ALOK VAID-MENON (THEY/THEM)
"WHITE" IS NOT A SLUR, IT'S A STRUCTURE

Alok Vaid-Menon (they/them) is a gender non-conforming performance artist, writer, educator, and entertainer. Their eclectic sense of style, political comedy and poetic challenge to the gender binary have been internationally renowned. Alok was a guest at Kampnagel for the first time as part of the performance-duo DARKMATTER in May 2016 with the show ITGETSBITTER. In June 2017, Alok hosted the workshop THIS WORLD MIGHT BE ENDING, I AM SORRY, I LOVE YOU in the framework of Danny Banany’s School of Uncool – an intense exchange with the participants about hope, bonding and loneliness in an imaginary apocalypse.

1. calling an idea, a movement, a political analysis, and a person "white" is not a slur, it's a commentary on a structural position and impact. saying "white" instead of "mainstream" or "liberal" is necessary because it names a specific and foundational origin of violence.

2. "whiteness" is not something people of color made up. it is an intentional and specifically curated identity, culture, institution, and strategy of domination created by white people themselves to keep Black, indigenous, and other racialized people down.

3. naming whiteness is not "divisive" or "divide and conquer tactics," it is about expressing an oppressive power dynamic that often goes unmarked. as Black & brown activists have argued forever calls for "unity" without seriously engaging the reality of difference are really just a way of incorporating the people you actively oppress into frameworks that continue to oppress them. ending racism is about transformation, not inclusion.

4. "homophobia" and "transphobia" exist because of white supremacy, imperialism, and settler colonialism. the gender binary is a colonial imposition to uphold racism. white people may use "gay" and "trans" identities to position themselves as victims of the very systems they are responsible for creating. if you are interested in ending homophobia/transphobia, you must end racism.

5. expecting non-white people to always explain racism to you is a form of exploitative labor. rather than trying to "save" non-white people, white progressives should really focus on saving your own. educate and organize other white people to commit themselves to solidarity, redistribution, and substantive change.

Published on Alok Vaid-Menon’s official website on February 9, 2016: https://www.alokvmenon.com/blog/2016/2/9/white-is-not-a-slur-its-a-structure. Publication on KOSMOS with kind permission by Alok Vaid-Menon.
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