in maintaining and extending the grip that white people have on the major sources of power in ‘Western’ capitalist societies.

This is not a new idea in the US. Indeed it was adopted by leading US black intellectual and activist, bell hooks, in preference to racism many years ago. As she put it in 1989:

As I write, I try to remember when the word racism ceased to be the term which best expressed for me the exploitation of black people and other people of color in this society and when I began to understand that the most useful term was white supremacy (hooks, 1989, p. 112, cited in Gillborn, 2005, p. 485)

We would argue, however, that Gillborn’s advocacy of a *white supremacy* position is misleading and incomplete. While it is manifestly the case, as argued in this paper, that racism is widespread in UK society, there are two significant problems with the use of the term *white supremacy*. The first is that it homogenises all white people

together in positions of class power and privilege, which, of course, is factually incorrect, both with respect to social class inequality in general, and, as will be shown in later in this paper, with reference to xenoracialization.

Gillborn (2005, pp. 497-8) states that we should reject the ‘commonsense (white-sense?) view of education policy and the dominant understanding of the functioning of education in Western societies’ in favour of ‘the recognition that race inequity and racism are central features of the education system’, and that they ‘are not aberrant nor accidental phenomena that will be ironed out in time’, but ‘fundamental characteristics of the system’. While we would agree that *commonsense* interpretations should be rejected (as we shall see, *commonsense* is a central feature of the Marxist concept of racialization), we would disagree that commonsense in any way equates with *white-sense*. While it is undoubtedly true that racism (including xenoracism – see below) has penetrated large sections of the white working class, and while it is clearly the case that members of the (predominantly though not exclusively) white *ruling class* are the beneficiaries of the commonsense view of education policy, it is certainly not white people as a whole who are in this hegemonic position, nor white people as a whole who benefit from current education policy, or any other legislation. Indeed the white working class, as part of the working class in general, consistently fares badly in the education system.

The second problem with Gillborn’s position relates to his specific conclusion that ‘*education policy is an act of white supremacy*’ (2005, p. 498). This has the unfortunate effect of equating institutional racism with far-right racist movements and with fascism, and muddies the waters, thus preventing a rational analysis of racism. Marxists (and others) have consistently stressed the need to differentiate the specificities of fascism from everyday capitalist-imperialist practice. Here is the platform of *Race Traitor* (2005), an organisation which calls for the abolition of whiteness:

What We Believe

The white race is a historically constructed social formation. It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, which means no more and no less than abolishing the privileges of the white skin. Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in US society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

RACE TRAITOR aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.

Incomprehensibly, Gillborn (2005, p. 488) labels the political stance of Noel Ignatiev, and others at the journal, *Race Traitor* as Marxist [3]. This stance, which stresses ‘abolition of the white race’ before instituting ‘reforms’, and advocates putting ‘racial interests above class’ bears absolutely no resemblance to Marxism whatsoever. Marxism does not advocate the abolition of *whiteness*; rather it seeks the abolition of capitalism and the liberation of the working class. Indeed, the central tenant of Marxism is the advocating of a class-, rather than ‘race’- based analysis. In addition, while Marxists support *reforms*, they are, first and foremost, revolutionaries not reformists.

We would argue, in addition, that the *style* in which *Race Traitor*’s ideological position is written is worryingly reminiscent of Nazi propaganda, and seriously open to misinterpretation [4].

There is undue emphasis on social class, and oppression based on ‘race’ is the major form of oppression in contemporary societies

In his latest article on CRT, an article which has no social class analysis or analysis of capitalism, Gillborn’s (2006, p. 27) writing epitomizes the CRT view on the centrality of ‘race’:

CRT offers a challenge to educational studies more generally, and to the sociology of education in particular, to cease the ritualistic citation of ‘race’ as just another point of departure on a list of exclusions to be mentioned and then bracketed away. CRT insists that racism be placed at the centre of analyses and that scholarly work be engaged in the process of rejecting and deconstructing the current patterns of exclusion and oppression.

For Marxists, while recognising the crucial significance of identities other than social class, class exploitation and class struggle is constitutive of capitalism, and ‘race’ and racism, as we shall argue, need to be understood in terms of the role that racialization plays in the retention and enhancement of capitalism. The problem with CRT is that it does not connect with the mode of production – a major strength of Marxism is that it does make this connection. This does not mean that CRT cannot provide insights into racism in capitalist societies. For example, its stress that ‘people of color speak from a unique experience framed by racism, and, therefore, need to be listened to’ is important.

