

# **Rethinking Racism in Countries of the Global South: Sub-Saharan Migration in Morocco**

Fatima Ait Ben Lmadani  
University Mohammed V, Morocco

If Francophone (and, in particular, French) researchers disdain racism as a starting point for research, social scientists in Morocco tend to avoid it even more. Since the early 2000s, due to highly restrictive European immigration policies, new scholarship has emerged, which does not focus on race or racism, but in addressing the question of sub-Saharan immigrants to Europe, touches upon this subject. In this article, then, I hope to examine the question of race by looking at the production of knowledge on Moroccan migration. I will privilege the research of Moroccan nationals, without ignoring other researchers who have tackled this question by using Morocco to engage with the ways migrants are effaced, minimized or, in some cases, excessively spotlighted. In this regard, I will adopt a self-reflexive perspective on the researcher as both an object of knowledge and a creator of meaning. I will examine the hesitations and ideological positions in relation to this question. In addition, I will pay careful attention to the parallels that can be drawn between the treatment of slaves and black Moroccans<sup>1</sup> and their impact on the question of racism towards sub-Saharans. I hope to outline the kind of research that has been minimized in the sociology of racism and migration.

## **Introduction**

To reflect on racism in Morocco is to embark upon a difficult and dangerous academic and intellectual project. The difficulties include the paucity of existing research on this question, the

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<sup>1</sup> Here, I am referring to the children of former slaves and those who are perceived as black Moroccans. We will see elsewhere how these negative images linked to this category of Moroccans will be attached to sub-Saharan immigrants.

lack of sufficient documentation of Morocco's history with slavery, the unique impact of colonialism on the way Morocco views its black citizens, an underrepresented minority, and above all, the Moroccan nationalist movements which have attempted to gloss over all ethnic and religious differences since independence. Current research on this question takes immigration as its jumping-off point. From this perspective, racism seems tied to the treatment of sub-Saharan immigrants to Morocco and the effects of Moroccan and European immigration policies (AMERM, 2008; Timera, 2009; El Miri, 2018). The violence committed against these migrants recalls their condition as black people and calls to mind the era of slavery and colonialism.

Still, while these researchers take pains to document the ways in which migrants are discriminated against, they give little information on the context of this issue in Morocco in particular. They do not spend significant time on the historical and situational conditions which might explain the unique way in which the question of race<sup>2</sup> is approached in Morocco (AMERM, 2008; El Miri, 2018). What is more, aside from a very few studies, including that of M. Timera (2009), there is rarely discussion of the potential gap between the discourse and social practices of sub-Saharan migrants to Morocco. In this paper, I propose simply to discuss these two blind spots. I make no pretense to offer an exhaustive reading on this issue. Instead, I will interrogate these works in the light of research conducted on immigrants to Morocco since 2012 and other work on the history of enslavement, colonialism, and nationalism. My hypothesis is that the study of race in Morocco cannot come to be without attentive readings of three historical flashpoints: slavery, colonialism, and nationalism, all in context. Though these topics have been spotlighted from time to time in interviews or in observing the practices of immigrants, they remain in large part difficult to observe.

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<sup>2</sup> Race here is understood as a social construction, not as a biological given, and is similar, in the case of my interlocutors, to the nation. The nation, as E. Balibar (1988) shows, is constituted by a community or a people who recognize themselves [as such] in advance of the state. The fabrication of origin myths and a feeling of historical continuity, including in the case of 'old nations,' makes it possible to see in the state expression of a preexisting identity, meaning an effective ideological form, without which the appeal of patriotism would not be addressed to anyone. Individuals of multiple origins that come to see themselves as members of the same nation are formed as *homo nationalis* by a network of institutions and practices that socialize them by fixing the affects of love and hate such that internal differentiation between social groups is relativized in relation to the symbolic difference between 'us and foreigners.' According to Balibar, this process is one of 'fictive ethnicization' where the fictitious refers to the fact that it is the result of a fabrication, not that it has no effect in reality. The two methods used for this fabrication are, first, language, that is the linguistic community, but that is not sufficient since it "assimilates everyone but retains no one." The second method of race, which functions as a principle of closure and exclusion, uses genealogy as a framework that imaginarily carries over into nationality.

