

The development of an anti-racism movement in Hong Kong: a project in the making

Amoy Yuk Mui Ong, Dept. of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
ssamoy@polyu.edu.hk

The recent passing of the Race Ordinance in the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (SAR) poses both an opportunity and a challenge as to how the issues of race and racism might be addressed. The fact that “ethnic minorities” as a group constitutes only 2.3% of the Hong Kong population has often been cited as a major reason upon which demands for equal treatments with the local Hong Kong Chinese numerical majority could not be realized. In addition, the lacking of a democratic political infrastructure upon which civil society movements can be anchored serves as another major challenge to effectively address issues of race and racism.

Drawing on the experiences of the Canadian anti-racism movement, the author reflects on the possibilities of similar homegrown movement in Hong Kong. This paper attempts to map out lessons that can be learned from the Canadian situation as well as critical engaged dialogues, which must take place over some core questions:

Given the “cultural differences” of Eastern “harmony-based” vs. Western “rights-based” discursive practices, how would a local anti-racism and diversity movement look like, and feel like? Would the movement follow an assimilation model, an integration model, or neither but the creation of a model that is fundamentally different from either? What about the notion of national identity – how would the national identity of “ethnic minorities” be (best) positioned within Hong Kong SAR and Mainland China? What are the possibilities of such movement hooking up with the larger civil society movement in SAR? What about the players/ stakeholders – who are they in terms of identities and identifications, and how would home-grown strategies deployed by such individuals differ in dealing with power differentials between the dominants and the have-nots in the SAR? Finally, how would such movement contribute to the building of a “caring society” which is often envisioned as a desirable core of a more collective-based civil society?

Finally and importantly, how could the participatory approaches so central to Community Organising, to PAR and AL be employed to support such movement; are there lessons to be learned from the Canadian experience as to how the past experiences could be utilized and reflected upon for application elsewhere and particularly in Hong Kong?