

Multiracial Identities in Colonial French Africa

Despite increasingly hardened visions of racial difference in colonial governance in French Africa after World War I, interracial sexual relationships persisted, resulting in the births of thousands of children. These children, mostly born to African women and European men, sparked significant debate in French society about the status of multiracial people – debates historians have termed “the métis problem.” Drawing on extensive archival and oral history research in Gabon, Republic of Congo, Senegal, and France, Rachel Jean-Baptiste investigates the fluctuating identities of métis. Crucially, she centers claims by the métis themselves to access French social and citizenship rights amid the refusal by fathers to recognize their lineage and in the context of changing African racial thought and practice. In this original history of race-making, belonging, and rights, Jean-Baptiste demonstrates the diverse ways in which métis individuals and collectives carved out visions of racial belonging as children and citizens in Africa, Europe, and internationally.

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