Introduction: Towards a Racial Turn in Spanish Scholarship on Migration and Diversity

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This special issue aims to contribute to the debate on race, racialisation and racism in Spain from a perspective that combines theoretical analysis and empirical studies. We take a systemic understanding of racial relations as our point of departure and focus on the Spanish context. Our objective is twofold. First, we aim to challenge a persistent "colour-blindness" and a widely spread silence about race in European societies (Lentin, 2008; Song, 2018; El-Tayed, 2021), as well as in Spain (Rodríguez-García, 2022; Rodríguez-García et al., 2021), which has permeated research on migration, diversity, interculturalism and ethnic relations. As Omi and Winant (1994, p. 159) pointed out "opposing racism requires that we notice race [... and] that we afford it the recognition it deserves and the subtlety it embodies." This will contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes that shape and reconfigure racial categories. Furthermore, it will advance knowledge on the concept of "race" and its intersections with other social categories, such as class, gender, and migration status, highlighting how these intersections fundamentally shape social interactions, power structures, and various forms of inequality.

Second, with this special issue we intend to provide a collection of empirically based research about racialisation processes, racial categories and racial relations in the case of Spain. The contributors to this special issue are Spanish and international scholars based in Spain who conduct their research at the forefront of the ongoing "racial turn" in Spanish academia (see, e.g. Hellgren, 2025; Suárez-Navaz & Suárez, 2024; Rodríguez-Reche & Cerchiaro, 2023; Hellgren & Bereményi, 2022; Rodríguez-García, 2022; Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021). All of the

contributors place race, racialisation and racism at the core of migration and minority studies, both in the Spanish context and internationally. This endeavour is necessary to look transversally to the processes of othering, racialisation and hierarchical categorisation that involve at the same time newcomers (migrants and refugees particularly from the global South) and national minorities. What for some scholars and policy actors is an issue related to the lack of residence permits and recent arrivals from different (and by some framed as culturally irreconcilable) contexts, is in our view part of larger dynamics of systemic racism in Spanish and European societies that affect also minoritised national citizens as the Roma (Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021). We contend that the publication of this special issue further consolidates the racial turn in Spanish scholarship on migration and diversity.

1. Race, racialisation, and racism: some conceptual clarifications

We understand "race," "racialisation," and "racism" as historically constructed and interrelated concepts that shape social structures and power dynamics in contemporary societies and, at the same time, as analytical concepts that allow us to study these phenomena. While "race"—the belief that humans are divided into different essential biological types, each of them with inherited different capacities—itself is a social construct with no biological foundation, it con-tinues to serve as a powerful organising principle in societies, influencing institutional prac-tices, systemic interactions, the unequal allocation of wealth (cementing social and global in-equalities), and individual experiences. In other words, although the idea of race is a fallacy, its social consequences—racism and racialisation—are very real (Bonilla-Silva, 1999).

"Race" becomes constructed as a social category through the process of racialisation, by which racial meaning is assigned to individuals or groups based on attributes that may be physical, cultural, or religious. Racial categories, as well as racialisation processes and racism, have their roots far back in history, related to the perception of "others." In European societies they are deeply rooted in slavery and colonisation (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991), but they evolve over time.

The concept of "racialisation" represents an indispensable analytical tool to go beyond "race" and to understand the processual and dynamic dimension of the creation, adaptation and reinterpretation of racial categories (Silverstein, 2005; Virdee, 2014; Gans, 2017). As Mayblin and Turner (2021) argue, racialisation operates within broader structures of Western identity formation, where the construction of "otherness" remains deeply embedded in national nar-ratives and social hierarchies. In this sense, racialisation is best understood as a dynamic process of differentiation and unequal treatment based on socially constructed racial categories. Con-sidering the complex configuration that racialisation processes may take, it is necessary to ap-ply an intersectional approach to understand how race, gender, class, sexual identity and other social categories interact, not just in establishing racial categories and hierarchies but also in terms of how they play out in the everyday experiences of racialisation and the production of inequalities (Davis, 1981; Curiel, 2017; Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021).

