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Fantini, Joao Angelo (2012) The "racialized" other: intolerance and political equality in Brazil and the United Kingdom. In: The "racialized" other: Intolerance and Political Equality in Brazil and the United Kingdom, 14 May 2012, London, UK. (Unpublished)

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Seminar - The "racialized" other: Intolerance and Political Equality in Brazil and the United Kingdom

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Event description

The 'racialized' other: Intolerance and Political Equality in Brazil and the United Kingdom

Departmental Research Seminar: open to staff, research students and research associates in the department

The implementation of Affirmative Action (Political Equality) in various spheres of Brazilian society, including in the university, and mainly implemented through a system of 'racial' quotas, have confronted cultural myths such as 'Brazilian cordiality' or 'racial democracy'. Affirmative Action is currently the subject of intense debate in Brazilian society, not only amongst intellectuals, academics and politicians, but amongst many sections of the population, including young students interested in entering the public universities. Conversely, in the United Kingdom, affirmative action or reverse discrimination, i.e. choosing someone solely on the grounds of their gender or racial group and not on their abilities, is illegal under UK anti-discrimination law. This perspective changes not only the legal status of such actions, but implies a change in perspectives towards modes of 'racializing the other'.

The Brazilian case is particularly relevant, with the recent arrival of the poorest population of consumers to the universities and the broader market increasing intolerance towards ethnic and social differences. This proximity was theorized by Freud in 'The taboo of virginity', where he coined the phrase 'narcissism of minor differences' referring to the earlier work of British anthropologist Ernest Crawley, who had said that we reserve our most virulent emotions (aggression, hatred, envy) for those who most threaten us when they remind us of our similarities, much more than those with whom we have little in common. Starting from his theory of narcissism, Freud discusses the mechanisms of cultural

segregation to explain how humans living in societies have a propensity towards aggression against one other. This occurs through a process that stigmatizes the other with minor differences, which brings about the segregation and alienation of other people or groups. The implementation of Political Equality actions entails extending the knowledge of people involved beyond opinion polls that elicit whether such actions are viewed favorably or not. It seems vital that these actions are designed in the context of qualitative studies to guide their development in a more comprehensive way, including drawing on experience of other countries, with the possible preventive and educational measures to transform these actions into effective political opportunities.

About the Speaker

João Angelo Fantini is a Professor in the Federal University of São Carlos/Brazil and Honorary Research Fellow in Birkbeck College. Psychologist and Psychoanalyst, Fantini's research considers the production of subjectivity and symptoms in the psychoanalytic clinic today including social and cultural aspects, especially in recent times, and about the relations between traditional and new media and violence as a result of intolerance against marginalized groups, employing theoretical frameworks derived from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Professor Fantini is the author of *Images of the Father in Cinema: Cultural Clinic* (Edufscar, 2009), and a number of book chapters and journal articles on Psychoanalysis and contemporary society.

Project funded by: FAPESP (São Paulo Research Foundation)