



Governing Religious Identity

The Religion and Society Research Cluster presents Dr Tanya Riches, of the Fuller Theological Seminary, USA; Dr Fiona Murphy, of the Queen's University Belfast; and Professor Douglas Ezzy of the University of Tasmania. They will present on Pentecostalism in Australia and Ireland, and governance of religious diversity in Australia.



Date and Time

Thursday, 31 March 2016: 13.00 – 17.00 pm

Venue

Bankstown Campus Building 23, Room G.41

RSVP

By Thursday 24 March, 2016 by email:
ssap-research@westernsydney.edu.au

SPEAKER ONE

Tanya Riches

Fuller Theological Seminary, USA

“Blak” Urban Aboriginal Australian Pentecostal Christians

The rise of Pentecostalism over the last hundred years is often attributed with a “Southward Shift” of global Christianity. According to missiologist Andrew Walls, the heartlands of the faith have moved geographically south - from Europe and North America, to Africa and Latin America. European cultural Christianity was enshrined in the notion of “Christendom”, and continued within the theological imagination during the colonial era. However, non-Western Christians now make up 65% of the religion. And, many of these movements are amongst Indigenous peoples, such as Yoruba in Nigeria, and Mayan peoples in Yucatán, Mexico. Joel Robbin’s theological- anthropological work with the Pentecostal Urapmin in Papua New Guinea provides insights into Christian rituals, and this is also helpful in understanding Aboriginal Australian Christianity. Aboriginal Australian (“Blak”) Christianity has been dismissed and under-researched since the closure of the missions (with a few notable exceptions in rural areas).

On one hand, the state and missionaries forced cultural rupture with Dreaming spirituality, particularly in the city. Indigenous scholars express anger at the church’s patriarchalism, and involvement in The Stolen Generation. On the other, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 73% of Aboriginal peoples self-identify as Christian. Although this is a nominal rate, Aboriginal Christians form a marginal presence in most Australian denominations. The largest Pentecostal denomination, the ACC, is formed out of autonomous congregations. This presentation investigates the decolonization of Australian Christianity from ethnographic observation in three urban ACC congregations with Aboriginal senior pastors, observing ways the Blak pentecostal imagination affects worship and social engagement rituals.

SPEAKER TWO

Fiona Murphy

Queen’s University Belfast

The Jesus Walk: A discussion of the Identity and Home-making practices of African Pentecostalism in Austerity Ireland

This paper examines the spatial practices of African Pentecostalism in Ireland through the ethnographic lens of a ‘Jesus Walk’ held in an urban area in the North eastern region of Ireland. Central to the paper is the manner in which religious migrants partially render Irish post-secular place into an ‘enchanted space’ in the ‘exceptionally disenchanting’ context of economic crisis. I argue that the Jesus walk as a ‘church without walls’ was a spatial enactment and performance of migrant and religious identities which made visible practices of African Pentecostal worshippers in an Irish context. This act of re-enchantment can also be seen as an act of negotiation with emergent formations of migrant identities, belonging and home-making, all key thematics in my discussion.

SPEAKER THREE

Douglas Ezzy

University of Tasmania

Governing Religious Diversity in Australia

This paper examines governance policies and practices for the management of religious diversity. Existing research suggests some governance policies and practices can both defuse religious conflict, encourage tolerance, and enable religious minorities to more confidently address emerging problems within their own communities. This is particularly important in the context of fears about radicalisation and extremism. I illustrate this argument through a discussion of the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. However, where do strategies of tolerance reach their limit? In particular, how important are the broader patterns of migration, ethnicity, and religious diversity in Australia to underpinning the success of this legislation. Some commentators have raised concerns that ‘tolerance’ creates threats to ‘shared values.’ Drawing on Veit Bader’s concept of democratic institutional pluralism, I argue that these concerns are misplaced. Further, beyond tolerance, successful religious diversity requires governance practices and policies that facilitate constructive religious participation in the public sphere that in turn promotes social cohesion and an economically productive society.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Tanya Riches is a well-known researcher specializing in Australian Pentecostal worship, music, and its social impacts. Her MPhil at ACU (*Shout to the Lord!: Music and change at Hillsong: 1996-2007*) investigated Hillsong's musical, theological and business practices. Her current PhD project at Fuller Theological Seminary, USA, explores ritual linkages between worship and social engagement within Australia's Aboriginal-led urban Pentecostal churches. She has published eight articles and three chapters, and various media pieces including in ABC's Religion and Ethics. She is also a songwriter and singer.



Fiona Murphy is a research fellow in the Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice in Queen's University Belfast. Fiona specialises in Indigenous politics and movements, refugees and mobility studies, and sustainability in Australia and Ireland. The key thematics in her work include trauma, memory, reconciliation, mobility and integration. Her current work focuses on both the politics of reparations in the context of the removal and institutionalisation of Aboriginal Australian children and sustainable consumption in the context of economic crisis in Ireland. She blogs and reviews for both Allegra: A Virtual Lab of Legal Anthropology Blog and LSE Review of Books.



Douglas Ezzy is Professor of Sociology at the University of Tasmania, Australia. He is President of the Australian Association for the Study of Religion, and the Editor of the *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*. His most recent book is *Sex, Death and Witchcraft*, published by Bloomsbury.