Furthermore, racialisation is not exclusive to (post)colonial societies or limited to the black/white divide (González-Sobrino & Goss, 2019). Various groups that were not initially racialised (based on the previous biological conceptions of races) as the Irish and Italians in the United States, for instance, nonetheless became racialised (and othered) based on their status

as poor migrants, and then excluded from the dominant white category (Fredrickson, 2002; Goldberg, 2002, 2006; Gans, 2017; Rodríguez-García, 2022, p. 3). The phenotypical pantone of racial categories is also contextually adapted to make sense of different historical trajectories of state building and of the relation with the "other," defined by geographical and political reasons. A "white" person in Spain becomes, for instance, a "Latin" in the US, or not-so-white in northern and central Europe, exemplifying the concept of "dirty white" (Böröcz, 2021).

Similarly, national minorities in Europe (most prominently the Roma) have long been subjected to racialisation and othering processes, producing and later on reinforcing their subalternity and marginalisation. In the case of Roma people in the Iberian Peninsula, for instance, Motos Pérez (2009) reconstructs through a Foucauldian genealogical approach the six-century-long process of racialisation and othering of this group through legislation.

Hence, while phenotypical traits often serve as the basis for racial categorisation, racialisation is not limited to physical appearance (Silverstein, 2005). For instance, as Rana (2011) demonstrates, religious affiliations (or perceived ones) have historically functioned as racial markers, particularly in the case of Muslims and Jews in Europe (Murji & Solomos, 2005; Meer, 2014; Rodríguez-García, 2022; Rodríguez-Reche & Cerchiaro, 2023). Similarly, Modood (2005) argues that the racialisation of Muslims is not solely a matter of religious prejudice but rather a broader process of "othering" in which cultural elements—that we may relate to the orientalism (Said, 1978) of European societies, as well as to specific national construction and history—play a crucial role in their exclusion and stigmatisation.

Considering the complex configuration that racialisation processes may take, it is necessary to apply an intersectional approach to understand how race, gender, class, sexual identity and other social categories interact not just in establishing racial categories and hierarchies but also how they play out in the everyday experiences of racialisation and the production of inequalities (Davis, 1981; Curiel, 2017; Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021).

Racism, in turn, represents the structural system that sustains these divisions, reinforcing the dominance of certain groups while oppressing others. Historically, racism was primarily justified through biological arguments, but contemporary forms of racism have increasingly shifted towards culturalist explanations. Scholars such as Barker (1981) and Taguieff (1987) have documented the transformation of racialism (i.e., the scientific doctrine born in Western Europe in the mid-18th century that elaborated the idea of race, hierarchically categorising humanity in races on the basis of supposed genetic differences [Todorov, 1989]) into "new racism," or "differentialist neo-racism," respectively, which replaces biology as the primary justification for inferiorisation and exclusion. This shift allows racist ideologies to persist while adapting to contemporary discourses of multiculturalism and national identity. Chun and Lo (2015), Hall (1980), and Grosfoguel (2004) define racism as a hierarchical structure that has historically privileged white populations while subjecting groups racialised as nonwhite to systemic oppression. Inherent in their analysis is that racism consists of a deeply embedded social system rather than a mere collection of individual discriminatory actions.

We consider it essential to apply such a systemic and relational understanding of racism and racialisation in order to critically analyse contemporary social dynamics and address the persistent inequalities that racial ideologies as well as subtler forms of everyday racism produce. As history has shown, racialisation and racism are not static phenomena; they evolve in response to shifting political, economic, and cultural contexts and continue to shape social, economic, and political realities in contemporary societies. Hence, racism remains an evolving system,

adapting to different historical and geopolitical contexts while maintaining its fundamental functions of producing exclusion and upholding hierarchies of privilege. In line with the fundaments of critical race theory, we believe that recognising how societies reproduce racialised social systems allows for a more nuanced and in-depth engagement with the relationship between race and inequalities, ultimately contributing to more informed and effective strategies for social justice and inclusion.

