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**Response Paper to “Television’s Other Histories”**

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### **Deracialization or (De)nationalization?**

At first glance, the deracialization of Global TV Studies seems to lie in the questionable legitimacy and adequacy to analyze “race” outside of American-British context. Asking the reason behind the deracialization of global media studies may run the risk of imposing the analytics of Cultural Studies such as race, class, gender, and sexuality that deprived from American-British context onto non-western contexts, while ignoring the fragmented, contradictory, and historically specific natures of these analytics. Moreover, these analytics such as “race” could be entangled with other social categories that produce and assign differences in a specific context.

However, while it is important to pay attention to the different historical configurations of race/ethnicity out of United States, it is equally crucial to recognize the fact that seeing race as an essential American-British problem obscures the existence of racism in other parts of the world. Race is never a flat issue in the “West.” As Fatima El-Tayeb points out in her book *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, racial issues in Europe get sidelined when French intellectuals pinpoint race as an essentially American problem.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in non-western contexts, the continuing discourse that “race” is a “western problem” fails to comprehend the complex and racialized realities such as recent black protests in China.<sup>2</sup> Despite the fact that many Africans in

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<sup>1</sup> See See Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others : Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> See “Africans in Guangzhou Protest after Nigerian dies in police custody,”

<http://beijingcream.com/2012/06/africans-in-guangzhou-protest-after-nigerian-dies-in-police-custody/>

China felt that they are judged by the color of their skin, discussions of race or racism are largely absent on Chinese media as race is believed to be a “western problem.”

Thus, on one hand, we need to resist the temptation to universalizing critical and analytical tools; and on the other hand, we should be cautious about the over-emphasis on cultural differences, an essentialism or particularism that sometimes disguised as critiques of Western hegemony.

Furthermore, the main reason behind the deracialization of Global TV Studies, I contend, is that racial and ethnic issues are subsumed, obscured, or displaced by nationality, thus dismissed as “local” problems by existing scholarship on Global TV Studies, which often times privileges transnational and transregional flows. In other words, nationality, instead of race/ethnicity, is a preferred marker of difference in the study of non-western world.

For example, a term such as Chinese television may have conflated meanings of nationality and ethnicity. First, Chinese television may refer to TV industries in China. Here, Chinese is a marker of nationality. Second, as an ethnic and linguistic marker, Chinese television points to TV programming beyond the boundaries of China and includes those Chinese-language content produced in Singapore, Los Angeles, and many other locations around the globe. Both of these two interpretations of Chinese television may not always acknowledge the fact that Chinese is a multi-ethnic marker instead of a homogenous construct. In the first case, the continuing ramification of “national framework” in the study of the non-western world deemphasizes the multi-ethnic reality in China. In the second case, Chinese-language TV outside of China is seen as one minority language TV while in fact they could refer to Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokka or TV production in other languages under the umbrella of Chinese.

Thus, the conflation of nationality and multiple ethnicities asks for further investigation on the complex relationship between race/ethnicity and nationality in media production and representation as well as knowledge production.