



Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

PROJECT ACRONYM AND TITLE: SHADES OF BLACK - The Darker Shades of Black. The Value of Skin Colour in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Slave and Labour Markets, 1750-1886

FUNDING PROGRAMME: H2020 Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions Individual Fellowship

CALL: H2020-MSCA-IF-2019-Global Fellowship – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships

KEYWORDS: *Skin colour, shades, race, labour, captivity, slavery, serfdom, workers on galleys, sex workers, economic value, Mediterranean, Atlantic, Italy, France, Spain, French Antilles, Cuba*

HOST DEPARTMENT: DSLCC – Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies

SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBLE: Prof. Rolf Petri

FELLOW: Giulia Bonazza

FINANCIAL DATA:

Project total costs	Overall funding assigned to UNIVE
€ 269.002,56	€ 269.002,56

ABSTRACT:

Shades of Black proposes a new approach to the problem of race, a connected and global history which gives skin colour a fundamental role in determining the economic value of captives, slaves and free men of colour in the century of abolition. The objective is to examine how the skin colour of captives, slaves, serfs, workers on galleys and sex workers affected their value in economic transactions before and after the legal abolition of slavery in the period 1750-1886. The value of captives and slaves in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic changed according to the qualities they were assigned. My hypothesis is that skin colour and shades thereof were a major factor in influencing both the slaves' exchange value and the salary level of free workers. I want to find out from the sources whether there was a correlation between the market price of slaves and the skin colour that was attributed to them by vendors, buyers and intermediaries. If confirmed, the colour black and its shades established a form of differentiation or discrimination among the workforce. I will compare experiences in countries of the Southern Mediterranean with those in the colonies of the French and Spanish Empires. For the Mediterranean, my case studies focus on the Italian area, France and Spain, and on Cuba and the French Antilles for the Atlantic. The period chosen allows analysis of, first, a period of growth in the trafficking of slaves and captives on the Mediterranean coasts, during and after the decline of the Atlantic trade, and then the consequence of the abolitions of slavery within geographical spaces characterised by accelerating mobility of persons of colour with different juridical statuses. Shades of Black entails the first study of the connection between the economic value and the physical appearance of slaves. The overall objective is implementing the first comprehensive examination of how shades of skin colour influenced the negotiation of the price at which a slave was traded.

Planned Start date	Planned End date
1 st October 2020	30 th September 2023

PARTNERSHIP

1. Ca' Foscari University	Italia	Coordinatore
2. Columbia University (New York)	USA	Partner