2. The broader context: international research on race and racism

While social divisions have probably existed as long as Homo Sapiens, the notion of "race" is more modern. There is no general agreement regarding the origins of the race concept, but it is often considered that it emerged during the 16th century. A key figure in theorising on the links between race and colonialism is Aníbal Quijano (2000), who argues that race, in its contemporary sense, emerged as a mental category of modernity. According to him, the idea of race, as currently conceived, has no known historical precedent before the colonisation of the Americas. Initially, it may have simply referred to phenotypic differences between conquerors and the conquered. However, this categorisation quickly evolved into a system that attributed supposed biological distinctions to different groups, solidifying racial hierarchies and becoming a fundamental tool in structuring labour relations and global power dynamics (Quijano, 2000). There is wide agreement that the concept of race is closely linked to colonialism and the moral necessity to justify slavery and other forms of inhumane treatment of non-white people in colonised territories. Hence, the invention of the notion of "inferior races." In other words, the racial classification was historically used to justify hierarchisation and the domination of certain groups over others. This idea is fundamental to the theories of racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983; Fraser, 2016; Bhattacharyya, 2018; A. Kundnani, 2022, 2023), uncovering the intimate relationship between capitalism and colonial exploitation (Melamed, 2015). Literature on "racial capitalism" does not just point out the foundational relation between racism and the beginning of capitalism, during slavery and colonisation, but also underlines that the capitalist system itself is necessarily based on racism, devaluation and expropriation of those exploited through racial hierarchies (Fraser, 2016), even in its recent evolutions. Racism is not something that is bound to disappear under the deepening of capitalism; rather it remains an indispensable pillar of capitalist accumulation (Robinson, 1983; Bhattacharyya, 2018).

In the modern social sciences, thinkers as W. E. B. Du Bois, Franz Fanon, Aimé Cesaire and James Baldwin are often considered to have laid the basis for what was subsequently coined as Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the 1970s-80s by a group of Afro-American legal scholars (Crenshaw et al., 1996; Bell, 1989). Cesaire (2000/1955) underlines the inherent violence of colonialism against a broader perception of this time as a force of progress, driving the dehumanisation of colonial subjects and their economic exploitation through their use as a constrained labour force and the expropriation of raw material and natural resources. Fanon (1952, 1961) explored how colonialism shaped racialised thought, demonstrating how colonised individuals internalised European racial ideologies. Similarly, Banton (2012) examined how European colonisers imposed racial classifications on indigenous populations, linking racialisation to the classification of people based on fictitious biological distinctions. Miles (1993) expanded on this notion, emphasising that racial differences are constructed beyond physical attributes and are influenced by broader social, cultural, and political dynamics. The core of Critical Race Theory lies in its focus on how race shapes power relations, structuring

political, economic, and cultural institutions that reproduce racist hierarchies and inequalities (Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Goldberg, 2002; Grosfoguel, 2004; Hughey, 2017, 2022; Song, 2018).

In Europe, critical theories on race, racialisation and racism long remained widely taboo and considered applicable only to the American context (Lentin, 2020). Lentin (2008) has explained this as related to the trauma after World War II, linking the concept of race with the Holocaust. (H. Kundnani, 2023) in turn deconstructs the myth of an inclusive and colour-blind Europe, pointing at how the European project emphasises lessons of the Holocaust, but not the lessons of colonial history. In recent years there is growing presence of critical theories of race and whiteness in the European social sciences (e.g. Warmington, 2020; Hellgren & Bereményi, 2022; Kundnani H., 2023). Anti-racist scholars and activists often point at the necessity to talk of race in order to address the problem with structural racism at its roots. Race however remains a contested concept in the social sciences at large and in the field of migration studies (Simon, 2022), which is tangible in the Spanish context.

