

## **PLENARY – Racism**

### **Speaker 2 – Liz Thompson, RMIT**

#### **‘Free Speech’ and the ‘Yellow Peril’**

##### *Universities and Plagiarism*

There is racialised surveillance of the new threat of plagiarism. The University of Newcastle responded to the Patriotic Youth League (PYL) by using Turnitin.com. This is similar to what happened at RMIT where a new plagiarism policy introduced because of the Kevin Wong case where the student got a tutor to sit an examination for him.

There are also notable ‘hurdle’ requirements for success in faculties with a high number of international student enrolments. A key example is the requirement that if students do not pass the examination then they cannot pass the entire subject, regardless of their overall mark.

##### *Student activism*

The racism that we are seeing now is using the rhetoric of student bodies such as NUS, CAPA etc. Slogans such as “Merit not Money” have been adopted by the PYL. Full-fee paying students are bad and nasty as opposed to good, working class, Australian students. Painting international students as dumb, rich kids is an easy way of explaining the full-fees debate to the general public.

The PYL have used the slogans used in the anti full-fees campaign to racially vilify students. In 2003 the President of NUS made a comment in response to allegations of soft-marking that ‘this is what happens when you get full-fee payers.’

There is no sense of solidarity among the student body on this and related issues. In terms of anti-racism campaigns students have separated asylum seekers and indigenous peoples from international students and the debates that surround these issues. Partly as a result, there is a colour coding of campuses.

The Student Union at RMIT is currently run by right wing students with consumer arguments and philosophy.

##### *Moving forward*

The ‘Touch One, Touch All’ approach has been lost and replaced with ‘good’ and ‘bad’ students.

- The student body needs to look critically at what message the Left is sending out.
- Anti-racism campaigns must have depth and tackle the full-fee arguments.
- The student body must build solidarity with international students and combat increasingly active consumer rights discourse.
- Student bodies and bodies such as the National Tertiary Education Union must recognise their parts in bring us to where we are today.

See Barbara Lipmann argument using the US analogy about academic league tables.

## ***Questions & debate***

*Discussion about what other arguments can be presented by international students besides consumerism and that will be listened to.*

*Discussion of the fact that international students have very little protection other than the ESOS Act.*

*Discussion about Visa Condition 8303 and how many students do not know about this oppressive condition.*

*Discussion that the idea that full-fee paying students, both international and local, are necessarily rich kids is a fallacy. Rhetoric has not matched reality. The reality is that poorer people are trying to pay their way into private education. It was identified that there is a lack of research on this issue and the tertiary system. Such research is particularly important given that the situation is likely to get worse when loans come in.*