Based on my survey of Senegalese migrants in Morocco between 2012 and 2014, I will outline a contextualized and, above all, discursive reading of racism and discrimination in the Moroccan case. This survey included 60 people in four Moroccan cities (Fes, Meknes, Rabat, and Marrakesh) and was conducted based on focus groups that took into account the diversity of migrants' profiles and the gender dimension. This survey is being used in this paper to serve two purposes. The first purpose consists of an intersectional analysis that makes it possible to show different power relations that overlap and are, at times, clearly presented by our respondents in their representations of racism in Morocco.<sup>3</sup> Within this first point, the question will arise regarding relations of domination (based on class, race, and sex) that are mobilized by our interlocutors in their definition of racism and to explain the behavior of others (Moroccans and other migrants) towards them. The second purpose involves a situational and dynamic reading of these migrants' perceptions of racism in Morocco and the registers of differentiation that they mobilize. These two approaches demonstrate the complexity of dealing with the racial question and the need to move away from an ahistorical and acontextual reading of this object of study.

Moreover, in the second section of this paper, I will focus on the state response to the issue of discrimination and racism experienced by migrants in Morocco. This is how I will show the impact of policies that externalize European borders and how the Moroccan state, like other countries, is faced with a double challenge: that of controlling European borders by relying on a security policy that is by definition limiting of migrants' rights to free movement and the challenge of protecting migrants by implementing a migration policy that ensures their integration and fights against the forms of discrimination they face. Finally, in the last part of this section, I will propose a critical reading of the works that have dealt with this question in the case of Morocco. This analysis will open debate on the different points of view and positions of researchers when they address anti-black racism in a "white" Africa. This approach aims to answer the following questions: how can we approach this question without falling into the trap of a non-contextual transposition of a Western reading on the Moroccan case? How can one make a link between the history of slavery and the figure of the black person in these countries with the treatment of sub-

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<sup>3</sup> For a more specific reading on an intersectional analysis of gender and migration in a colonial context, see the article by Fatima Ait Ben Lmadani and Nasima Moujoud (2012) « Peut-on faire de l'intersectionnalité sans les ex-colonisé-e-s. »

Saharan migrants who live in Morocco now? This last point will be an opportunity to open a critical debate on future research projects rather than a claim on my part to answer these questions.

### **Perceptions of Otherness: The Experience of Senegalese Migrants**

In this section, I will focus on our survey of Senegalese migrants in Morocco rather than on other surveys I have conducted with sub-Saharan migrants, in general. This choice allows me to demonstrate the specificity of this migration in Morocco – a specificity that my interlocutors, moreover, claim. Furthermore, this choice invites us to explore more easily the question of racism far from administrative difficulties since, at least legally,<sup>4</sup> the bilateral convention between Morocco and Senegal insists on the right of Moroccan and Senegalese nationals to free movement, residence, and establishment.

Within my investigation, the question of racism experienced by Senegalese migrants emerged. It was my respondents who introduced it into the debate during the focus groups. This demonstrates the importance of this question for my respondents and the need they felt to express their suffering and difficulties with integrating into Moroccan society. However, if most of them evoke the racism of Moroccans against them, the motivations behind this racism and the way in which it manifests differ according to social relations of domination, social status, and interlocutors' gender. We are reminded, in this regard, that Senegalese immigration to Morocco is very diversified and includes university graduates and non-graduates. This social class divide operates as a distinctive variable between the groups that make up Senegalese migration to Morocco. I also noted the presence of groups by socio-professional category that defend the interests of each category (associations of students, workers, merchants, athletes, etc...).

The focus groups as well as the individual interviews conducted with Senegalese migrants in different cities reveal the contempt, even the latent racism of Moroccans towards black people. This negative attitude, which is often denounced by the various people interviewed, does not target the national group of Senegalese people as such, but is more aimed at black people perceived as African, poor, foreign, and in an irregular situation. The nationality of origin is not, at first glance, very important as a basis for the negative perception since Senegalese migrants fall into the category of sub-Saharans. Among the negative criteria often attached to sub-Saharans are that of

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<sup>4</sup> It should be specified that the convention does not solve all the administrative problems these migrants face and, even less so, the types of discrimination they suffer, as we will see.

"poor," "illiterate," and "uncivilized." Senegalese students and university graduates are particularly sensitive to this image. Also, as a Senegalese students pointed out:

"Moroccans look at us as if we come from a country where there is no school, where there is no university, as if we are not civilized. Me, when I arrived, I was asked: are there no schools where you live? Why did you come to Morocco?... I find that they do not have enough general knowledge. They look at us like extraterrestrials who have nothing at home and who have come to invade their space."

