



Organizers of the 2016 ACIP workshop, *Other Universals* (left to right): Ruchi Chaturvedi, Victoria Collis-Buthelezi and Premesh Lalu

2016 African Critical Inquiry Workshop: *Other Universals*

The African Critical Inquiry Programme (ACIP) is pleased to announce that the 2016 ACIP workshop will be *Other Universals*. The project was proposed by organizers Ruchi Chaturvedi (Sociology, University of Cape Town), Victoria Collis-Buthelezi (English, University of Cape Town), and Premesh Lalu (Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape). *Other Universals* will be organized as an ongoing interdisciplinary, cross-institutional working group with a series of week-long workshops centred on visits from distinguished scholars. Activities will take place in Cape Town, South Africa.

Other Universals

Other Universals will bring together scholars and postgraduates keen to examine and think through "universals" that have emanated from experiences of marginality primarily in three regions of the Southern Hemisphere: the African continent, the Indian subcontinent, and the Caribbean. It is guided by new interdisciplinary scholarship on anti-colonial internationalisms and underlying principles and practices of equality and solidarity that emphasize the potential for discerning "likeness in difference," in Walter Benjamin's words. Calls for seeing likeness in difference abound in the South African public sphere today. Such calls exhort the impoverished and the unemployed black poor of South Africa who have reportedly been involved in the recent violence against foreign nationals to recognize their affinity with fellow Africans and others; many ask them to be "more human."

Neither nationalism nor humanism and humanitarianism exhaust the ways that equality and universality have been imagined and iterated in the last few centuries. Since the 19th century equality and likeness in difference have been lived and imagined both from an anti-imperial vantage point as well as from overlapping marginal perspectives embodied in blackness, untouchability and non-normative sexualities. Accounts of the world offered from such vantages allow us to reflect on pasts that sought futures alternative to our present. They challenge marginality by offering other universals, unimperial

universals, that have provided ways to imagine, articulate and give form to ‘unnational’ solidarities not encompassed by or reducible to geographical territories, communitarian unities or class. Such anti-imperial universals will help participants re-articulate the project of postcolonial studies from South Africa.

Other Universals will be organized through an interdisciplinary, cross-institutional working group based at University of Cape Town and the University of the Western Cape. The full *Other Universals* project encompasses a three year series of workshops, running from 2016-2018. Each semester features a workshop built around a week-long visit by an important scholar who has written on universals crafted outside the fold of Western humanism. Visiting scholars will present public seminars, co-teach master classes, and consult with colleagues and students. During the months preceding each visit, reading group sessions will explore the visiting scholar’s writings. This organization will allow for extended and intensive engagement with a range of work revolving around anti-colonial and anti-imperial thought and *Other Universals* that have been formulated from marginal positions in parts of the Global South. *Other Universals* will help define new research directions and foster academic and public discourse attentive to these other universals and political thought from the Southern Hemisphere.

The first year, supported as the 2016 ACIP Workshop, will lay the project’s foundation with visits by Dr. Aaron Kamugisha (University of West Indies) and Prof. Gopal Guru (Jawaharlal Nehru University). Kamugisha will help plot shifts in Caribbean identities inflected by experiences ranging from the abjection of slavery to diasporic, internationalist histories. Sessions with Guru will focus on the kind of universals that Dalit groups in India, once known as “untouchables”, might aspire to, both challenging their marginality and addressing the pain and humiliation born from the stigma of untouchability. Visitors in later years will focus on *Other Universals* formulated in relation to marginalities in African and Caribbean contexts and transatlantic and Indian Ocean worlds.

Founded in 2012, the African Critical Inquiry Programme (ACIP) is a partnership between the Centre for Humanities Research at University of the Western Cape in Cape Town and the Laney Graduate School of Emory University in Atlanta. Supported by donations to the [Ivan Karp and Corinne Kratz Fund](#), the ACIP fosters thinking and working across public cultural institutions, across disciplines and fields, and across generations. It seeks to advance inquiry and debate about the roles and practice of public culture, public cultural institutions and public scholarship in shaping identities and society in Africa through an annual ACIP workshop and through the Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards, which support African doctoral students in the humanities and humanistic social sciences enrolled at South African universities.

Information about applying to organize the 2017 ACIP workshop and for the 2016 Ivan Karp Doctoral Research Awards will be available in November 2015. Deadlines are expected to be 2 May 2016 for workshop applications and 1 June 2016 for student applications.

For further information, see <http://www.gs.emory.edu/about/special/acip.html> and <https://www.facebook.com/ivan.karp.corinne.kratz.fund>.