Editorial Introduction: Decolonising Statistics

As we put the final touches to this special issue we just learned of the re-election of Donald Trump as President of the USA. His campaign was to a significant degree fueled by xenophobic and racist hate, with promises of launching 'the largest deportation program in American history' while some of his allies poured vitriol over the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, a US colonial possession. For the Democrats' part, had Kamala Harris been elected we may have heard a softer tone, but she had also backed the increasing securitisation of the US' southern border. Moreover, the Democrats active financing and backing of the ongoing genocide in Gaza also cost Harris support.

To say nothing of the UK's own 'racist riots' in July and August of this year, whipped up by far-right agitators, but enabled by the mainstreaming of vitriol directed at migrants, many of them fleeing neo-colonial conflicts in which Britain is an active participant.

Race, racialisation and racism clearly matter and the 'problem of the colour line' is as significant to the 21st century as W E B Dubois presciently predicted it would for the 20th. As academics and activists, it is incumbent upon us to challenge contemporary racism, and an important component of this is excavating and expunging the racist content of our own discipline. Given the role of statistics and statisticians in transforming race from a social construction to a pseudo-scientific fact, one could argue we have a particular obligation to the work of decolonising.

But this is not simply a question of historical curiosity, there are contemporary forms of data colonialism that to this day play a pernicious role in maintaining social hierarchies in and between the Global South and the coloniser's heartlands. We hope that this special issue, based on a panel from the 2024 *Radstats* conference, is the beginning of a much larger conversation.

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