Moroccans' ignorance and misunderstanding of other African countries as well as their socio-economic situation partly explain, according to this student, their contemptuous attitude towards other Africans. However, this judgment is generally put into perspective by students and workers, who tend to minimize this situation by facing it with certain contempt. Respondents who belong to more disadvantaged categories share more virulent remarks towards Moroccans whom they consider racist. The social status of the interlocutor will be a determining factor in how they receive experiences of racism and the negative images that are often corollary to them.

In interviews, Senegalese migrants condemn, in particular, the verbal violence to which they are subjected in the street. The terms *azzi* and *zitouna* are often thrown around, especially by young people in certain working-class neighborhoods. And, if some Senegalese migrants have adopted an attitude of indifference vis-à-vis these insults, such as this interviewee who affirms, "I am beyond this kind of thing... you can call me 'black' morning and evening, it doesn't matter to me, you don't reach me," others continue to suffer from it and to retaliate with other pejorative terms (*maticha*,<sup>5</sup> *naar*,<sup>6</sup> etc...) towards Moroccans. This openly hostile attitude of some Moroccans in public spaces is often nuanced among those who interact with Senegalese people frequently in school and the workplace. In these circles, Senegalese migrants who were interviewed shared attitudes of reservation, indifference, and opportunism from certain Moroccans towards them.

Respondents note migrants' legal situation to explain differences in how they are treated by Moroccans. Thus, as a Senegalese university graduate and worker highlights, "there is a difference between students [and] workers that have a residency permit and those, often including street vendors, who are in an irregular situation. With your residency card, you can work, and above all, find housing more easily. Moroccans do not treat you the same, of course."

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<sup>5</sup> *Maticha* means tomato and it is a pejorative term to mark Moroccans' different color.

<sup>6</sup> *Naar* is most used by Senegalese people to designate Arabs and is mainly borrowed from the Mauritanian context.

Waves of migration are another difference that is associated with legal situation and is often noted by these migrants to explain the way Moroccans behave with them. Workers settled in Morocco for twenty years highlight the difference in representation between the "first" Senegalese migrants and those who have recently arrived. The former group are, according to one respondent, viewed "well" because they are seen as "very honest, very disciplined, and hardworking... The first ones demonstrated a good image, which is why Moroccans like us, but now, the behavior of people who one finds in the street – that does not necessary give a good image. The opinion has changed. When you go now to a police station, for example, before they held a good opinion, but today, when you go there, even the look, you see, it has changed."

Finally, there is a difference in how men and women interact with negative stereotypes and Moroccans' attitudes of indifference or rejection towards them. As such, women, regardless of their social status and mode of integration, are more inclined than men to express their dissatisfaction in the face of demonstrations of rejection. This differentiation is partly explained by the social vulnerability of women compared to men and by the place of women in Moroccan society. Thus, one female merchant denounces the attitude of certain Moroccans by saying that "when they see a black girl, they think she is a whore."

Also, while most of the interviewees confirm and denounce the racist behavior of Moroccans, their discourse is often nuanced according to their social status, their living arrangement, their acquaintances, the length of their presence in Morocco, and their sex. These distinctions cover the cleavages and modes of differentiation within the groups of Senegalese migrants themselves.

Another type of discrimination from Moroccans that our respondents reported is that of the refusal to share space with the other or to introduce them into their intimate space. This behavior is perceptible, according to our interlocutors, in spaces of social diversity, such as the market, the school, or certain working-class neighborhoods. However, it is also visible in the differentiated choice of places to socialize, as respondents often highlight this when they insist on non-hospitality of Moroccans. In this regard, many insist on the fact that they have never been invited to the homes of their Moroccan friends. One student shared, "I think that Moroccan society is not very open. Spending the day at your friend's house is normal in Senegal. Here, this is not the case. Well, it's the social nature of the country – we can't do anything about it." Another respondent nuanced this

remark by explaining, "I think it depends on the culture because at home, if you have a friend, you can go to his place, but here, if you want to see a friend, you meet in a coffee shop, for example, you talk." This form of rejection of the other, or at least their exclusion from the other's inner space, is often explained, as we see in the interviews, by a Moroccan culture deemed "individualistic" and "Westernized." In this sense, despite the embarrassment and mistrust it can arouse, it is often accepted because it is an integral part of the specificity of the other – here the Moroccan.

