Annette Joseph-Gabriel's 'Reimagining liberation'

Posted on May 27, 2021 by Nadeen Dakkak
[vc_row][vc_column][vc_column_text css=""]In this session, *Reading Decoloniality* members read the introduction to Joseph-Gabriel's *Reimagining Liberation*, as well as Chapter 5, 'Aoua Kéita: Rural Women and the Anticolonial Movement in Femme d'Afrique: La vie d'Aoua Kéita racontee par elle-meme.'

The book focuses on the important role that seven black women played in the fight against French colonialism and how their thinking and activist work additionally contributed to shifting ideas of citizenship and articulating new plural forms of belonging that fall within what can be called 'multiple citizenships.' These women used the language of citizenship to claim belonging to transnational cultural and political communities, thus imagining new pan-African and pan-Caribbean identities. In this way, they went beyond the nation-state at a moment in which the French metropole was shifting its relations with the colonies and in which the politics of citizenship for women were witnessing important shifts as well.

At the centre of our discussion of Joseph-Gabriel’s work was the notion of ‘decolonial citizenship’ which she lays out by first discussing the exclusions and inequalities that have from the beginning been built into the concept of citizenship. Decolonial citizenship contests the colonial foundations of citizenship which have often been posited as universal. This is not the only mode of understanding collective identity and contains elements of coloniality that silence non-European notions of belonging. Decolonial citizenship also moves away from the nation-state and does not confine itself to the narrow political communities enabled by it.

Our discussion digressed into contemplating the numerous historical moments in which contestatory collective identities that sought to challenge the colonial foundations of modern nation-states and identities became oppressive, despite their liberatory potential. We highlighted how Joseph-Gabriel’s primary purpose was not to evaluate these women’s new ways of defining citizenship in relation to their successful or failed materialisation in reality. Instead, we suggested that the purpose is to bring to the forefront, through archival research, their unacknowledged efforts and active role as doubly-marginalised black women in the French empire.[/vc_column_text][/vc_column][/vc_row][vc_row][vc_column]

Editor: CLAIRE FRENCH
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