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BIOGRAPHY:

My name is Jaspal Gharu (or Jaz for short). I prefer the pronouns he/him. I am currently studying a Masters of Research (MRes) in Philosophy. My academic research focuses on the philosophy of romantic love, philosophy of race and racism. My supervisors are Dr Jussi Suikkanen and Professor Heather Widdows. I am the Equality and Diversity Assistant for Student Services. I assist in the monitoring and evaluation of events for the University of Birmingham Equality and Diversity Ambassadors. This programme is part of wider programme called HEFCE Diversity and Inclusion Ambassador Programme. I am the lead organiser of the University of Birmingham’s MAP (Minorities and Philosophy) chapter. This is a student led group which aims broadly at addressing (a) minority issues in the profession, (b) theoretical issues regarding philosophy of gender, race, sexual orientation, class, disability, etc, and (c) philosophy done from minority perspectives.

TITLE OF PAPER: IS ROMANTIC LOVE SYSTEMATICALLY RACIST?

KEYWORDS: ROMANTIC LOVE, SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM, FUNCTIONALISM, RACISM, BEAUTY IDEALS

IS ROMANTIC LOVE SYSTEMATICALLY RACIST?

My original paper raises an under-explored issue within the philosophy of romantic love - whether romantic love is systematically racist, and in what way. My paper builds on two vital arguments, Carrie Jenkins' 'constructionist functionalist account of the nature of romantic love' (Jenkins, 2015) and Heather Widdows' 'beauty idealisation' (Widdows, 2018). I argue by using these two key arguments, that romantic love in the West is systematically racist. Of note, when I say systematic racism, I refer to institutional racism. I adopt Macpherson's definition, "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people" (Smith Jr. quoted Macpherson, 2004, P.118).

Carrie Jenkins' constructionist functionalism is a dual nature romantic love theory. She theorises that the nature of romantic love has both humanistic and scientific components. Jenkins argues that the realiser of love is a biological phenomenon [increase of the neurotransmitters dopamine, norepinephrine increase in the brain etc.]. However, Jenkins theorises as to why biological phenomenon occurs in romantic love is - because of romantic loves social constructs. Jenkins formulates a list of romantic love social constructions; "social practices and traditions of courtship and dating, romantic commitment, social institution(s) of marriage..." (Jenkins, 2016, P.361). I argue that there is a crucial element missing in Jenkins romantic love social construction list and this is the Heather Widdows' beauty idealisation.

 In today's prevalent beauty stressed society, beauty image and aspirations have become *de rigueur*. Widdows argues that the beauty ideal (for women) is thin but curvy, tanned, young and 'Eurocentric' (Widdows, 2018, P.21). With the help of visual culture, we live in world that depicts a white Jesus and the white saviour colonialist motif, 'white is right'. I argue that Widdows’ recent contribution to the literature, ‘*Perfect Me!*’ points to a racialised “homogenised beauty ideal” (Widdows and MacCallum, 2016, P.2), where the dominant narrative that is promoted is a white Eurocentric ideal. Therefore, when we romantically fall in love (biological phenomenon), I argue the desire aspect stems from this socially constructed beauty ideal. This beauty ideal is entrenched in whiteness and white privilege. Hence, this is why I conclude romantic love is systematically racist in the West. Furthermore, Widdows argues the beauty ideal is a global trend and therefore can be seen as a global ideal. In this line of thought, romantic love can be seen as systematically racist globally.

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