The second form of exclusion is much less accepted and is the subject of more severe denunciation because it affects people's dignity. It manifests itself in spaces of social diversity, such as markets, where some Senegalese migrants point out the different treatment they receive compared to Moroccans, including the way in which sellers address them. Women often make this complaint and explain this behavior as a result of their not knowing Darija as well as the sellers' contempt towards them. This second form of racism can also be felt in public transport, as in the example of this Senegalese woman who was surprised by a Moroccan woman that preferred to remain standing in a bus instead of taking the only remaining unoccupied seat, which was right next to her. Also, it can sometimes be experienced in university spaces where Moroccan students will refuse to mix with students from sub-Saharan African. Finally, it can result in segregated occupation of the same space. This segregation is visible in the informal spaces of street vendors. This is how we notice, for example, in the big Moroccan cities, that the spaces occupied by street vendors, mostly Senegalese people, are not occupied by Moroccan merchants, even when the products they sell are similar.

If the stigma expressed by respondents is often deplored and the various behaviors of rejection towards them are condemned, the feeling of vulnerability in relation to the status of foreigner and non-reciprocity in treatment remain the most denounced. This unequal and non-reciprocal treatment is experienced in several spheres. Two main sectors were given as examples when it came to this discriminatory treatment. The first is the labor sector and the second is the housing sector.

This unequal treatment in professional environments is perceptible in the qualifications required during recruitment and the availability required during work, even though laws do not permit any difference in treatment. As this executive working in the private sector points out, "they

will recruit you either because you are much more competent than the Moroccans or else, they will ask of you something that the latter will not accept, but you will. For example, if you can work more than 10 hours a day or even 11 hours – maybe that every time we call you, you must be available. Most often, there is never any difference in treatment, well, on a legislative level, between the foreign worker, I mean Senegalese, and Moroccan. You have the same rights.”

When it comes to non-formal activities, such as street commerce, this differential treatment will take other forms. Inequality is greater because this context involves women without residence permits and carrying out activities not authorized by law – a legal situation that weakens them even more. This is how a street vendor describes these difficulties: “When you arrive in Morocco, you use all your money to buy the goods. So, if the police confiscate it, you’re starting from scratch – it’s a big loss, no! You see? And, at each display, you are asked [to pay] 10 dirhams to 20 dirhams. And, from morning to night, you don’t see anything. It’s from 8 am that they let you sell – 8am to 10am. Then, you pack up your things. You see that it’s a short [time] to sell anything.”

Also, as this woman, restaurant-owner highlights, finding accommodation is more complicated for foreigners from sub-Saharan African countries when they are faced with landlords who refuse to rent their apartment to them: “One day, I was looking for an apartment, so I contacted a broker by phone. He asked me, are you African? I answered ‘yes, I am African and, more precisely, Senegalese.’ He told me the landlord does not rent to Africans. I said, ‘oh good! And yet, you are African. Only we are black and you are white.’”

### **Response to Feelings of Exclusion: Stand Out or Retaliate**

Facing stigma and discriminatory practices, Senegalese migrants respond in a variety of ways: differentiating themselves from other Sub-Saharan migrants, indifference, or retaliating with negative images of Moroccans.

While most of our respondents highlighted the negative stereotypes to which they are subjected by Moroccans, many also insisted on the distinction that must be made between them and other migrants from sub-Saharan Africa – a differentiation that has its origin in the negative perception that some Senegalese people have of other migrants from African countries. The latter are considered to be poorer and to have only one objective: to go to Europe. Also, as one worker asserts regarding sub-Saharan beggars:



“well, I have rarely seen Senegalese [beggars]. Often there are people who say they are Senegalese because they know that there are close relations that exist between Morocco and Senegal, so often there are [people with] other nationalities who pretend to be Senegalese. When a Moroccan asks them their nationality, they say [they are] from Senegal. But, often the people who beg are not Senegalese, often [they are] English speakers. When you approach them, they don’t speak Wolof, they speak English.”

