

STUDENT ID: U3173465

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QUESTION: Write an essay exploring how the theory of race (including Critical Race Theory) is dealt with in "Americanah" by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

In this essay, I will be discussing the theme of race as portrayed by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her book "Americanah", first published in 2013. However, before discussing the theme of race, it would be worthwhile to understand the meaning of race. Race was first used by the French Physician Francois Bernier to denote skin colour in classifying human bodies (Ford & Airhihenbuwa 2010, p.30). The concept of race and racial groupings introduced by Carolus Linnaeus and others devalued and degraded those classified as non-Europeans (Ford & Airhihenbuwa 2010, p.30). This definition by Linnaeus became the backbone on which many countries, including the United States, based their racial policies (Ford & Airhihenbuwa 2010, p.30). The novel deals with race and racism, which Adichie has described so beautifully that if you are reading it for pleasure, you will not be able to discern them. Most of the novel's discussion of race involves pointing out racism and humanising it. For this essay, I will be discussing racism in Nigeria, America and England as portrayed in the novel.

I will begin my deliberation of race in the novel with Adichie's presentation of it in Nigeria. Ifemelu never knew she was black before she travelled to America (Americanah 2017, p.290), which shows that race was not an issue in Nigeria. Although the issue of race in Nigeria is not so prevalent in the novel as in the United States of America, the author still discussed it. She discusses the issue of racial hierarchy in Nigeria as outlined in the quotation below, in which light-skinned or mixed-race people are considered more attractive (Americanah 2017, p.55-56).

Ginika did not go abroad often, and so did not have the air of away as Yinka did, but she had caramel skin and wavy hair, that when unbraided, fell down to her neck instead of standing Afro-like. Each year, she was voted Prettiest Girl in their form, and she would wryly say, 'it's just because I'm a half-caste. How can I be finer than Zainab?' (Americanah 2013, p.55-56).

Most of the discussion of race in the novel is centred in America. For this essay, I will limit it to Ifemelu's love relationship with Curt and the incident involving Mr White, the black security at Princeton Library. I will also look at Ginika's conversation on race with Ifemelu, some of Ifemelu's blogs that deals with race and Auntie Uju and Dike experiences with racism. In the novel, Adichie portrays the shared experience of blackness and racism between African Americans and non-American blacks. Adichie conveys that black African immigrants do not immigrate to America but immigrate to black America (Taylor 2019, p.80). Ifemelu discovers that racism in America is a much more pervasive part of life. The outside force of a racist society reduces every one of different skin colour to black no matter their nationality or origins. After she was forced to adapt to America's complex politics, she started to consider herself black, something she had never thought of in Nigeria (Americanah 2017, p.290).

There were instances of racism in the relationship between Ifemelu and Curt, a white man. There was a racist undertone in the expressions on the faces of most white people they encounter, as they assume that Curt should not be dating Ifemelu a black lady (Americanah 2017, p.292-293). The exchanges here show how Ifemelu believes that race matters in public space. It also shows the divergent and often conflicting views about race that black immigrants in the United States hold (McCoy 2017, p.280). Adichie was very objective in her presentation of racism as she presented characters who overcame racism through love and friendship. Ifemelu could transcend racial boundaries in her sexual experience with Curt (Americanah 2017, p. 222-224). Her relationship with Curt exposes the intersections of race and class as they operate in the United States (Bragg 2017, p.134)

The incident involving Mr, White the security guard at the library in Princeton, was a clear example of racism (Americanah 2017, p. 341-343). A white employee reported him because he was seen exchanging money with another black man while handing over his car key to him. If the exchange had been between two white men, no one would have reported the incident to the police. It shows that people in America are judged not because of their actions but their skin colour.