Such insights are particularly illuminating for some white people whose life experiences are restricted to monocultural settings.

One of CRT’s founders, Richard Delgado (1995) argues that the stories of persons of color come from a different frame of reference, one underpinned by racism, and that this therefore gives them a voice that is different from the dominant culture and deserves to be heard. Arguing in a similar vein, Dixson and Rousseau (2005, p. 10) define the concept of *voice* as ‘the assertion and acknowledgement of the importance of the personal and community experiences of people of colour as sources of knowledge’.

The crucial point for Marxists, however, is that people of color need always to be listened to *because* they have been racialized. Racism can be best understood by both

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

listening to and/or learning about the life histories and experiences of those at the receiving end of racism, and by objective Marxist analysis. There is thus considerable purchase in Zeus Leonardo’s (2004) attempt to ‘integrate Marxist objectivism and race theory’s focus on subjectivity’ (see also Maisuria 2006) [5]. At the beginning of an article on racism in Britain, one of us (Maisuria, 2006, p. 1) explains his theoretical technique of linking state policy with his family’s experiences of racism:

I will ... [highlight] events and legislation that have shaped and defined macro policy, and also the micro experiences of the Maisuria family. It is of huge important to establish a connection between macro politics and micro struggles in a liberal democracy to see how the state links with lived lives.

Delgado and the Return of Social Class

When CRT was originally envisioned, it was to be an intersection of ‘racial theory’ and activism against racism. However, a number of CRT theorists today are frustrated at the turn CRT has made from activism to academic discourse [6], and this has led to a reappraisal of the significance of social class.

Delgado (2003) noted above as one of CRT’s founders, recently put forward a materialist critique of the discourse-focused trend of recent CRT writings which focus more on text and symbol and less on the economic determinants of Latino/a and black racial fortunes. Delgado’s paper was the subject of a symposium, run by *The Michigan Journal of Race and Law*, entitled, *Going Back to Class: The Re-emergence of Class in Critical Race Theory*. University of Illinois at Chicago Philosophy Professor Charles Mills, a symposium panelist, said he favoured the combination of Marxism and CRT, which forms a kind of ‘racial capitalism.’ He said he agreed with Delgado on the belief, central to CRT, that class structure keeps racial hierarchy intact. The working class is divided by ‘race’, Mills said, to the advantage of the upper class, which is mainly composed of white elites (Hare, 2006).

University of California at Berkeley Law School Professor Angela Harris said CRT is essential in exposing how interconnected class, ‘race’ and sex can be: ‘We need to pay attention to the intersections and understand how complicated these issues are,’ (*ibid.*). As an example, she referenced the affirmative action disputes in higher education. The often-cited argument that working-class whites are being rejected in

favor of middle-class blacks and Latinos — who, the argument goes, have a better chance of acceptance regardless of ‘race’ — is looking at class based solely on income (*ibid.*). ‘What CRT exposes is that class also needs to be looked at in terms of access to wealth and the racialization of class’ (*ibid.*). As for the future of CRT, Delgado envisions a new movement of CRT theorists to recombine discourse and political activism. ‘I’m worried that the younger crop of CRT theorists are enamored by the easy arm-chair task of writing about race the word and not race in the world’, Delgado concluded. ‘A new movement is needed’.

For Marxists, these are promising developments and point towards a possible alignment between CRT and Marxism, an alignment to which the current work of Gillborn, for example, is not conducive.

The Marxist Concept of Racialisation

Robert Miles has defined racialization as an ideological process that accompanies the exploitation of labour power (the capacity to labour), where people are categorized into the scientifically defunct notion of distinct ‘races’. Racialization, like racism, is socially constructed. In Miles’ (1989, p. 75) words, racialization refers to ‘those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and *construct* differentiated social collectivities’ (our emphasis). For Miles, racialization is essentially a Marxist concept. As he puts it:

the process of racialisation cannot be adequately understood without a conception of, and explanation for the complex interplay of different modes of production and, in particular, of the social relations necessarily established in the course of material production (Miles, 1987, p. 7).

