

15. Ringvorlesung Gender Studies: Bildpolitiken – Repräsentation ist niemals unschuldig! (Teil II)

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Imag(in)ing black bodies in Switzerland

In 2007, the far right wing Swiss People's Party launched a campaign for the hardening of the Swiss politics of immigration by means of a controversial poster that placed the slogan "For More Security" under an image of several white sheep kicking a black sheep out of the Swiss territory. In 2012, the Swiss section of Amnesty International launched a campaign against the hardening of the Swiss asylum politics by means of satirical images depicting far right and right politicians that were "blackfaced". The campaign asked what these politicians would do, if they "were born again as asylum seekers". Despite pursuing opposed political aims, these two campaigns converge in their modes of representing racial difference: both evoke black bodies metaphorically or metonymically, that is without directly representing black subjects.

My lecture addresses the power of such visual evocations by drawing upon a critical race and postcolonial analysis. On the one hand, I explore the implications of such evocations in the (re)production of a hegemonic racist visual regime. I analyze the racialized visual logics at play within these campaigns and their links with the history of colonial images and imaginaries in Switzerland. On the other hand, I explore the ways such images affect black subjects that live in Switzerland. I analyze their public contestations against these campaigns, their resistance through alternative images and evocation of blackness. These explorations unravel one story: hegemonic images and imagination around black bodies that circulate in Switzerland tend to "derealize" the public appearance of black subjects and, thus, deprive them of a political voice.

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