The issue of race was also discussed by Ginika, who was of mixed race and realised the complex nature of her colour and identity in America. She never thought she would have issues with her colour. However, She was surprised that she also encountered racism, forcing her to recommend that other Nigerians who have biracial kids raise them in Nigeria (Americanah 2017, p. 124). Griffin (cited in Taylor 2019) suggests that the second phase in African American migration narratives involves a confrontation with the new space and the different modalities of how race and racism function (Taylor 2019, p.75). This phrase is explicit in the conversation Ginika had with Ifemelu after she picked her up from the bus station in Philadelphia (Americanah 2017, p. 124). She cautioned her of using certain words that are freely used in Nigeria but not tolerated in America. For instance, she is supposed to be offended if someone refers to her as "half-caste" in the United States because it is considered a bad word. Ginika was also blunt with her that she, Ifemelu, should be conscious of colourism in the United States. Ginika stated that "There's some shit you'll get from white people in this country that I won't get," she warns her so that she can navigate the racial politics effectively (Americanah 2017, p. 124).

When she becomes more cognizant of how race and colourism operate in the United States, Ifemelu then understands the racial politics of the social space to which she has migrated (Taylor 2019,p.75). "Why Dark-Skinned Black Women—Both American and Non-American—Love Barack Obama."

From the above blog, Ifemelu learns that race is a social construction determined by others. She was able to use this knowledge in her blog post appositely titled "To My Fellow Non-American Blacks to encourage other non-American blacks to stop denying their blackness and that the politics of blackness are amplified (Americanah 2017, p. 220). The central idea conveyed in her blog is that the digital exploration of race is also an act of self-exploration. She was able to fully contextualise her own experience by bringing American Black and Non-American Black into dialogue. The images of exposure and inauthenticity in her blog also convey the serious work of examining the identities projected onto her and those that she chooses (Bragg 2017, p.31).

Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I'm Jamaican or I'm Ghanaian. America doesn't care. So, what if you weren't "black" in your country? ... And admit it—you say "I'm not black" only because you know black is at the bottom of America's race ladder. (Americanah 2013, p. 220)

Ifemelu performs blackness throughout her blog, giving the 'black nod' to another black person in a space dominated by whiteness. She is offended when certain remarks about black people are mentioned in jokes and when discussing an incident of racism with a non-black person. However, she instructs her readers to deliver the story subtly by taking the anger out of it and making it funny (Taylor 2019, p.78). Because of course we're all prejudiced... but racism is about the power of a group and in America it's white folks that have the power. How? Well, white folks don't get treated like shit... (Americanah 2013, p. 327).

Through the above blog, she discusses the segregation and the racism in America and how people from third world countries are treated like sub-humans.

Understanding America for the Non-American Black: A Few Explanation of What Things Really mean. (Americanah 2013, p. 350-351).

Ifemelu discusses how white people do not want black people near them but need them as nannies and limo drivers in this blog. However, they are firmly against having a black boss. The issue of race in America was much more prevalent in the blog posted by Ifemelu, which involves navigating the differing experiences of African Americans and non-American Blacks who come to live in America and are experiencing racial prejudice for the first time (David 2018, p.366).

The refusal of white patients to accept Aunty Uju as their doctor is also an act of racism in the novel (Americanah 2017, p. 182). The pharmacist told her that her accent was incomprehensible. A patient told her to go back to her country because she refused to give him more pain medicine when he was not sick (Americanah 2017, p. 218) also constitutes racism. In addition to her confrontation with racism, her son Dike also faced racism in his

school. His colour singled him out in an all-white school as the 'Other'. His perceived aggressiveness was because he was different from the rest of the children in the school. The novel dwells on what it means to be black, and Dike experienced it to the letter as a young boy. Doing what was considered normal for other children was interpreted as aggression for him (Americanah 2017, p. 201). Dike was also accused of hacking the computer network only because he was a black kid (Americanah 2017, p. 349), and even the treatment Dike received from a clergy was different from what the white kids received. Adichie, through Ifemelu's discussion with a middle manager, exposes how being black was so demeaning that no one wants to adopt black babies and that even black families denounce the idea of adopting black babies (Americanah 2017, p.4-5)

Adichie does not spend much time discussing racism in England as in America because Obinze spends more time with people of his race. However, the focus of her cultural criticism for England is the widespread fear of black and brown immigrants. In this regard, she discusses the idea of otherness which is configured and inscribed as black in America experienced by Obinze. When he fell and limped to the truck, the truck driver did not sympathise with him but rather made fun of him using the racist term in the process.