Whereas for postmodernists, *discourse* refers to the way in which different meanings are constructed by the readers of texts; for Marxists, all discourses are products of the society in which they are formulated. In other words, ‘our thoughts are the reflection of political, social and economic conflicts and racist discourses are no exception’ (Camara, 2002, p. 88). While, such reflections can, of course, be refracted and disarticulated, dominant discourses (e.g. those of the Government, of big business, of large sections of the media, of the hierarchy of some trade unions) tend to directly

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

reflect the interests of the ruling class, rather than ‘the general public’. The way in which racialization connects with popular consciousness, however, is via ‘common sense’. ‘Common sense’ is generally used to denote a down-to-earth ‘good sense’ and is thought to represent the distilled truths of centuries of practical experience, so that to say that an idea or practice is ‘only common sense’ is to claim precedence over the arguments of Left-wing intellectuals and, in effect, to foreclose discussion (Lawrence, 1982, p. 48). Antonio Gramsci differentiated between ‘good sense’ and ‘common sense’. For him the latter:

is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space. It is the ‘folklore’ of philosophy, and, like folklore, it takes countless different forms. Its most fundamental characteristic is that it is ... fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential (Gramsci, 1978, p. 419)

The rhetoric of the purveyors of dominant discourses aims to shape ‘common sense discourse’ into formats which serve their interests. From a Marxist perspective, in order to understand and combat racism, we must relate it to historical, economic and political factors. It is these interconnections, which we will demonstrate henceforth, that make the concept of racialization inherently Marxist [7]. The intensity of racialization has increased since 7/7. These events have provided a pretext in this ‘war’ situation to be more ruthless than ever before. For example, it is argued that on the international stage, the idea that ‘friendly fire’ and ‘soft targets’ that injure, maim or kill, often unarmed, civilians, is justifiable in that context. Similarly, at home, human rights are being revoked with counter-terror raids on a massive scale on Asians on what appears to be consistently flawed ‘intelligence’. Two most recent examples include the tragedy of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes who was shot dead by the police, and of the two young British Muslim men, Mohammed Abdulkayar and Abul Koyair, where the former was also shot in the Forest Gate area of East London. Abdulkayar has described the harrowing event, when he was shot as soon as the police officer had ‘eye contact’ with him (Muir, 2006). The police proceeded to hit him in the face with their guns, and, as he begged them to stop, one of them kicked him in the face, and kept telling him to ‘shut the fuck up’ (*ibid.*) (hence the title of this paper). Whereas CRT might view these actions as a normal act of white supremacy, a Marxist interpretation would relate the events to ongoing processes of state racialization.

We will now argue that racialization and institutional racism post 7/7 need to be seen in the context of the convergence of the legacy of British Imperialism, and current US imperialism, including the so-called ‘war on terror’, as well as xenoracism and xenoracialization.

Xenoracism and xenoracialization has festered in Britain, in the context of the enlargement of the European Union, and the ongoing capitalist quest for cheaper and easier to exploit human labour. The net result of these processes is that in contemporary Britain all *Others* are racialized.

We would argue that, in making these connections, racialization has more purchase in explaining and understanding racism in contemporary Britain than ‘white supremacy’. Indeed, we would maintain that if social class and capitalism are not central to the analysis, explanations are ambiguous and partial.

British Imperialism and its Aftermath

In the old Imperial era, in order to justify the continuance of ‘the strong arm and brave spirit ... of the British Empire’ (Bray, 1911, cited in Hendrick, 1980, p. 166), and the ongoing and relentless pursuit of expanding capital accumulation, the African subjects of the colonies were racialized, in school textbooks, as ‘fierce savages’ and ‘brutal and stinking’ (Glendenning, 1973, p. 35), while freed West Indian slaves were described as ‘lazy, vicious and incapable of any serious improvement or of work except under compulsion’ (Chancellor, 1970, p. 240). When the British ‘race’ and therefore Empire and global capital expansion was seen to be under threat at home, foreign Jews were described at the same time, by the media, as ‘semi-barbarous’, unable or unwilling to ‘use the latrine’, depositing ‘their filth’ on ‘the floor of their rooms’ (Holmes, 1979, p. 17) and involved in world conspiracy (thus directly threatening British Imperial hegemony): ‘whenever, there is trouble in Europe’, the ILP [Independent Labour Party] paper, *Labour Leader*, put it, ‘you may be sure a hook-nosed Rothschild is at his games’ (Cohen, 1985, p. 75).