In this excerpt, Sub-Saharan migrants are English-speakers, beggars, and aiming to cross. This need for distinction is linked to some respondents’ refusal to suffer the same negative image attached to other migrants and to be designated in the same homogenizing category of sub-Saharan. One of the interviewees complained of this generalization like so: “We are generalizing everything now. It is enough to be black, and the Moroccan believes that you are Senegalese.” Another respondent, this time a student, justifies his resignation to adopting this category in how he defines himself vis-à-vis others: “Me, I find that we have ended up recognizing ourselves as sub-Saharan because that is how we are described. Moroccans do not seek to know the nationality of the person, whether he is Congolese or Senegalese. In any case, they know he is black, so one says sub-Saharan or African.”

The desire for distinction does not only manifest vis-à-vis other Senegalese or other sub-Saharan migrants, but also vis-à-vis Moroccans. The latter are often considered hypocritical, not respecting their religion, intolerant, and not very hardworking. These negative images are often means of self-valorization for Senegalese migrants in opposition to the stereotypes conveyed about them by Moroccans. This is not what E. Goffman calls reversal of stigma, since Senegalese migrants, in their representation of themselves and of the other have not integrated the signs of inferiority that the other has given them. Contrary to other European contexts, where historical relations of domination, particularly colonial, rigidify the positions and the place of people in social hierarchies, the historical context of Morocco, as a formerly colonized country with a disadvantaged economic situation, allows for greater flexibility and considerable leeway in how migrants position and define themselves in interethnic relations.

The negative images conveyed by Senegalese migrants borrow mainly from a moral register. The discrepancy between the representation that these migrants had of the Moroccan in Senegal as a pious and practicing person and the behavior of the Moroccan in Morocco is often highlighted in interviews. Thus, as one student notes regarding this discrepancy, “the image I had of Morocco is the Morocco that we see in the films, with the mountains, the somewhat North

African structure, and the people whose religion is really respected. When I was in Senegal, I dressed in American style, but before coming here I changed my style. I only brought back djellabas because for me that was Morocco." Another interviewee adds, "I chose Morocco because it was a Muslim country and, as I am a practicing Muslim and I wear a headscarf, I had thought that my faith would be respected here, but I was very surprised when I arrived. Moroccans don't even pray."

Another negative representation is related to the status of Moroccans as a formerly colonized country. There is a perception that Moroccans have a complex about outward signs of wealth or power, as shown in this excerpt from an interview with a Senegalese worker, speaking to an interviewer who is also Senegalese: "If you want to receive information from any ministry, you just have to dress well... with heels and all.... The 'naar' has a complex – the outfit makes the difference. Dressed up, serious, anything you say, they'll agree with."

In this first section, we wanted to give the floor to migrants to show, with their words, the evils to which they are subjected. This discourse on the migrant's self and on the other should be supplemented by a more exhaustive and refined ethnographies of practices to give a more complete picture of issues, such as stigma, discrimination, and racism in the migratory context in Morocco. However, this reading allowed us to show the complexity of dealing with the issue of racism and its diverse manifestations. Thus, feelings of rejection, discriminatory practices, words uttered by children, and negative images of certain Moroccan colleagues are often evoked to name racism, but our interlocutors do not give the same definition.

This reading also underlined differences in reception of racism according to social position, gender, and legal status. This discursive situational analysis challenges Eurocentric readings of the issue of racism and discrimination while also demonstrating the diversity of situations. My interlocutors dispute the racism they experienced by defending the principle of equality with Moroccans. According to them, colonial relations do not explain the racism. Furthermore, Senegalese migrants – who are surprised by the racism of Moroccans, which they consider unexpected, and above all, illegitimate - criticize the act of "pretending to be white."

Finally, the question of slavery and the treatment of black people with Moroccan nationality is not at all highlighted in our survey. If color is put forward to explain the racism of Moroccans, the fact that it is a determining factor is not shared by our respondents. Parallelism

between the situation of black Moroccans and Senegalese migrants is never mentioned. The comparison that is made is with Europeans living in Morocco. Members of this community do not adopt the idea that Moroccans are perceived as "white." Surveys, such as that of AMERM (2009) on the racism of Moroccans vis-à-vis sub-Saharan peoples also show that in their rejection of the other, they invoke their culture, their religion, and their way of life, but in no way make a link between the situation of these migrants and black Moroccans.