3. Race, racialisation and racism in Spain

Spain represents a compelling case study for analysing racialisation in a contemporary context, for several reasons. To begin with, some scholars argue that the first constructs of "race" and "whiteness" date back to the 15th century in Spain, when the idea of "blood purity" (established by law with The Laws of Purity of Blood) was used to distinguish Christians (who were perceived as "racially pure") from both Muslims ("the Moors") and Jews (Feros, 2017; Wade, 2022; Hering Torres, 2003). As pointed out by Wade (2022, p. 45), even if the first concepts of "race" and their associated categories were markedly different from the thought of the biological elaborations during the Enlightenment of northern Europe, these categories indicated a "social formation structured by racism and racial thinking." Further, as put by Rodríguez-García and Freedman (2025, p. 292) "this racist ideology also reinforced and shaped Spain's colonisation of the Americas and of parts of Asia and Africa, affecting indigenous and African peoples within the colonies, with enduring effects. Later, during Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), the concern of the ruling regime was to morally regenerate what was called 'the Spanish race' through a project of national Catholicism and a revival of 'authentic' Spanish tradition. Similarly, the proclaimed notion of Hispanidad (i.e., exclusive, nationalist 'Spanishness') was not defined by racial categories per se, but it was highly insular, defined by Catholicism, and deeply antagonistic to 'foreign' elements [...] In this way, race, religion, and class have been inextricably intertwined concepts and categories throughout Spanish history" (see also Rodríguez-García, 2022, pp. 6-8). Hence, Spanish Catholic-based racism, rooted in Spanish colonial expansion (Hispanidad) seems to be a characteristic of the construction of race and dynamics of racism in Spain (Feros, 2017; Wade, 2022; Rodríguez-García, 2022).

Contemporary Spain is an ethnically diverse immigration country, where intercultural diversity policies have played a prominent role. However, the country's approach to diversity has generally been defined as colour-blind (Rodríguez-García, 2022; Rodríguez-García et al., 2021), a framework that often minimizes or renders invisible the dynamics of racism and racial hierarchies. As stated by Rodríguez-García (2022), the country's colonial history, which extends beyond the Americas to include territories in Asia and Africa—such as Morocco and Equatorial Guinea, which remained under Spanish control until the late 1960s—along with the historical expulsion or persecution of Jewish, Muslim, and Roma communities, is often erased from national memory. For instance, there is lacking acknowledgement of the fact that

Spain was the last European nation to abolish slavery, with Black enslaved individuals still being sold as late as 1846 (see also Piqueras, 2012; Rodrigo et al., 2017; Rodríguez-García, 2022). Similarly, the othering and racialisation, as well as the persecution and marginalisation of Roma people in the country is widely forgotten or denied. Racism towards this group of people is deeply internalised at the societal level and has only begun to be challenged in recent years (see Hellgren & Gabrielli in this volume; Rodríguez-García in this volume; Motos Pérez, 2009; Cortés et al., 2021; Cortés, 2021).

Spanish identity has long been constructed in contrast to the North African, particularly Maghrebi Muslim, world—most notably Morocco. Historically, "the Moors" have been stigmatised and racialised as eternal outsiders (Cebolla & Requena, 2009; Mateo Dieste, 2018). This deeply rooted Islamophobia—or more specifically, *morofobia* (Martín Corrales, 2002, 2004)—can be traced back to the Reconquista, the centuries-long struggle in the Iberian Peninsula between Christians and Muslims that preceded Spain's colonial empire. Even today, symbolic reenactments of battles between Christians and "Moors" are performed in schools and at popular festivals across Spain to celebrate the Christian reconquest. As a result of this history, any perceived connection to Maghrebi ethnocultural ancestry often provokes social exclusion and discriminatory attitudes within mainstream Spanish society, even in contemporary times (Rodríguez-Reche and Rodríguez-García, 2020; Rodríguez-Reche & Cerchiaro, 2023; Rodríguez-García, 2022).

Racism remains deeply entrenched in Spanish society, to a great extent defining present-day patterns of segregation and social exclusion. Fuelled by rising right-wing populism, racism in Spain is growing alarmingly (Van Dijk, 2003; Feros, 2017; Cea d'Ancona, 2023), a reality that has been informed in an increasing number of reports by Spanish governmental agencies and NGOs (e.g., Spanish Government's Report, 2024, 2020; ENAR, 2024; SOS Racisme, 2022; Federación SOS Racismo, 2022). Still, everyday (or more subtle forms of) racism and discrimination, which are often debated publicly, remain insufficiently investigated and reported.

The racialisation of different migrant and ethnic minority groups continues to serve as a central mechanism of exclusion and discrimination, shaping social hierarchies and limiting access to opportunities. In particular, the racialisation of and racism against North African people is deeply influenced by Spain's colonial past, geopolitical relations, and contemporary Islamophobia. As Rodríguez-Reche and Rodríguez-García (2020) highlight, "Arabs" are often perceived as a dangerous "other", alien to Spanish national identity. This perception has been reinforced by securitisation discourses, especially following terrorist attacks in Europe and the rise of anti-immigration populist movements. Similarly, the racialisation of non-western migrant and Roma populations is closely intertwined with socioeconomic factors, pointing at the centrality of intersections between racism and aporophobia in the stigmatisation of non-white groups. We have argued that this tendency is salient in the Spanish context and that this is both fuelled by, and fuels, the links between poverty and racialisation (Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2021).