Once when he tripped landed on his knee, a fall so heavy that he limped back to the truck, the driver told the others at the warehouse, 'His knee is bad because he's a knee-grow!' (Americanah 2013, p.251-252)

Apart from the above incident, Obinze also encounters racism with the media in the United Kingdom. The lurid newspaper headlines like "Schools Swamped by Asylum Seekers" and "Speak English at home, Blunkett tells immigrants" ostracise him from the society (Americanah 2017, p.258). In addition, Eminike's story about the cab driver who refused to pick him up because he was black and went on to pick two white ladies ahead (Americanah 2017, p.275) is also a naked display of racism in the novel.

Throughout this essay, I have discussed the racism in Nigeria, America and England as portrayed by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in his book "Americanah".

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QUESTION. The establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House (now Old Parliament House) in January 1972.

Part 1

The establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of Parliament House (now Old Parliament House) in January 1972

INTRODUCTION

My response task for this event is taking the form of a research in which I will discuss the political and socio-economic situation of the Aboriginal people before 1972, the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, and its effects. The Australian Tent Embassy is an epitome of a successful use of a symbolic protest and the relative accomplishment of an indigenous minority in attracting the attention of the international world and demanding redress from those in position of power (Tarpey-Brown 2019, p.72). The establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was an inspiring demonstration of Aboriginal self-determination and the demand for land rights. This was made evident in the symbolic reoccupation of land in front of the Parliament House (Muldoon 2010, p. 534). The establishment of the Tent Embassy was a climax to a decade of protest action, and a creation of a stage upon which the interplay of different methods of protest were enacted (Robinson et al 1994, p.3). The poor structured architecture symbolises both the dispossession from and continued possession of Aboriginal land (Muldoon & Schaap 2010, p. 540). The event brings to the entire world a true image of Aboriginal camps on the outskirts of rural towns and the material conditions that many Aboriginal people continue to endure (Muldoon & Schaap 2010, p. 540).

THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE BEFORE 1972

It is worthwhile to understand the political and socio-economic situation before 1972. The Black Power movement in Australia was established because of the socio-economic and political situation in the country during the 1960s (Trometter 2015, p.239). It was made possible through the interaction with African American soldiers who were fighting the Vietnam war and coming over to Australia to rest and also the interaction with the Black Panther Movement in America (Trometter 2015, p.239). This **(The)** existence of this organization was a driving force in the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in (Trometter 2015, p.226). By the late 1960s, many Aboriginal people have migrated to urban areas especially in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane (Trometter 2015, p.239). These Aboriginal people were socially deprived with no electricity, clean water, and other essentials which other Australians have. They lack laundry machines, garbage disposal and the infant mortality rate was very high (Young 1985, p.9) (Trometter 2015, p.239). There was wide spread of diseases among the general Aboriginal population such as tuberculosis and glaucoma and the death rates

were high. The Aboriginal people also suffered institutional discrimination (Trometter 2015, p.239). The bulk of the Aboriginal people were confined in reserves and there was institutional racism which saw many of them in prison (Trometter 2015, p.231). Economic inequality and **(are)** daily reminder of oppression provided a basis for political movement aimed at redressing the appalling conditions of the Aboriginal people throughout Australia (Taylor 1994, p.175-176) (Trometter 2015, p.239-40). The working-class Aborigines were also doubly disadvantaged by discrimination which isolated them from the opportunity structure of the Australian job market (Young 1985, p.9) (Trometter 2015, p.239-40). There was a large percentage of unemployment among them because of unequal opportunity to compete with non-Aboriginal people (Young 1985, p.9) (Trometter 2015, p.231). The Aboriginal political movements in the 60s were addressing issues of land right and were demanding the return of the land expropriated by the Europeans (Australian Information Service 1974, n.d), (Trometter 2015, p.232). By 1972 Australian Aboriginal people had developed a form of political consciousness that embraced the idea of land rights and for the most part had adopted protest as their means of political expression (Australian Information Service 1974, n.d) (Robinson et al 1994, p.3).

