Racism and anti-racism in Europe


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Abstract

‘Remarkable ... a major contribution to our understanding and handling of one of the crucial contemporary issues that acquires more gravity by the day.’ Zygmunt Bauman ‘[This] is the most comprehensive attempt at discussing the current crisis of anti-racist discourses and politics in Western Europe.’ Etienne Balibar ‘An excellent book, which enriches the tradition of political sociology conceptually, methodologically and substantively.’ Peter Wagner This is an in-depth sociological study of the phenomenon of anti-racism, as both political discourse and social movement practice in western Europe. Lentin develops a comparative study of anti-racism in Britain, France, Italy and Ireland. While ‘race¿ and racism have been submitted to many profound analyses, anti-racism has often been dealt with as either the mere opposite of racism or as a theme for prescriptives or polemics by those concerned with the persistence of racist discrimination. By contrast, this book views anti-racism as a variety of discourses that are central to the understanding of the politics of modern states. Examining antiracism gives us insights not only into current debates on citizenship, immigration and Europeanisation, but it also crucially assists us in understanding the nature of race, racism and racialisation themselves. At a time of mounting state racism against asylum seekers, migrants and refugees throughout Europe and beyond, this book provides a much-needed exploration of the discourse of anti-racism that shapes policy and public opinion today.
Anti-racism was not a new phenomenon; anti-slavery and self-help movements became established in Europe during the nineteenth century and were complemented, come the 1920s, by the work of anti-racist scientists, determined to prove the unscientific nature of the ‘race’ concept (Barkan 2003). Anti-racism (re)emerged in the early postwar era, primarily in reaction to the horrors of the Nazi genocide, to construct itself not only in opposition to racism but as Save. Cite this Item. Anti-Semitism, a common trend in European history, is also highlighted in French history by events such as the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the nineteenth century, and France’s treatment of its Jewish population during the Vichy regime. Likewise, the treatment of North Africans and other former colonials during the colonial era, the atrocities committed in Algeria during the War of Independence (1954–1962) and also the Paris massacre of 1961 are also signs of intolerance. In 1998 the Council of Europe’s European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) made a report stating concern about racist activities in France and accused the French authorities of not doing enough to combat this.