In the post-world war two period, not surprisingly given British colonial history, the British Cabinet racialized many of the African-Caribbean community as ‘accustomed to living in squalid conditions and have no desire to improve’ (*The Observer*, 1989),

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

while their children were described, by one local education authority, as ‘physically robust and boisterous, yet mentally lethargic’. At the same time the same LEA perceived there to be ‘very real problems’ with the ‘domestic habits and personal hygiene of the Asiatics’ as well as ‘the problem of [their] eating habits’ (Grosvenor, 1987, pp. 34-35). Children from minority ethnic groups (not a source of cheap labour, as were their parents) were racialized as problems to be dealt with in these post-war years.

Islamophobia

Islamophobia is a key facilitator of racialization by connecting aspects of the old (British) to the New (US) Imperialism, in capitalism’s ongoing quest for global profits. The racist term, ‘Paki’ co-exists with the racist term of abuse, ‘Bin Laden’, and Islamic head scarves – hijabs - are now a symbol for a ‘cause for concern’, with some *educational* institutions now forbidding students to wear them, thereby negating any notions that Britain has become a genuine multicultural society.

These connections between the old and new imperialisms are particularly obvious, for example, in discussions surrounding the case of British detainees of Pakistani origin at Guantanamo Bay (see below).

According to The Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia (CBMI), Britain is ‘institutionally Islamophobic’, with hostility towards Islam permeating every part of British society (Doward and Hinsliff, 2004). The report produces a raft of evidence suggesting that since 9/11, there has been a sharp rise in attacks on followers of Islam in Britain. Ahmed Versi, editor of the Muslim News, who gave evidence, said:

We have reported cases of mosques being firebombed, paint being thrown at mosques, mosques being covered in graffiti, threats made, women being spat upon, eggs being thrown. It is the visible symbols of Islam that are being attacked (*ibid.*).

Shopkeepers in south and east London can vouch for some of these findings. In June 2006, a man specifically targeted shops because ‘Islamic-looking’ people owned them. He went through a ritual of opening the door and shouting ‘here’s a firebomb for you’ and throwing in an explosive (Barkham, 2006). This follows a disturbing

discourse of hate crimes against Muslims since 7/7. One month after the London bombing, the *London Metro* led with an unequivocal front-page headline 'Faith Hate Crimes Up 600% After Bombings' (Austin, 2005). The report accompanying this title noted:

[t]he number of attacks ... have soared ... There have been 269 faith hate crimes reported since the suicide blasts, compared to just 40 in the same three-and-a-half weeks last year [2004]. In the first three days after the attacks, there were 68 religious hate crimes in the capital. There were none in the same period 12 months ago [2004] (*ibid*, p. 1).

The backlash from 7/7 has also meant that Hindus have suffered as a consequence of racialization. Although no figures are collated to differentiate racial groups, there is hard evidence to suggest that Hindus and Hindu buildings have suffered aggression. As a consequence, a 'hate crime' hotline has been created, and for protection and preservation, religious leaders have been forced to take security training (Bennetto, 2006).

In addition to being targeted by individual racists, people perceived to be Muslims have seen an increase in police attention. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) permitted stop and search measures on civilians only if there was 'reasonable suspicion'. 'Reasonable' is a contentious word that does not have a normative reference point, but controversially it was legislated. However, racialization has increased dramatically under the Terrorism Act 2000 (section 44), which, against much opposition, introduced new powers that allows stop and search on a random basis without: suspicion, intelligence, prior information or accountability. The Act legitimises racial profiling, and thus racialization, by stating that '[t]here maybe circumstances ... where it is appropriate for officers to take account of a person's ethnic origin in selecting persons to be stopped in response to a specific terrorist threat' (Kundnani, 2006, p. 2). People who appear to be of Islamic faith (wearing a veil, sporting a beard, or even carrying a backpack (see Austin, 2006, p. 21)) are immediately identified as potential terrorists and are five times more likely to be stopped and searched than a white person (Dodd, 2005).