### **The Question of Racism in Morocco: Between History and Migratory Policy**

As we have shown, perceptions of racism from a situational perspective confront us with the diverse motivations for this racism, especially when expressed by those who experience it firsthand. However, this reading invites us to answer two questions, that of how the State reacts to and manages this phenomenon and how academic research makes sense of racism in Morocco. These two questions are connected because if the first dimension invites us to question the state on the limits of its institutional management, the second criticizes our role as producers of knowledge. If the questioning of institutional failures is common in scholarship and various reports on this question, the documentation, admittedly rare but dominant, devoted to it is rarely criticized.

In 2013, Morocco put in place a new immigration policy which on a political level resulted in two "regularization campaigns" in 2014 and 2016. On a legislative front, the policy put forward three laws on asylum, trafficking, and immigration; on an institutional front, it enlarged the spheres of influence of the Ministry of Moroccans Living Abroad and the Ministry of Immigration. This new policy can be thought of as a direct consequence of the border externalization policies of the European Union. It was a response to the demands of international institutions, NGOs, and civil servants working on questions of immigration. In addition, the new policy was a way to correct the negative image of Morocco as "gendarme" to Europe, and as a nation where there were human rights infringements. Finally, it was the result of unstable and ever-changing regional policies.

Nevertheless, for the moment, these bills (aside from the one concerning trafficking) have not been adopted by the Moroccan Parliament and thus, Morocco currently has *no comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation which fully enshrines the framework of the The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) on racial equality*, as noted by the special rapporteur, writing on contemporary racism. In his report, E. Tendayi

Achieme (2018), chastises Morocco for the omission of a racial definition in its body of law that conforms to the Convention. Achieme encourages Morocco to make a national plan of action aimed specifically at combatting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and its associated prejudices.

This indictment lays bare Morocco's slowness in addressing these questions with legislation. It is worth noting that as long as these bills on immigration, refugees, and the laws of asylum are not passed, businesses and institutions cannot rely on them to bring lawsuits against discriminatory practices.<sup>7</sup> The questions of racism and discrimination in Morocco were addressed at an institutional level in 2013 in a report from the National Human Rights Council of Morocco (CNDH). This document, now considered a reference point for new immigration policy in Morocco, summarized the state of affairs concerning the discrimination and racism suffered by sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco. Even from an institutional point of view, the question of racism is inherently tied to the supposed skin color of the immigrants and much less to their socio-economic circumstance or their cultural or national origin. This perception has echoed in the sensitivity campaigns of certain organizations, which have focused on the plight of sub-Saharan immigrants, even if this has led to a simplification of their difficulties to everyday racism. In this way, the social and economic rights of sub-Saharan immigrants have been put on the back burner. One of these campaigns, "My name is not Azzi," was launched on March 21, 2014 by the group "Papier pour tous" to educate Moroccans on the effects of "ordinary racism."

Whether in terms of migration policy or societal debate on migration, I have noticed a focus on sub-Saharan migrants even though the figures given in the 2014 census do not demonstrate that they are the most statistically significant. Moreover, these awareness campaigns on racism framed by civil society do not allow for a deeper debate on the memory of slavery in Morocco and the experiences of racism against black Moroccans or other cultural minorities. Unearthing this history to question it without falling into the trap of an ethnocentric and Western reading of racism is the

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<sup>7</sup> Even if some laws, and especially anti-discriminatory practices, are beginning to emerge in Morocco, Morocco does not yet have a comprehensive framework against racial discrimination. However, equality before the law of all people regardless of sex, race, or religion, enshrined in the 2011 constitution as well as the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination signed by Morocco, obliges the State to adapt its legislative framework and allows associations to pursue certain cases of discrimination.

goal of the following section, where we will discuss some works that have proposed a historical reading of the origins of racism in Morocco.

In his book on the legacy of slavery in Morocco, the historian C. El Hamel claims that Morocco has often been described in official historiography as a homogenous nation with a national religion (namely Islam) and a national language spread both linguistically and politically by the Arab nationalist movement. This vision, per El Hamel, ignores the effects of slavery as well as the socio-economic discrimination that have often targeted black people in Morocco. El Hamel's analysis highlights the articulation drawn between slavery as a political practice,<sup>8</sup> that gained momentum under the Alawite Sultan Moulay Ismail, and the nationalist movement, which by denying other ethnic, linguistic, and identity dimensions in Morocco, reinforced and legitimized marginalization of minority groups.