Racist and othering narratives have tangible effects, manifesting in employment discrimination, residential segregation, and racial profiling by law enforcement. In recent years, several scholars have documented how these processes impact various communities differently, including Arabs, Roma, black Africans, and Latin Americans, with significant consequences for their social status and access to rights (Rodríguez-García & Rodríguez-Reche, 2022; Cea d'Ancona, 2023; Hellgren & Gabrielli, 2024). Beyond the academic sphere, we must acknowledge the key role of a race-conscious approach in recognising and confronting racism in Spain

coming from an increasing political activism lead by ethnic, racial and religious minorities, such as Roma people, Black African, Muslim and Latin American populations (i.e. Adlbi et al., 2022; Bela-Lobedde, 2018; Douhaibi & Amazian, 2019; Filigrana, 2020; Karvala, 2016; El Aaddam, 2024).

4. This Special Issue

This special issue seeks to go beyond existing research by analysing how racialisation and racism operate and their underlying causes, exploring also the consequences of everyday microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, 2010) that racialised people experience on a daily basis in Spain. It represents a compilation of new research encompassing how dynamics of racialisation apply to a variety of minority groups, manifesting in areas such as the labour market, housing, education, or everyday life. Schools are a key area where the sense of belonging is constructed (or not) and where racialised youth face structural barriers that condition their future opportunities (Hellgren, 2025). Moreover, the phenomenon of 'mixedness'—encompassing intermarriage and multiple or mixed ancestries—introduces an additional layer of complexity that warrants closer examination, as, contrary to assimilationist assumptions, mixedness does not eliminate the stigma of "otherness," nor does it prevent racialisation and discrimination when visible markers of difference remain salient. In this way, mixedness becomes a crucial test for evaluating the persistence of ethnoracial divisions (see Ballestín-González et al., in this volume; Rodríguez-García, in this volume; see also Lentin, 2020; Rodríguez-García et al. 2021; Rodríguez-García, 2022).

4.1. The Contributions

This introductory article defines the conceptual framework of the special issue and our positioning in relation to the key concepts of race, racialisation and racism and the need to further foster these debates in and about Spain. The special issue then opens with Mostafà Shaimi and Carles Serra's examination of how racialised women publicly denounce heteropatriarchal and racist oppressions in Spain. Drawing on an intersectional framework rooted in Black feminist thought and decolonial theory, the authors analyse the discursive and political strategies employed by grassroots movements to confront the silencing and marginalisation of racialised bodies. Their work highlights the tensions between institutionalised anti-racist agendas and the lived experiences of those who inhabit multiple axes of oppression, revealing the limits of liberal inclusion and the need for a decolonial feminist praxis that centres embodied knowledge and collective resistance. This contribution situates itself within broader debates on the co-optation of intersectionality and the depoliticisation of anti-racist struggles in institutional contexts.

Cristina Rodríguez-Reche's article explores the identity negotiations of descendants of Moroccan migrants in Spain, focusing on how everyday encounters with racism shape their sense of belonging and self-identification. Through in-depth interviews and ethnographic insights, the article traces the emergence of what the author terms "camouflage" strategies—adaptive forms of self-presentation that seek to mitigate racial stigmatisation while navigating the contradictions of national and cultural affiliation. This concept enriches theorisations of racial passing by attending to the affective and embodied dimensions of racialisation in a context where race is often denied yet persistently enacted. Rodríguez-Reche's work contributes to

the literature on Descendants of immigrants in Europe, offering a nuanced account of how racialised youth negotiate visibility, authenticity, and social mobility in a society that positions them as perpetual outsiders.