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TENT EMBASSY

The Australian Tent Embassy was established on 26th January 1972 by Billy Craigie, Tony Coorie, Bird Williams and Michael Anderson who came down from Redfern in Sydney and erected a beach umbrella on the lawn of the then Parliament House of Canberra (now the old Parliament House) (Watson & Coe 200, p.17-18) (Cowan 2001, p.30-31). The protest was an alternative to the annual Australian Day celebration which is regarded by the Aboriginal people as an Invasion Day celebration (Cowan 2001, p.30-31). For Aboriginal people, it is a celebration of the day the First Fleet of the Royal British Navy sent to establish the colony of New South Wales in 1788 arrived (Iveson 2017, p.537). The day the freedom, liberty and right and land of the Aboriginal people were stolen. From the 1960s, Aboriginal political activist featured new forms of organizations and adopted a system of self-determination and land right (Tarpey-Brown 2019, p.72). See figure 1 and 2 images of the original Aboriginal Tent Embassy.



Figure 1. Aboriginal Tent Embassy on Australia Day, 26 January 1972. (source National Museum of Australia)



Figure 2. Setting up of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, 26th January 1972. (source State Library, New South Wales)

Anyway, we are sitting down there, and we are debating this you see. And Tony Coorey went down the hall to the toilet. And he is sitting there with the door open, obviously because he is listening to everything we are saying. And we are in this discussion in the lounge room saying, 'well, what are we going to call it?' There's got to be some name. And out of the blue from the throne, deep down, in the hallway, there's Tony Coorey sings out and he says, 'well this is the home of the embassies, why don't we call it the Aboriginal Embassy?' Done. It snapped like that. It was just wonderful. You know, it was the thing. So Tony Coorey called

that out and we said, 'yes, that's the name for it. We'll set up an Aboriginal Embassy'.
(Iveson 2017, p.538)

The idea of an Aboriginal Tent Embassy was a spontaneous response by the activists to make statements about land rights planned for then Prime Minister McMahon's 'state of the nation' Australia Day speech (Cowan 2001, p.30-31) (Robinson et al 1994, p.3). The establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in the forecourt of the old parliament building was a symbolic and historic protest because of Prime Minister William McMahon's rejection of land rights (Muldoon & Schaap 2010, p. 537) (The Tribune Australia 1972, p.6-7). Instead of accepting the land rights, McMahon instead endorsed a weak form of title called general purpose leases for communities still living on their traditional land. This weak form of title will ensure the continued exploitation of the land by the mining and pastoral industries (The Tribune Australia 1972, p.6-7). McMahon's statement effectively relegated Aboriginal people to the status of aliens in their own land (Robinson et al 1994, p.3). Since, McMahon has treated them like foreigners they decided to establish an Embassy in Canberra just as the foreign nations whose embassies were in Canberra (Muldoon & Schaap 2010, p. 537). The establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy in 1972 and the demonstrations that took place put the land right on the national agenda and contributed in the collapsed of McMahon's Conservative government (Muldoon & Schaap 2010, p. 537). The land rights protest evolved into a tent encampment that was made of bricolage of materials, including tarpaulin and plastic sheets (Cowan 2001, p.31). They named it the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, a name that was disturbing as the form (Cowan 2001, p.31). The Tent Embassy constituent parts are also collapsible, organically facilitating compromise and resurrection (Cowan 2001, p.31). This Embassy is also portable, its parts being transportable in the boots of cars.

The Aboriginal Tent Embassy symbolises the horrid living conditions of and the land ownership of indigenous Australian peoples. It is considered to many as a silent form of protest and like other protest movements confronted and tried to reverse the negative impact of colonization, discrimination, and cultural suffocation (O'Mara 2012, p.9). The tent Embassy is a way of advocating for self-determination which the Aboriginal people believe is essential to improving indigenous health and wellbeing. They opined that Self-determination gives equal entitlement to Aboriginal people and equal entitlement to be in control of their own destinies (O'Mara 2012, p.9).