I have two reservations about this interpretation. The first is that the author does not discuss the role that colonialism played in reinforcing stereotypical images among Moroccans about those referred to as Africans. Instead, El Hamel presents colonialism as a force that lessened the consequences of these stereotypes by containing them inside the home. Thus, the selling of slaves in slave markets was effectively forbidden without any actual legal abolition of slavery in Morocco being enacted. The author also highlights the fact that certain colonizers profited from the slave trade by selling Senegalese slaves to Moroccan families who put them to work as domestic servants. This analysis elides the impact of colonialism in creating the persistent belief in a hard line between North Africa (delineated as a Muslim territory) and black Africa (conceived of as homogenous by virtue of skin color, ignoring the historical context of each region). The binary vision of two distinct areas of Africa that was perpetuated by colonialism also reinforces the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim territories.

Moreover, El Hamel's work seems to hover around without actually documenting the way in which black Moroccans were treated in certain regions of Morocco, in terms of the social and spatial segregation they endured, and the way sub-Saharan immigrants are treated in Morocco today. This perspective is missing in the work of Moroccan researchers and scholars (AMERM, 2008; El Miri, 2018). Without a doubt, the Moroccan perspective on sub-Saharan immigrants

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<sup>8</sup> Here, political practice means all the public and institutional strategies and policies put in place by the State and its representatives to discriminate against and institutionally legitimize slavery practices.

draws from a well of stereotypes and an image fashioned out of the history of slavery and colonialism in Morocco. However, the ordinary racism<sup>9</sup> of urban Moroccans is largely related to the ways in which immigrants are often conceived of as poor and anomalous. This perception of the other is reinforced by repressive European immigration policies compounded by the Moroccan policy of appeasement.<sup>10</sup> Dark skin is not, as El Hamel and other researchers have suggested, a distinctive sign which alone can explain racism (King, 2019; El Miri, 2018). The intermixing of races in the Moroccan population means that blackness manifests itself in a variety of ways and isn't solely dependent on skin color. Social class, history, and often even regional variations can influence this negative perception of blackness. Paul Rabinow tells the apropos story of a hierarchical system among the members of a certain tribe (Rabinow, 1988). According to Rabinow, members of the tribe share the exact same skin color and yet do not belong to the same social class. In this case, the designation of blackness is not constituted by color but by the social class of the person in question. In large swaths of the South, racial intermixing and the union of white men and black women<sup>11</sup> was common. Consequently, children born of these unions were not considered slaves and moved beyond blackness.

## Conclusion

The migratory question and, more particularly, the question of how otherness is dealt with and racist behavior towards migrants in Morocco, opens the way for debate within a field under construction, namely, that of memory, identity, and diversity. Today, in Moroccan academic discourse, there are two problems which hinder the development of this field: the first is the epistemic gap between two inchoate fields of research - slavery and immigration. The second has to do with the methods used to document, describe, and analyze immigration and slavery. This essay has sought to reflect on and interrogate these analytical biases with a goal of laying the groundwork for an interdisciplinary project. Research in this new field should borrow from

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<sup>9</sup> Here, I contrast institutional racism, which is the result of a state policy, with ordinary racism, which is a concept taken from Taguieff who extrapolates a relationship between identity and behavior. Because of their ethnic or religious affiliation, the immigrant is thus suspected of deviant or criminal behavior.

<sup>10</sup> For more on the externalizing effects of the borders of Third World countries like Morocco, see the work of Belguendouz (2009) and Pian (2009).

<sup>11</sup> The status of women was more complex than previously thought, as M. Ennaji shows. They were effectively concubines, servants, and also, slaves. In the 19th century, this domestic slavery was limited to several important Moroccan families who permitted it.

methodologies on studying racism and interethnic relations, multicultural approaches, intersectional perspectives, as well as materialist and constructivist analyses.

*Fatima Ait Ben Lmadani is a researcher at the Institute of African Studies at the University Mohammed V in Rabat. Her research interests are gender, migration, racism, and South/South mobility. Among her many publications, are: in 2023, with Hicham Hafid, Politique d'immigration au Maroc: Quelle integration des femmes et des mineurs subsahariens au Maroc (Editions la croisée des chemins); in 2018, "Senegalese Migrants in Morocco: From a Gender Perspective," in Gender and Mobility in Africa (Palgrave) and La vieillesse illégitime? Migrants marocaines en quête de reconnaissance sociale (Editions Bouregreg).*

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