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Introduction

MONISH BHATIA and EDDIE BRUCE-JONES

Abstract: This introduction to the special issue of *Race & Class* on *Race, Mental Health and State Violence* by its guest-editors sets out the main themes and scope of the issue, and its genesis, together with a brief account of the contributions included.

Keywords: Angiolini Review, Behrouz Boochani, counter-terrorism policy, deaths in custody, mad studies, psy-discourses, racism and mental health, state violence

There are many ways to understand how the state regulates and controls those within its domain along and between the lines of race and mental health. Whilst these two categories cannot be disentangled from the myriad other ways in which we are called upon by the state, reading race and mental health together may allow us to revisit the ways the state's institutions place many of us along the polarising axes of fragility and strength, capability and incapacitation, maliciousness or vulnerability, civilisation and atavism, worthiness and disposability. A close and creative analysis of these logics, their contemporary and historic manifestations, and forms of refusal of such logics may help us to imagine the possibilities for a different type of future world

This special issue, *Race, Mental Health and State Violence* is a long time in the making. On 10-11 April 2018, we held a two-day symposium at Birkbeck, University of London which aimed to bring together legal practitioners, scholars, civil servants, medical service providers, campaigners and bereaved loved ones who have lost family and friends to state violence. The objective was to make space for a cross-sector and interdisciplinary conversation about the intersectional impacts of state violence on people racialised as non-white who are also experiencing mental ill health, including those who experience mental health deterioration due in some part to state action or inaction.

This special issue includes submissions and provocations from the Symposium, alongside material that has been commissioned by or submitted to this edition of *Race & Class*. The issue is divided into three main sections: articles, interviews and book reviews.

The collection's first section begins with a short essay by Eddie Bruce-Jones, which sets some context by discussing the publication of the *Report of the Independent Review of Deaths and Serious Incidents in Policy Custody* (the Angiolini Review). The essay considers the *Report* in light of the insights offered by INQUEST's director Deborah Coles and campaigner and activist Marcia Rigg at the 2018 Symposium, and discusses both the courageous aims of the report's recommendations as well as the disillusionment

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Eddie Bruce-Jones is a reader in law and anthropology at Birkbeck, University of London. He is the author of *Race in the Shadow of Law: State Violence in Contemporary Europe* (Routledge, 2016) and the co-editor of this special *Race & Class* issue on race, mental health and state violence (*Race & Class*, January 2021).

with a lack of implementation of those recommendations by government. The second article is by Monish Bhatia on the psychological effects of electronic monitoring devices in the UK, which are used for those under immigration control, including asylum applicants. Bhatia offers a critical view on the practice and a way of understanding the inevitable traumatic consequences of using such monitoring as surveillance. The third article, by Tarek Younis, examines the relationship between the psychologisation of colourblindness and racism in the context of counter-terrorism policy. It highlights the lasting effects of what Younis calls the ‘nation-state’s management of dissent’, and the role of institutional racism and the continued use of psy-discourses in maintaining minority political subjectivity. The fourth article, presented at the 2018 Symposium by Germany-based sociologist, Dr Vanessa Eileen Thompson, makes a case for taking mad studies and intersectional abolitionist thinking seriously, particularly in regard to the intersection of race and mental health. Thompson argues for an intersectional abolitionist vision that centres around practices of care rather than criminalisation and pathologisation.

The interview section begins with a conversation between the issue editors, Behrouz Boochani (acclaimed writer who, as a refugee, was detained in an Australian prison camp on Manus Island), and Omid Tofighian (a writer, scholar and translator who translated Boochani’s book *No Friend But the Mountains*, from Farsi into English). The interview explores psychological and physical strain in the camp, including how Boochani experienced the ordeal and how he thinks about the systemic nature of repression within the asylum system. The second interview, conducted by Jasbinder Nijjar, is with Southall-based Suresh Grover, Director of the long-established Monitoring Group, whose work as an anti-racism campaigner for more than forty years addressed, among other issues, the murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, the death of Blair Peach, and the ground-breaking Stephen Lawrence campaign.

