

Book Review

Este, David, Lorenzetti, Liza & Sato, Christa (Eds.). (2018). *Racism and Anti-racism in Canada*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing (416 pages). ISBN: 9781552668887

As a racialized immigrant educator and settler from Africa who is still coming to terms with the histories, realities and challenges of racism in the Canadian context, I found the collective knowledge, insights and incisive scholarship of *Racism and Anti-racism in Canada* extremely relevant. It helped me comprehend the different dimensions of racism and the multiple/interlinked lens and approaches through which it can be understood and addressed in a Western, multicultural society context. I consider it a necessary read for people like me who draw on critical theories and approaches to advance social justice and equity for racialized, threatened, oppressed and disenfranchised people in both academic and social contexts in the pursuit of an equitable and diverse society. I also view it as a vital and highly informative guide for every member of Canada who is truly concerned about racial and multicultural inclusivity and justice.

The fourteen-chapter text provides readers with a thoroughly researched, thought-provoking and action-inspiring account of the state of racism in Canadian society, how the privileged located at the centre are implicated, and the different ways in which racialized and minoritized members living on the margins of society continue to be impacted. The book is framed in the theoretical blueprint of intersectionality. Grounded in a critical paradigm, it inspires sober reflections and informed liberatory/emancipatory approaches through brilliantly articulated content in well sequenced chapters. Key concepts and issues are unearthed that centralize the realities of racism and anti-racism struggles in virtually every sphere of Canadian society. The authors explain how the different and interconnected social identities such as race, class, gender, religion and so forth interact to promote and perpetuate unequal power relations through layered intersecting relationships and systems.

In the first chapter, the editors define and explain key concepts related to race and racism (including the different types of racism, race-related stress, anti-racism, and anti-black racism) and provide a contextual background that is linked to theory and is fundamental to navigating the rest of the book. They also present succinct summaries of the chapters that follow – which provides the reader with a clear overview of the content on offers from a diverse group of contributing authors.

The second chapter offers a critical exposition of racism in Canada as “structural or systemic oppression, rooted in racialization and *White privilege*” (p. 41) and identifies *whiteness* as “a key category of ongoing sociopolitical and economic dominance” (p. 46). Writing from the perspective of White anti-racist allies and settlers, the authors examine current social structures and nation-building efforts that reproduce and reinforce racial inequities and oppression in a so-called *multicultural* Canada. They stress that “a narrative from a privileged position is often accompanied by invisibility, which is easily portrayed as objective truth” (p. 43) and call for a more authentic commitment among White anti-racists towards challenging the inequities that are prevalent in the current socioeconomic political relations and structures of the nation. They advocate for a *trustworthy* orientation – one that is more accountable in acknowledging the deficits of Canada’s historical and contemporary oppressive social structures and practices, and the complicity of white settlers in it – a necessary first-step towards addressing the complex power imbalances and multiple forms of resistance to social justice and equity in Canadian society. Becoming trustworthy, as they see it, must be combined with genuine personal and collective efforts to intentionally promote more equitable participation by all, in all dimensions (social,

economic, cultural and political) of society, anchored on the principles of individual accountability, and collective equity and social responsibility.

In the subsequent chapters of the book, a variety of authors systematically unpack a range of themes and topics that reflect important dimensions of racism and the fight against it, in relation to specific social groups, including as Indigenous people, Whites, immigrants and refugee populations, youth, the Muslim community, people with diverse gender and sexual identities. Specific institutions, such as the criminal justice system, immigration and education systems at the centre of Canada's social order are examined. The authors' draw on the literature as well as historic and recent evidence to present, analyze and explore complexities and solutions to both long-standing and emerging issues regarding racism that are structurally and systemically entrenched within multiple facets of Canadian life.

The penultimate chapter of the book (titled *From Multiculturalism to Critical Multiculturalism*) outlines the evolution of Canada's Multicultural policy from a period of excluding racialized, non-European Canadians (in the early 1900s) to a period of more ethnocultural, linguistic and religious diversity in society (beginning from the 1970s) and the ultimate institutionalization of a multiculturalism policy (since the 1980s) (pp. 334-338). Further to this, Sato and Este (2018) both contend and advocate for a "critical multiculturalism" that goes beyond the notion of tolerance and acceptance of different cultures, to identifying and addressing underlying systems and structures that create and sustain intersecting societal inequities manifesting in everyday experiences of racialized and marginalized people (p. 346). The authors provide a preliminary roadmap for critical multiculturalism (that engages both individuals and institutions): Canadians should acknowledge and discuss racism in the public sphere; include the marginalized in decision-making on actions against racism; restructure schools within an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, critical multicultural framework; and promote government-led public education and awareness campaigns that expose people to new forms of racism and how they impact racialized/marginalized people (pp. 358-359).

Overall, the writers make a successful effort to unmask and challenge the nature and operations of racism at systemic, institutional and individual levels, as well as suggest what different stakeholders can do to respond to its continuing and counterproductive impact in an unequal society. They juxtapose reality against myth and aspirations by taking the reader beyond an idealistic understanding and acceptance of multiculturalism into a deeper comprehension of the everyday contradictions and realities faced by racialized and marginalized people in Canadian society. At the same time, many chapters provide some hope for the future – an optimism founded on the principles of collective social responsibility and action (for the willing ambassadors of change) in the fight against various forms and shades of both overt and covert racism.

In an era where racism remains prevalent in many realms, and society continues to grapple with adequately addressing the vestiges of our nation's (not so often talked about) oppressive past, while embracing a continually shifting and diversifying population's needs, most people would like to see Canada's adopted multicultural policy become a reality for everyone. In this sense, the book serves as a timely critical catalyst; an invaluable contribution with accessible content presented in a manner that everyone can relate to and apply. Leaders, policy-makers, scholars, educators, students, social justice activists, anti-racist allies, and all equity and civic minded citizens or residents of Canada can draw on this resource to advance or support sustainable change towards a truly multicultural society where racial equity and equality are a reality.

Benjamin Denga

Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

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