In 2003, more than 35,000 Muslims were stopped and searched, with fewer than 50 charged for non-terrorism related and minor offences (Doward and Hinsliff, 2004).

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

After the July attacks in London, the number of Asian and black people likely to be stopped and searched without reasonable suspicion in London increased by more than twelve times from 2004 when one hundred people were stopped each day (Kundnani, 2006, pp. 2-3). In London, just two months after 7/7, 10,000 people were stopped and searched, none were charged nor arrested (*ibid*). Between July 7th to August 10th, 6,747 Asian people accounted for 35% of the people stopped and searched (Dodd, 2005), one being one of the authors of this paper. There can be no doubt that racial profiling is being adopted by the authorities and state-sanctioned racialization is occurring, since Asian people make-up 12% of London’s population against 63% white people, meaning that there is huge disparity in the ratio of the population and those who were targeted by police for the application of the Terrorism Act 2000 (section 44). What is clear is that ‘stop and searches’ cannot be justified by the conviction rate for terrorism offences. The result of these measures to combat the potential of attacks has led to the racialization of huge numbers of people, despite New Labour MP Hazel Blears pledging that new the Terrorism Act 2000 ‘will not discriminate against Muslims’ (Dodd, 2005) [8].

Old and New Imperialisms

Much of the world in the 21st Century is imbued with the vestiges of the old (British) and the new (US) imperialism. Thus there co-exist images of primitive barbarism and violence. As living testimony to the two imperialisms, Benjamin Zephaniah states:

when I come through the airport nowadays, in Britain and the US especially, they always question me on the Muslim part of my name. They are always on the verge of taking me away because they think converts are the dangerous ones (Zephaniah, 2004, p. 19).

Zephaniah’s experience was by no means an isolated one with thousands of Asian people being given ‘special’ attention at security checkpoints. The actors in the highly acclaimed film ‘The Road to Guantanamo’, were stopped at an airport after returning to England from Germany where the movie had been awarded the Silver Bear Award. They were treated with intimidation about making further ‘political’ movies, refused access to legal aid, had personal belongings, including a mobile phone, confiscated, and were verbally abused (BBC, 2006).

Islamophobia, like other forms of racism, can be cultural or it can be biological, or it can be a mixture of both. Echoing the quote from the school textbooks, cited above, where Asia was denigrated as ‘a continent of dying nations rapidly falling back in civilisation’, and where reference was made to ‘the barbaric peoples of Asia’, the former Archbishop of Canterbury recently defended a controversial speech in which he criticised Islam as a faith ‘associated with violence throughout the world’. At the Gregorian University in Rome he said that Islam was resistant to modernity and Islamic societies had contributed little to world culture for hundreds of years, thus choosing to subscribe to the notion that Asia is overrun by ‘mad Mullahs’ and ‘Islamic Fundamentalists’, and failing to acknowledge the fact that there are fundamentalists in all faiths and religions, not least his own.

A more biological Islamophobic racism is revealed by Jamal al-Harith, a British captive freed from Guantanamo Bay. He informed *The Daily Mirror* that his guards told him: ‘You have no rights here’ (hence the title of this paper). al-Harith went on,

[a]fter a while, we stopped asking for human rights - we wanted animal rights. In Camp X-Ray my cage was right next to a kennel housing an Alsatian dog.

He had a wooden house with air conditioning and green grass to exercise on. I said to the guards, ‘I want his rights’ and they replied, ‘That dog is member of the US army (Prince and Jones, 2004)

Such treatment is sustained by racialization. Indeed, the *a priori* racialization of Muslims as sub-humans and terrorists serves to facilitate and legitimize torture, rape, humiliation and degradation. In particular the humiliation of the body stands in stark contrast to the Muslim importance of covering and not exposing flesh. This was revealed two years ago as having occurred on a massive scale and having apparently been developed by Intelligence Services over many years, and is now standard practice in the US and some British detention centres.

Most recently, US soldier, Lyndie England serving at the Abu Ghraib camp in Iraq was charged with abusing detainees and prisoners by forcing them to lay in a naked human pyramid. The BBC (2004) reported that there “were numerous incidents of sadistic and wanton abuse. ... Much of the abuse was sexual, with prisoners often kept naked and forced to perform simulated and real sex acts” [9]. As well as these tactics of abuse physical abuse, the detainees are sometimes deliberately served non-halal

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

meat causing psychological anguish. These abuses are not a rarity. Moazzam Begg, former detainee, recalls such incidents in US and British military prisons in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, and Guantanamo Bay.

