Edited Volume Call for Papers | intellect

Unequal Listening: Unconscious Prejudice in Global Popular Music

Volume editors: **Paroma Ghose** | **Jamie Johnson**

Closing date for submissions: Sunday 20th December 2026
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This edited collection will examine unconscious prejudice – or problematic representations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability perpetuated without apparent deliberate intent – in popular music from around the globe.

People from different national, cultural, and social groups carry inherited, unconscious prejudices and assumptions (Meeusen and Kern, 2016) that shape their behaviours and opinions. For musicians, unconscious prejudices can become embedded in creative outputs, such as recordings, music videos, and artworks. These prejudices often become evident when audiences from different sociocultural and/or geographic groups encounter these creative outputs, eliciting unintended feelings of discomfort and offense (see Lindsay, 2024; Johnson, 2025). For example, in his 2021 song "l'Odeur de l'essence", French rapper Orelsan repeatedly used a problematic ableist slur with roots in a mistaken belief that people with Down Syndrome shared physical features with Mongolian people. Although a relatively uncontroversial slang term in early-2020s France, the rapper's use of it generated backlash when groups and individuals associated with Mongolia who were sensitive to the term's problematic connotations recognised it as a slur, leading to a petition to boycott the rapper (Beaugé 2021).

The global circulation of popular music in the twenty-first century makes it a powerful, if unsuspecting, conveyor of unconscious prejudice. This volume will examine the **unconscious spread of prejudice through popular music** to narrate a broader history of how societies, communities, and individuals have built, shared, and been persuaded by ideas about each other. The editors invite proposals that consider how the 'other' is constructed, perceived, and represented in the creative outputs of different musical artists, scenes, and genres, and what this reveals about constructions, conceptions, and applications of 'justice' and rights (Ghose, 2025). They also welcome proposals that critically examine how different experiences of prejudice and oppression interact and intersect, such as when unconscious prejudice appears in the music produced by artists from minoritised communities, generating uncomfortable encounters and hierarchies of victimhood. For example, when African American singer Lizzo used an ableist insult on her 2022 track "Grrrls", which she later acknowledged as unintentionally hurtful, invoking her own marginalised positionality to demonstrate her sensitivity to prejudiced language (Cain, 2022).

Other areas of interest include, but are not limited to, proposals examining unintended prejudice in popular music and:

- The generation of controversy (or lack of it)
- Consumer tastes and music industry trends
- DSP streaming platforms and algorithmic curation

- The misrepresentation of intentional prejudice as unconscious bias
- AI-generated popular music
- The normalisation of prejudice and the complicity of artists
- Social media platforms
- Prejudicial hierarchies
- Changing perceptions of prejudice across national borders
- Unconscious 'positive' bias in popular music and its various societal manifestations
- The framing of constructive and useful discussions concerning prejudice and bias

As this collection will take a global approach to its research subject, the editors particularly welcome proposals from scholars from underrepresented regions and groups. We welcome contributions from a range of disciplinary, theoretical and methodological perspectives, particularly those that open the discussion on places, people, and realities that are insufficiently seen in academic scholarship.

This book project is under contract with Intellect Books and will be published as an edited collection following peer review. The editors of this volume are Paroma Ghose (Geneva Graduate Institute) and Jamie Johnson (University of West London).

Guidelines for Submission

Authors should send the following as a single PDF file to:
unconsciousprejudiceeditors@gmail.com
by the **20th of December 2026.**

- A 500-word chapter abstract
- A 200-word author biography
- We kindly ask you to follow the **Intellect Books style guide.**

Authors will be informed of the outcome of their submission by the 15th of January 2027. Successful authors will be required to submit drafted chapters of approximately 8000 words for editorial review on 15th July 2027. Chapters will then be submitted for formal peer review on 15th October 2027.