

## **Decolonizing Racial Euphemisms in Trinidadian Society**

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This paper considers the significance of the terms “indentured laborer” and “sugar worker” in the political rhetoric of contemporary society in Trinidad & Tobago. By tracing their origins from “define and rule” practices of British colonialism, as defined by Mahmood Mamdani, these terms will be treated as racially coded euphemisms. A clearer understanding of define and rule colonialism shows how these euphemisms evolved from demands for political recognition asserted by labor movements, in the 1930s, to their contemporary uses in everyday speech and in political discourses. In contemporary uses, these terms now describe a racial group, rather than an economic class. And, after being dislodged from their reference to class, these terms now involve a dangerous tendency to function as propaganda. In order to resist the damaging effects of such propaganda, a transnational, class-based critique of the politics of ethnic nationalism provides a key distinction. One step toward the construction of this distinction is evident in debates between Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, who advocated for the priority of recognition and distribution, respectively. Recognition and redistribution are political concepts that point in the right direction, showing how economic systems have built upon define and rule colonialism to lay the groundwork for contemporary tensions of race, class, gender, and caste that euphemisms gloss over. At the same time, an adequate distinction must also set demands for political recognition and distribution apart from racially and ethnically indexed euphemisms. Therefore, a class-based critique of this racially coded language must also be decolonized, moving beyond the paradigms of both recognition and redistribution.