Racialization, under conditions of imperialism is fired by what Dallmayr (2004, p. 11; see also Cole, 2005), has described as ‘the intoxicating effects of global rule’ which anticipates ‘corresponding levels of total depravity and corruption among the rulers’. Global rule, of course, is first and foremost, about global profits, and serves to relate old and new imperialisms. This connection to capital, national and international is outside the remit of CRT, thereby rendering its use as a tool for analysis significantly lacking.

Xeno racialization and Skin Colour

It is not only non-white Asians who have been racialized. Indeed, Miles (1987, p. 75) makes it clear that, like racism, racialization is not limited to skin colour

The characteristics signified vary historically and, although they have usually been visible somatic features, other non-visible (alleged and real) biological features have also been signified.

Following Cole (2000) we would like to make a couple of amendments to Miles’ position. First, consistent with our preferred definition of racism (see above), we would want to add ‘*and cultural*’ after, ‘biological’. Second, the common dictionary definition of ‘somatic’ is ‘*pertaining to the body*’, and, given the fact that people are sometimes racialized on grounds of clothing (e.g. the hijab), we would also want this to be recognized in any discussion of social collectivities and the construction of racialization. Elsewhere (e.g. Cole, 2004, 2005), one of us has introduced the concept of xenoracialization (developing on from Sivanandan’s discussion of xenoracism) to describe the process whereby refugees, economic migrants and asylum-seekers (often white) become racialized. He defines xenoracism as follows:

It is a racism that is not just directed at those with darker skins, from the former colonial territories, but at the newer categories of the displaced, the dispossessed and the uprooted ... It is a racism, that is, that cannot be colour-coded, directed as it is at poor whites as well, and is therefore passed off as xenophobia, a ‘natural’ fear of

strangers. But in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or expelling them, it is a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism. It is racism in substance, but ‘xeno’ in form. It is a racism that is meted out to impoverished strangers even if they are white. It is xeno-racism (cited in Fekete, 2001 p. 26).

Xenoracism and xenoracialization homogenise the *Other*. This is best exemplified by the not uncommon term used in derogatory contexts: ‘ABCs’ – Albanians, Bosnians, and Kosovans (sic). Given the widespread existence of xenoracism and accompanying xenoracialization it is important that in the current era, as well as through history, that racism directed at people with ‘white skins’ remains firmly on the agenda. The position that many of these denizens occupy is based on stratification through racialization. The new settlers are seen as ‘intrusive, unwelcome post-colonial consequences of a departed imperial prestige’ (Gilroy, 2006) whose simple presence is a dilution of an all-powerful traditional English stock reconfigured by a depleted status [10]. Fates reminiscent of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay have also befallen for those in danger of their lives and seeking refuge. In 2006 it emerged that Home Office officials demanded sexual intercourse to process visa applications (Townsend and Doward, 2006). These kinds of degrading and humiliating experiences are all too common for those in desperation and in most need (*ibid*).

So how can we explain the current process of xenoracialization? Capitalism always seeks cheap labour, and globalisation in the twenty-first century requires labour market flexibility. However, resurgent economic crises have intensified the contradictions faced by states. As Gareth Dale (Dale, 1999, p. 308) puts it with great clarity:

On the one hand, intensified competition spurs employers’ requirements for enhanced labour market flexibility – for which immigrant labour is ideal. On the other, in such periods questions of social control tend to become more pressing. Governments strive to uphold the ideology of ‘social contract’ even as its content is eroded through unemployment and austerity. The logic, commonly, is for less political capital to be derived from the compact’s content, while greater emphasis is placed upon its exclusivity, on demarcation from those who enter from or lie outside – immigrants and foreigners.

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

In focusing on issues of color and being divorced from matters related to capitalist requirements with respect to the labour market, CRT is ill-equipped to analyse the discourse of xenoracism and processes of xenoracialization.

