

The Unfinished Politics of Race

The Unfinished Politics of Race argues that the past few decades have seen important transformations in the politics of race. Contending that existing accounts have focused narrowly on the mainstream political sphere, this study argues that there is a need to explore the role of race more widely. By exploring the mainstream as well as transitional and alternative spheres of political mobilisation, the authors stress the need to link the analysis of both local and national processes in order to make sense of the changing contours of racialised politics. The underlying concern of this study is to outline both a theoretical frame for an analysis of racial politics and detailed empirical accounts of different arenas of political mobilisation. By exploring the unfinished politics of race, this study provides a timely reminder that the position of racial and ethnic minorities in political institutions remains deeply contested.

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The Unfinished Politics of Race

*Histories of Political Participation, Migration,
and Multiculturalism*

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Preface

The Unfinished Politics of Race is a product of our long-term collaboration on research linked to questions about the changing politics of race, ethnicity, and migration in British society. This collaboration started with a project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) on the ‘Politics of Race and Social Change in Birmingham’ (Award No. R000231545) in the early 1990s, involving John Solomos and Les Back, which sought to provide a detailed analysis of the ways in which minority communities were beginning to become integrated within political institutions and parties in the local environment of Birmingham. At the time, there were few detailed empirical studies of this process of political engagement, and indeed few such studies have been carried out in the period since. This then led to further collaboration between all four of us on an ESRC-funded project on ‘Democratic Governance and Ethnic Minority Political Participation in Contemporary Britain’ (Award No. L215252046), which formed part of the ESRC Democracy and Participation Research Programme. Azra Khan worked with us for a period on some of the empirical research for this project, and we are grateful for her contribution. This project focused on trends and developments in London and in Birmingham, as well as on broader forms of national political mobilisations. We produced several articles from this project that sought to explore the evolving dynamics of minority political participation in the early 2000s. For a time, other priorities took over in our work, and we were not able to complete the writing up of this research at the time.

At the same time, we have continued to collaborate and work on various projects linked to the concerns of this book over the past two decades, and it is based on these collaborations that we have written this book. In addition to these more empirically focused projects, we have all engaged with evolving theoretical and conceptual debates in the broad field of race and ethnic studies, and this engagement is reflected in some of the themes that we take up in the core chapters of this book. So, this volume can be seen as reflecting the more specific collaborations focused

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on the evolving politics of race and ethnicity in British society and our interest in engaging with ongoing and pressing conversations about what kind of policy agendas are needed to address the racialised inequalities that have become an entrenched feature of the contemporary situation. The three parts of this book reflect the key elements of both collaborations and conversations, and we hope that they will contribute to the debates that are currently taking place, in Britain as well as in other societies.

During the research on which this book is based, we have accumulated debts to several of our colleagues in our academic networks who have provided us with sage advice and conversations that have allowed us to develop our arguments and reformulate our analytical frame. In particular, we would like to express our thanks to Nisar Ahmed, Claire Alexander, Anwara Ali, Malcolm Ball, Leah Bassel, Vikki Bell, Gargi Bhattacharyya, Alice Bloch, Manuela Bojadzijeve, Milena Chimienti, Steve Douglas, Ben Gidley, Paul Gilroy, Yasmin Gunaratnam, Sylvia Ingmire, Denise Jones, Abdul Maliq Khukhon, Marco Martiniello, Cathy McIlwaine, Gedu Miah, Ranu Miah, Karim Murji, Yasmeen Narayan, Sarah Neal, Therese O'Toole, John Pandit, Bhikhu Parekh, Steve Pile, Nirmal Puwar, Richard Robinson, Anamik Saha, Liza Schuster, Abdul Shukur, Miri Song, Brett St Louis, Rajan Jalal Uddin, Satnam Virdee, and Aaron Winter. In addition, we thank our various institutions over the years for providing us with supportive working environments that have given us the space and the intellectual environment within which to work on the book in its various stages of development. In the fast-evolving world of universities, this support has been invaluable to all of us.