The establishment of the Tent Embassy was the result of a decade of debate within the Aboriginal community over means and goal (Robinson et al 1994, p.3). The establishment of the Embassy was accompanied by the birth of tumultuous violence and calm restraint through symbolic response that culminated in the relative success of their seminal protest (Robinson et al 1994, p.3). The return of land was placed on the political agenda of the major parties and the Embassy achieved semi-

legendary status and inspired Aboriginal activists (Robinson et al 1994, p.3). It became a forum through which Aboriginal activists voiced out their anger and frustration and advocate for their land rights (The Tribune Australia 1972, p.6-7). It was there they demanded for the retraction of the Australian day statement and a compensation for stolen land. (Robinson et al 1994, p.6). The Tent Embassy made a media impact through its very existence and through conscious use of symbolic protest (Robinson et 1994, p.6). The peaceful demonstration was used as an effective means of communicating the substance of discontent to the Liberal Government of Prime Minister MacMahon and played a pivotal role in their removal (The Tribune Australia 1972, p.6-7). The continuous demonstrations after the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy were used to alter public opinion and even influence politicians (Robinson et al 1994, p.3).

Internationally, the debate in the media focused on the idea of an Aboriginal Tent Embassy and its political context of land rights (Cowan 2001, p.31). These protesters were joined by others and maintained the site for six months before they were removed by police who pulled down the tents (Watson & Coe 200, p.17-18). The Aboriginal Tent Embassy attracted tourist and visitors and non-Aboriginal support became apparent (Robinson et al 1994, p.7). Among them were the Australian council of trade Unions who made a statement in support of the Yirrkala people. The National council of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders women met at ANU and though the campus was empty due to holidays, they were able to get in contact with anti-apartheid supporters (Robinson et al 1994, p.7). They were also able to secure the support of the student body of the Australian National University who availed the facilities of the student Representative Council to the Aboriginal people (Robinson et al 1994, p.3).

FIVE POINTS ABORIGINAL DEMAND PUT FORWARD BY THE PROTESTERS

The leaders of the Aboriginal Embassy protest rapidly improvised and transformed an opportunistic accident into an effective protest that captured world attention and brought significant historical and political change in Australia (Robinson et al 1994, p.22). They used the opportunity to make a comprehensive statement in which they addressed serious issues. Among these were Aboriginal ownership of all existing reserves and settlements (including rights to mineral deposits), ownership of land in the capital cities (including mineral rights), preservation of all sacred sites in all parts of the continent, six million dollars in compensation and full rights of statehood for the Northern Territory). At the same time, Anderson named a 'ministry', including a Minister for the Arts, Environment and Caucasian Affairs. He made a more comprehensive statement of demands in early February (Robinson et al 1994, p.22).

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ESTABLISHING THE TENT EMBASSY

The establishment of the tent Embassy brought the diverse groups among the Aboriginal people together for a common goal. For instance, the Aboriginal people from Yirrkala, Elcho, Bathurst and Melville Islands that included Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Wali Wunungmurra lend a pan-Aboriginal appearance to the protest. It also attracted the support of the then federal opposition party. The Australian Labour Party leader, Gough Whitlam visited the Tent Embassy and gave his partial approval to the five-points plan. Another prominent Labour local member Kep Enderby visited the Tent Embassy with the Labour leader (Iveson 2017, p.545). Land rights were to be granted under Labour, and although this was a non-specific response to a relatively non-specific demand, the promise to grant statehood to the Northern Territory and abolish remaining discriminatory laws in the States was unequivocal (Iveson 2017, p.545). In addition to large numbers of tourists, visitors to the Embassy included Soviet diplomats, a representative from the Canadian Indian Claims Commission, and a cadre from the Irish Republican Army who donated a linen handkerchief to the cause. International media coverage included articles on the Embassy in *The Times* (London), the *Guardian* (Robinson et al 1994, p19-20). Having the Tent Embassy on the lawn in front of the Parliament House (now old Parliament House) is a clear demonstration that they have never ceded their sovereignty to the colonial authorities (Muldoon & Schaap 2012, p. 536). The demonstrations that ensued after the establishment of the Embassy was a moral victory and an enormous psychological boost for the movement. It was able to garner a wider support and wider media coverage. It was also able to expose the inadequacy of the MacMahon government and placed land rights on the political agenda of Australia major political parties (Robinson et al 1994, p19-20). The protest also united Aboriginal people around the demand for uniform national land rights and it found a renewed national expression (Muldoon & Schaap 2012, p. 537). The establishment of the Australian Tent Embassy was in many ways a success story. Although the central demand for land right was only partially fulfilled by the Northern Territory ACT of 1976, it assumed a mythology of historical and political significance among Aboriginal people. The Embassy exemplified the efficacy of protest action within the framework of the Australian democracy (Robinson et al 1994, p19-20). It gave the Aboriginal people an opportunity to rewrite history by telling the world what colonial people refused to tell the world.