Terrorists and Terrorism

The word ‘terrorist’ and phrase ‘Islamic terrorist’, is commonplace in discourse in Britain. But do we understand it? Whose definition is it? Is it safe to assume that ‘we’ all share the same definition? In fact, the UN, and the USA have differing definitions. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who gather information to be used in the ‘war on terror’ in the US define it as: “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetuated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (Central Intelligence Agency, 2006). The United Nations have an equally opaque definition in their resolution: ‘criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes ... whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that maybe invoked to justify them’ (United Nations, 2006). The country that has started most wars in the last century (the US) and the peacekeeper (the UN) do not agree on what terrorism is. Furthermore, the European Union (EU) and agencies within the USA are not united in a workable definition either. It is worth quoting Noam Chomsky (2001) at length who eloquently exemplifies this point and its reasons:

The United Nations General Assembly passed a very strong resolution against terrorism, condemning the plague in the strongest terms, to call on every state to fight against it in every possible way. It passed unanimously. One country, Honduras abstained. Two voted against; the usual two, United States and Israel vote against a major resolution condemning terrorism in the strongest terms. ... Well there is a reason. There is one paragraph in that long resolution which says that nothing in this resolution infringes on the right of people struggling against racist and colonialist regimes or foreign military occupation to continue with their resistance with the assistance of others, other states, states outside in their just cause. ... The main reason that they couldn’t [accept the resolution] at the time was because of South Africa. South Africa ... was officially called an ally. There was a terrorist force in South Africa. It was called the African National Congress. They were a terrorist force officially.

What Chomsky shows is that terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. It is not an absolute. Furthermore leaders around the world disagree with both the USA and the

UN on the definition of terrorism. For large sections of the world's population, at the time of apartheid, the ANC in general, and Nelson Mandela in particular, were seen as freedom fighters rather than terrorists.

Terrorism is therefore a social construct. This poses obvious problems when trying to identify a 'terrorist'. In fact, if terrorism is not fixed then neither is a terrorist. But this is not the way it is represented by the ruling class. The upshot of this dichotomy is that when resolutions, bills, legislation, and codes of conduct (for example citizenship education) are announced – they mean different things to different people.

The branding of terrorism is inherently racist. A 'terrorist' occupies a sub-normal inferior position. Therefore accusing a particular 'race' or faith of breeding terrorism, by default, homogenises everybody who subscribes to those values. Therefore it is not surprising for people to be afraid of particular categories of people in this constructed climate of fear. Expert on complex emergencies, David Keen, says '[t]hose who sell us the war on terror must first sell us the fear. ... In this endless (but not aimless) war, we must always be seen to be winning. But we can never be seen to have won'. This climate of fear is intimately connected to the imperialist designs of the US and British states, a connection, once more outside the remit of CRT.

Conclusion

Marxism most clearly connects old and new imperialisms with capitalism. It also provides an explanation for xenoracism and xenoracialization. While CRT certainly reminds us that racism is central in sustaining the current world order, and that we must listen to the voices of people oppressed on grounds of racism, it does not and cannot make the necessary connections to understand and challenge this racism. Indeed its advocacy of 'white supremacy' as an explanatory factor is counter-productive, in the struggle against racism. CRT does not explain why Islamophobia, the 'war on terror' and other forms of racism are necessary to keep the populace on task for 'permanent war' and the accumulation of global profits.

The London bombings of 7th July, 2005 were reactionary, not only in that innocent people were killed and injured. They also diverted attention even further away from

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

the class struggle. Such acts militate against what Leon Trotsky has described as the self-organisation and self-education necessary for progressive change. As he put it:

The more 'effective' the terrorist acts, the greater their impact, the more they reduce the interest of the masses in self-organisation and self-education ... To learn to see all the crimes against humanity, all the indignities to which the human body and spirit are subjected, as the twisted outgrowths and expressions of the existing social system, in order to direct all our energies into a collective struggle against this system - that is the direction in which the burning desire for revenge can find its highest moral satisfaction (Trotsky, 1909).

