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The (Im)possibility of decolonizing the university

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Abstract

There is increasing voice and activism related to decolonising yet actions primarily rely on the naming and shaming of white power and there is limited evidence of long-term reframing and/or social transformation. Many of the discussions that underpin decolonizing thought speak of the imperative of both contestation and reframing. My position is that the task remains at the level of contestation. While decolonising scholars use contestation as a method to challenge white power, the same method has been weaponised by discourses of post-racialism, as well as co-opted by whiteness and dynamics of Black and Brown complicity. This ultimately is turning the decolonizing project into a spectacle and leading to its failure. Reflecting on these points, some questions for discussion are: What kinds of “wins” should the decolonising project prioritise? E.g. should “calling out” be enough? What is/should the next step be? How do we move to this next step? How do we deal with the internal fractures within the decolonising project? How realistic is reframing as an outcome? What are we looking to reframe? Given the little success, what should we be looking to reframe and how?