

ABSTRACTS

Patrick Simon, The Choice of Ignorance: The Debate on Ethnic and Racial Statistics in France

For more than a century, statistics describing immigration and assimilation in France have been based on citizenship and place of birth. The recent concern for racial discrimination has given rise to a heated controversy over whether to introduce so-called “ethnic categories” into official statistics. In this article, I make an assessment of the kind of statistics that are available today and the rationale behind their design. I then discuss the main arguments put forward in the controversy and argue that antidiscrimination policies have created a new need for statistics that outweigh the arguments against the use of “ethnic statistics.” In fact, beyond the technical dimension of this controversy lies a more general political debate about the multicultural dimensions of French society.

Keywords: discrimination, race, statistics, policies, France

Louis-Georges Tin, Who is Afraid of Blacks in France? The Black Question: The Name Taboo, the Number Taboo

In 2005, black people in France decided to create a national organization: the CRAN. The country had lived for decades on the myth of human rights and equality, and as a result, minorities were invisible, and were expected to remain so. Therefore, the two most important goals of the CRAN have been: to give a name, to give a figure. The taboo of the name was broken when black people decided to stand up for what they are, to call themselves “black,” however unusual this might sound in French public discourse; the taboo of the figure was also broken when the CRAN decided to launch the issue of ethnic statistics in France. Until then, blacks would not exist as such in this country, and racial discrimination would remain ignored for the most part. But since this campaign was launched, ethnic statistics have become an important issue. The debate is still going on.

Keywords: discrimination, black, racism, France, ethnic statistics

Alain Blum and France Guérin-Pace, From Measuring Integration to Fighting Discrimination: The Illusion of “Ethnic Statistics”

In this article, we engage in a debate that first took place in France ten years ago, but that has revived today. This debate concerns the question of whether to introduce ethnic categories in statistical surveys in France. There is strong opposition between those who argue for statistical categories to measure ethnic or racial populations as part of an effort to fight against discrimination, and those who argue against such statistics. The latter, including the authors of the present article, discuss the impossibility of building such categories, their inadequacies, and the political and social consequences they could have because of the way they represent society. They also argue that there are better, more efficient ways to measure discrimination and to fight against it. After describing the history of this debate, the authors present the different positions and explore the larger implications of the debate for French public life.

Keywords: ethnic and racial studies, history of statistics, statistical methodology, discrimination, immigration

Valentine Zuber, La séparation des Églises et de l'État en France et à Genève (1905-1907): une solution pour deux histoires [in French]

The comparative history of secularization in France and in Geneva can shed fresh light on the separation of church and state in France in 1905 and in Geneva in 1907. Similarities in the timing of events and in the laws of separation in these two settings mask sharp differences in how *laïcité* was understood and how it was interpreted politically. The establishment of *laïcité* had neither the same causes nor the same political effects in France and Geneva. Nevertheless, as two examples of “total” *laïcisation*, the French and Genevan separations of church and state raised the same question about religious liberty and its safeguard by the state. Should a state that is “separate from religion” play an active role protecting the liberty of the different denominations in its territory, or should it uphold a prudent and distanced neutrality?

Keywords: *laïcité*, secularisation, France, Geneva, Church, State

Véronique Dimier, French Secularism in Debate: Old Wine in New Bottles

This article deals with two debates at two different moments in history: the recent 2004 debate on a law proposed by the Chirac government that aimed at forbidding any religious signs (including the Islamic headscarf) worn in an ostensible way at school; and the 1892 debate on native education in Algeria and the opportunity to have a Koran teacher at school. At stake in both debates were two conceptions of Republican *laïcité* (secularism), one assimilationist, the other more pragmatic.

Keywords: France, *laïcité*, colonial policy, Algérie

Judith Vichniac, Jewish Identity Politics and the Scarf Affairs in France

Much has been written about the scarf affairs in France and the subsequent legislation banning large religious symbols from the classroom. Less has been written about the major religious leaderships' responses from 1989 when the first affair took place until the debates surrounding the Stasi Commission in 2003. This article traces the evolution of their thinking with special emphasis on the splits within the Jewish leadership within the context of a rise of anti-Semitic acts.

Keywords: *laïcité*, schools, religion, multiculturalism, anti-Semitism