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Notes

1. This paper draws heavily on chapter 9 of Cole (2007) *Marxism and Educational Theory: origins and issues*, published by Routledge. Marxism is under continuous and sustained attack from a number of different world-views. *Marxism and Educational Theory* addresses some of these challenges from within the constructs of educational theory. In addition to critical race theory, the key theoretical issues addressed in the book are Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism and transmodernism. *Marxism and Educational Theory* aims to move forward the debate informatively in the pursuit of a socialist future. The focus is educational theory, but the issues raised range far wider. Further details are available from Mike Cole (Mike.Cole2@ntlworld.com)
2. Gillborn (2006, p. 20) has provided the following conceptual map of CRT
Critical Race Theory: A conceptual map
Defining elements
 - racism as endemic ... ‘normal’ not aberrant nor rare: deeply ingrained legally and culturally;
 - crosses epistemological boundaries;
 - critique of civil rights laws as fundamentally limited;
 - critique of liberalism: claims of neutrality, objectivity, colour-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages;
 - call to context: challenges ahistoricism and recognizes experiential knowledge of people of colour.

Conceptual tools

- story-telling and counter-stories;
- interest convergence;
- critical white studies.

The following critique of Gillborn should be read as comradely criticism and *esprit de corps*, in the pursuit of our common goal of understanding, undermining and ultimately ridding the world of the multiple inequities of racism.

3. We need to point out that Gillborn has since described labelling Ignatiev and Race Traitor as such as a temporary lapse of judgement (personal email correspondence to Mike Cole), something which happens to all of us when we are meeting deadlines. However, we felt that, since Gillborn's description is in print, it needs to be commented on.
4. This was underscored recently in a discussion of in a café with a Marxist friend, who, when one of us mentioned the organization, Race Traitor, he said 'hush' in case we were misunderstood!
5. This will ensure that the CRT concept of voice does not drift into postmodern multivocality (multiple voices) where everyone's opinion has equal worth. For a Marxist critique of multivocality, and of postmodernism, in general, see, for example, Cole, 2006, pp??; see also Cole, 2003; Hill et al, 2002
6. Discourse analysis has a long history in academia. For a critical Marxist analysis, see Cole, 2006.
7. In adopting Miles' definition of racialization, we should make it clear that there are a number of non-Marxist applications of the concept of racialization. Indeed, the concept is a contested term which is widely used and differently interpreted (for an analysis, see Murji and Solomos (eds) 2005).
8. In many ways, the Muslim communities of Britain are being scapegoated in similar fashion to 'black youth' in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Hall et al, 1978; Cole, 1986). Echoing Boulangé above, Madeleine Bunting (2004, p. 15) has argued that it is crucial that socialists make allies with Muslims as a show of collective solidarity, particularly at a time when there is a debate about interpretations of Islam.
9. It seems that torture and humiliation was also routine practice in Afghanistan, and in Guantanamo Bay (Campbell and Goldenberg, 2004: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,1284,1245236,00.html>: accessed 29 June 2006).
10. Gilroy (2006) notes a 'melancholia that has come to characterize our era'. The British greatness yearned in the aftermath of the empire (as exemplified by the quote from Prince Charles above) is greater than it has been since its collapse. Paul Gilroy articulated this point:

‘Shut the f*** up’, ‘you have no rights here’

The English are now supposed to be winners. In sport and in other areas this involves tricky politico-theological operations. They demand that foreigners, floaters and freeloaders are excluded and that others are seen to lose. This incidentally is why debates over the citizenship of [the] England manager and the numbers of foreigners in premiership football are noteworthy. A quite vernacular struggle is being conducted over the Schmittian logic that says “if you are not with us your against us”. ... I interpret those aspirations as after-effects of imperial domination, and responses to the loss of imperial prestige (Gilroy, 2006).

As anyone who ventured outside in the run-up to and during the 2006 world cup can testify, England’s roads are full of vehicles festooned with St. George flags and crowds over spilling out of pubs are draped in the English flag. We are not claiming, by any means, that all the drivers of these vehicles or the pub-goers are nationalists or imperialists, let alone racists or Islamophobes, but we do see a *connection* between the flaunting of these symbols and the relatively unconcerned public reaction to the shooting of Mohammed Abdulkayar. We do believe that the flags link in some way to the old and the new Imperialism England as the US’s number one ally – ‘our lads on the football pitch and ‘our lads’ alongside the US ‘lads’ on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. Blair’s sanctioning of the police raid and shooting in Forest Gate, even after the men were released, would have been inconceivable if the person shot had been a white suburban Christian Tesco manager.

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