

This talk examines the political temporality of scale in dominant US media and popular discourse — specifically, the persistent use of the term ‘increasingly’ as a scalar alibi for fascism’s long-standing grip on Black life. Phrases like ‘*increasingly authoritarian*’, ‘*worsening racism*’, or ‘*sliding into fascism*’ depend on a vantage point that begins not with the plantation or the occupied zone, but with the belated disturbance of those previously unaffected. Such scalar framings enact a violent epistemology: they obscure the fact that what is presented as a crisis-in-the-making is, for the colonized, regular police order. The future tense of warning (what might happen) becomes a liberal mechanism for ignoring the present tense of violation (what has always been). This deferral helps structure Black life as disposable — unseen at one scale, spectacularized at another, but never granted ontological weight across any. Focusing on three sites — the totalitarian logic of plantation rule in slaveholding Massachusetts, the anti-woke movement’s restriction of oppositional Black speech across institutions, and the ongoing occupation of Black neighbourhoods by police — the talk argues that fascism is not emergent but foundational. What is new is not its presence, but its spillover into the European

sector — i.e., into mainstream society. By centring the view from Black life in the colonized sector — not as the uncounted, the aberrant, or the apocalyptic future, but as the basis of the settler-colonial order — Yannick G. Marshall asks what becomes possible when we discard the scalar vocabulary of liberal crisis and begin to measure political reality by what has never been measured.

Yannick Giovanni Marshall, PhD is a faculty member at California Institute of Arts, USA in self-imposed exile. A writer and scholar of African and Africana Studies he holds an MA in African American Studies and a PhD from the Department of Middle East, South Asian and African Studies Columbia University. Marshall has published two collections of poetry, regularly contributes editorials and articles to *Al Jazeera*, *Middle East Eye*, and *Current Affairs*, and has given numerous talks and interviews on race, colonialism, radical dissent, and policing. His forthcoming book *The End of Supplication: The Invention of Prostrate Blackness as a Replacement for the Maroon* will be out with Zed-Bloomsbury Press in 2025. His writing and courses can be found at yannickgiovannimarshall.net.

Lecture Series Scale

Scales are used to quantify properties such as length and temperature, or also to measure popularity and affect. But as Alice discovers in Wonderland, a change of scale can also have dramatic qualitative consequences. It disrupts customary ways of perceiving, acting, and being — to the point of feeling as ‘queer’ to her as a caterpillar’s metamorphoses. Helped by the arguably inextricable intertwinement of different meanings and aspects of scale, Alice’s experiences continue to provide apt metaphors for the disorienting importance and effects of scale and scaling at a time of hyperglobalization and the so-called anthropocene.

Scale is indeed a highly ambiguous notion, even when one only considers the meanings deriving from the Latin or Italian *scala*, ladder. It simultaneously denotes the whole ladder, one of its steps, and the relation between two steps: The scale of a cartographic map is the ratio between a distance on the map and a distance on the ground, but any particular length also defines a scale, and the range of scales from the subatomic to the planetary scale is part of the spatial scale. Paradoxically recursive, scale combines and helps mediate quantity and quality, as well as subjective perception, objective material properties, and contingent construction.

If different disciplines, discourses, and dispositives each have their privileged scales to which they tend to reduce others, what may be gained by thinking them together, acknowledging both the relative autonomy of particular scales — each with their own affordances, limitations, rules, even laws and ontologies — and their interdependence — each affecting and being affected by other scales? What is the critical purchase of developing multiscalar architectures or patchworks of scale-specific, mutually inconsistent and irreducible descriptions, theories, and models? How might the tensions be made productive where they overlap or come into contact? The ICI’s Lecture Series ‘Scale’ will address such questions by reflecting upon the critical role of scale within and across a wide range of different fields.

Yannick G. Marshall – Unweighed Lives: On the Misrecognition of Fascism in the 'Colonized Sector'