CONCLUSION

In this response, I have discussed the background to the establishment of the Australian Tent Embassy by looking at the political, social and economic deprivation faced by the Aboriginal people

under the White Australian policy. The response also elaborated at the establishment of the physical structure of the Australian Tent Embassy, the demonstrations that ensued, the five point demands put forward by the organizers and the support it garnered from non-Aboriginal people. It also looked at the impact it had on political parties, student unions and the international media. The response deliberated on how the Aboriginal people were able to take control of their own narrative and sell it to the wider world through the establishment of the tent Embassy. Furthermore, I was also able to discuss the achievement made by the Aboriginal people in the establishment of the Tent Embassy.

Part 2: Reflective Essay 1000 words

This part of the assignment requires you to reflect critically on the politics of representation and voice that went into the construction of your response. In this essay you need to provide:

- 1. A short literature review: What sources did you engage with? What did they say about the event? Why did they choose to represent the event in a certain way?**

In my response, I engaged with peer review journals and interviews which are primary sources. I also engaged with other secondary sources from the National Museum of Australia website, and newspaper articles from the Tribune Australia, the Guardian United Kingdom that realistically portray the event. I choose these sources because they were able to do what history, the press and the government had not been able to do before the event. What the world knew of Australia Aboriginal people was what the government and white controlled press wanted them to know. However, for the first time, the Aboriginal people were able to rewrite some aspect of their history and tell their own stories with a single but very strong voice to the international world. The sources I used for this assignment are facts that exposed the inequality in the system and are written in a manner that is easy for the reader to understand. The sources are firsthand information that are known by everyone and so failing to represent it with all honesty will question their credibility. For example "*An autobiographical narrative of the Black Power Movement and the 1972 Aboriginal Embassy*" by Gary Foley, 'The Aboriginal Tent Embassy: 28 years after it was established' by Irene Watson, ['Aboriginal rights demonstration at old Parliament House' from the National Archives of Australia](#), and 'The Aborigines-184 years after the first fleet' by The Tribune Newspaper. Furthermore, the chronological sequence of events will keep the reader interested in proceeding. I choose to structure my response into different sections and headings so that the reader will follow the events as they occurred. I used the interview sources because they bring life to the event and it has a strong effect which no amount of political power will erase. The interviews used the voices of the Aboriginal activists who were present at the event so that the readers will have the first hand

understanding of their plight. For example, the following are the direct words of Isobel Coe one of those who were instrumental in the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

“We have never ceded our sovereignty from one end of the country to the other. There has never been any treaty signed. In relation to what's happening now I think things have gotten worse. We look at the death rate of our people - it's increased”. (Watson 2000, p.17)

Some of my sources have photos and posters which are faster and easier to educate the reader.

Interviewing an individual who was part of the event brings the event to the future. It makes it more realistic and makes the reader to imagine the events as the story unfolds.

2. Methodology: How did you translate your sources and discussions into a creative response and what factors influenced the final form of your response?

First, I used my diverse sources to look at the background of the event. I discussed the economic and socio-political condition of the Aboriginal people that drove them to establish the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. I then used my sources to discuss the Tent Embassy itself and the impact it has on the Aboriginal people on the one hand and the Australian Government on the other hand. I used primary and secondary sources and descriptive writing of the event so that the audience will have a clear understanding of the condition of the Aboriginal people. I structured my response and presented my facts in a chronological sequence. I feel that by reading the description of the event in sub section will enable the audience to understand the systemic racism the Aboriginal people were experiencing in Australia then and even now.