The third and final section contains three book reviews, which are within the scope of the issue’s themes. The first is a review essay by Eddie Bruce-Jones of the recently published book *Decarcerating Disability: deinstitutionalization and prison abolition*, by Liat Ben-Moshe, read together with the work of Camille Nelson on policing. The second is a review by John Moore of *Alienation and Freedom*, by Frantz Fanon (comprising his previously unpublished and hitherto inaccessible writings), and the third is a review by Leticia da Costa Paes of *Decolonizing Global Mental Health*, by China Mills.

It is most fitting, in this introduction, to both acknowledge and thank the contributors to the Symposium for their contribution to the broader discussion from which this special issue draws its foundational questions. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the plenary speakers for sharing their wisdom and time with us and orienting the direction of the Symposium. First and foremost, we would like to thank Marcia Rigg, director of the Sean Rigg Justice Campaign, for opening the conference with a reflection on her advocacy and the work yet to be done on policing-related deaths in the 10th year since the death of her brother, Sean Rigg, in Brixton Police Station. Marcia’s comments were instructive, grounding some of the key priorities in both conceiving of and organising towards meaningful political change. We would also like to thank Deborah Coles, who joined us from INQUEST, and described the vital support that the organisation offers bereaved family members, but who also highlighted the shortcomings in structural support that families receive. We wish to thank Camille Nelson, Dean of the University of Hawaii School of Law, for joining us at the Symposium and for delivering her paper ‘Racializing disability, disabling race’, which is also the title of her seminal article on policing and the criminal and medical gazes in the Canadian context. Finally, we would like to thank La Marr Jurelle Bruce, a scholar of American Studies at the University of Maryland, for his talk ‘How to go mad without losing your mind’, which drew from literature, music, cultural studies and history to give us a fresh look

at how we might otherwise consider this social construct of madness and the way it is inflected through race and racism.

The 2018 Symposium was dedicated to engaging with policy and legal frameworks for understanding the interaction between the state (predominantly policing institutions) and civilians at the intersection of race, gender and mental health. It also set out to examine ‘the state’ more broadly. Using a range of disciplinary perspectives from the humanities, arts and social sciences, the second day of the Symposium critically examined the field of tension at the interface of the state logics of race and mental health.

The Symposium would simply not have been possible without the financial support of the Wellcome Trust, and we are indebted to the Wellcome Trust for recognising the importance of thinking about this complex of issues across disciplines. The Trust made it possible to feature international keynote speakers in Sociology, Law and American Studies, who used a mix of social science, law, and humanities approaches in exploring the terms and major debates at the intersection of race, mental health and state violence. Additionally, we would like to thank the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, for its financial support of the first day of our Symposium.

We would like to thank all of the panellists and chairs of the 2018 Symposium: Leticia da Costa Paes, Zin Derfoufi, Vanessa Eileen Thompson, Nadine El-Enany, Kristine Harris, Serene John-Richards, Andreja Mesaric, Dinesh Napal and Fatima Rajina. We would also like to thank the administrative organisers of the Symposium: Matthew Wicks and Elisabeth Walser.

Finally, we would like to thank the Editors of *Race & Class* for their patience and support in the production of this Special Issue. This publication comes at a time of extreme global uncertainty, not only because of the relatively recent Covid-19 pandemic, but because of ongoing and persistent political shifts to the right in Europe, the United States and parts of Latin America and South Asia. It is important to keep our scholarship and activism oriented not only towards immediate relief for those most in need, but also on envisioning how we want our world to look in the long run. This issue attempts to bring those facets of our political and social struggles into conversation.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Sean Rigg, whose brilliant life was cut short one decade before the Symposium and whose sister, Marcia, has been a constant and instructive light in showing us all what we need to change about our world.