3. Theory: Describe the way one/some of the theories discussed in this course informed the way you constructed your response

One of the theories discussed in the unit that has informed the way I constructed my response, is the theory of space and time. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is a space for counter public formation and a space for formation towards the wider public sphere (Iveson 2017, p.545). It is considered as an example of an architecture which represent an opportunistic occupation of space (Cowan 2001, p.30). As Fraser stated, the subaltern counter public is a parallel discursive arena in which members of subordinated social groups create and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional viewpoints of their identities, interests, and needs (Fraser 1992, p.123). Sziarto and Leitner and Warner (as cited in Iveson 2017, p.540), these counter-public views are not only oppositional in what they say but also in the ways in which the views are expressed (Iveson, 2017, p. 540). Iveson on his part stated that to participate in a public is to imagine the existence of a social space in which we

can address others, and in which we can be addressed by others, as strangers. But such a social space can only exist through the acts of public address and interaction that take its existence for granted. (Iveson, 2017, p. 540). The Aboriginal tent embassy has a unique characteristic of occupying a site with symbolic significance which makes the site to work effectively as a space for public representation. It also affords the activists sufficient time to establish themselves before it was shut down by the authorities. These qualities which the event achieved are qualities that are difficult to achieve by any single event (Iveson, 2017, p. 540). The illegal occupation Australia and dispossession of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is compared to the occupation of the lawn outside the tent embassy (Cowan 2001, p.30).

Another theory that informed my response was “Ways of seeing”. I specifically look at it from the point of view of the oppositional gaze and power and authority. There was and there is still vast inequality between the Australian Government authority and the Aboriginal people. From the above response in part 1, the Aboriginal people were oppressed, dehumanized, and lack freedom. However, as indicated by Foucault in (hooks, 1992, p.116) he challenged the assumption that power controls everything. Indeed, we see from the response that the Australian Government was taken aback by the establishment of the Australian Tent Embassy. With all their police force and their military, they were taken by surprise and unsure of how to respond. Imagine, only four Aboriginal men, with no weapon, not even a stick, were able to start a protest with only a beach umbrella that attracted supporters from both within and outside their ranks. This clearly shows that in all relationship of power there is the possibility *of resistance*.

“Even in the worse circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one's gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it, opens up the possibility of agency. In much of his work, Michel Foucault insists on describing domination in terms of "relations of power" as part of an effort to challenge the assumption that "power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom." Emphatically stating that in all relations of power "there is necessarily the possibility of resistance,". (hooks 1992, p.16)

“The "gaze" has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that "looks" to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating "awareness" politicizes "looking" relations—one learns to look a certain way in order to resist”. (hooks 1992, p.16)

The theory of the gaze as discussed in the above quotation indicates that there will always be an oppositional gaze irrespective of the amount of authority in place. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy symbolises the oppositional gaze in this response. It was used to critically question the treatment of the Aboriginal people during the White Australian Policy moment and qualifies the assertion that

“that in all relations of power "there is necessarily the possibility of resistance,". The Tent Embassy created awareness among the Aboriginal people as it was able to bring different factions together. It was also used to garner support internationally and present the case of the Aboriginal people to the whole world.

Positionality: What position did you adopt in your response task? Critically analyse and reflect on the way your own positionality shaped your response.

In this response, I strongly empathised with the Aboriginal people and I stand with them in their struggles for recognition and land rights. I came from a background that experienced colonial rule. I am originally from Sierra Leone, one of the countries that was colonised by Great Britain. Colonialism has a similar effect throughout the world. As someone who has experienced the odds of colonialism, I chose to respond on this event so that I can help create awareness on the plight of the Aboriginal people. I am in support of the Aboriginal people struggle for sovereignty in every aspect. The land belongs to them and so being treated as second class citizens or foreigners in their own country is unacceptable and dehumanizing. Reading my different sources about the Aboriginal Tent Embassy reminiscent events I learnt as a child about the evils of colonialism in my country. However, those experience are in no way equal to the experience the Aboriginal people went through and are still going through. My response was influenced by the fact that I am a black African who has experienced colonialism and racism in diverse ways. Reading the sources brought memories of those moments when I experienced my own ordeal, something I do not wish any human being to experience. However, what I have experienced is not in any way equal to that of the Aboriginal people.

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