Zenia Hellgren and Lorenzo Gabrielli turn their attention to the normalisation of antigypsyism in Spanish society, arguing that everyday racism against Roma populations is both pervasive and structurally embedded. Their article draws on extensive qualitative data to demonstrate how discriminatory practices are legitimised through culturalist narratives and institutional neglect, contributing to the social exclusion of Roma communities. By foregrounding the voices of Roma individuals, the authors expose the mechanisms through which racism is rendered banal and unremarkable, calling for a re-politicisation of antigypsyism as a form of structural violence. This contribution aligns with critical Romani studies and challenges the dominant framing of Roma as a "cultural minority", instead situating antigypsyism within broader systems of racial capitalism and state violence.

Dan Rodríguez-García adopts an alternative approach to race and racialisation research by testing whether 'mixedness' (i.e., mixed couples and individuals, often seen as a phenomenon that blurs ethnoracial differences and disturbs social boundaries) mitigates deep-seated stigmatisation, racialisation, and discrimination of Spanish Roma (*Gitanos*), the largest ethnic national minority group in Spain, and how mixing affects ethnic identity. Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews, the author finds that even intermarried Gitanos and Spanish-born descendants of Gitano/non-Gitano mixed couples are stigmatised as being outsiders and experience everyday racism, as well as intragroup prejudices, all of which affect their identity choices, social interactions, and everyday lives. Rodríguez-García also finds that Gitano mixed couples and individuals adopt different strategies to cope with racism and discrimination and that Roma identity (*romanipen*) remains dynamic and resilient through mixing—strengthened rather than weakened—as a form of resistance to antigypsyism in Spanish society. In its examination of a national ethnic minority group, this contribution, therefore, addresses a double gap in the field of critical race studies: by decentering the usual focus on immigrant populations when looking at processes of racism and racialisation; and by challenging both assimilationist assumptions about processes of mixing and essentialist or monolithic views of minority groups and identities.

In a complementary vein, Liliana Suárez-Navaz and Iker Suárez offer a critical genealogy of racialisation at the Spanish border, tracing its roots to colonial and patriarchal logics of exclusion. Their article conceptualises the contemporary border regime as a site of neocolonial governance, where racialised migrants are subjected to a "new limpieza de sangre"—a symbolic and material purification of the national body. Through a decolonial lens, the authors unpack how race, gender, and lineage intersect in the production of border violence, revealing the enduring legacies of empire in Spain's migration policies. Their analysis contributes to the growing field of border studies by foregrounding the racialised and gendered dimensions of border control, and by linking contemporary practices to historical regimes of exclusion and purity.

The contribution by Glenda Vaillant Cruz, Antonia Olmos Alcaraz, and Beatriz Padilla shifts the focus to the realm of higher education, examining how Latin American students experience racialisation within Spanish universities. The authors analyse narratives of discomfort, exclusion, and resistance, showing how racialised *Latinidades* are constructed through linguistic, cultural, and phenotypical markers. Their work underscores the epistemic and institutional dimensions of racism in academia, while also highlighting the resilience and political

agency of Latinx students in contesting their marginalisation. This article engages with critical university studies and Latinx studies, offering a transnational perspective on how race operates within knowledge-producing institutions. It also raises important questions about the role of universities in reproducing or challenging racial hierarchies, and about the possibilities for decolonising academic spaces.

Finally, Beatriz Ballestín, Dan Rodríguez-García, Ábel Bereményi, and Miguel Solana investigate the racialised experiences of youth of diverse ancestries in Spain through the lens of multiraciality. The authors describe a reality of "multifaceted" (Rodríguez-García & Freedman, 2025) or "multi-layered racialisation" (Rodríguez-García, in this volume) in Spain affecting in particular children and youth of Black Afro-descendant, Maghrebi Muslim, and Roma (the "Conguito", the "Moro", and the "Gitano") mixed ancestry, who, despite being mixed, born and socialised in Spain, experience persistent racialisation and discrimination in educational, professional, and public social settings. The authors analyse how racialised stereotypes circulate in popular culture and everyday interactions, shaping the social imaginaries and self-perceptions of young people. Their findings reveal the persistence of racial stigma and the ambivalent ways in which racialised youth navigate visibility, belonging, and resistance in a society that continues to deny the salience of race. This contribution dialogues with scholarship on racial socialisation, youth studies, and critical mixed-race studies, offering a grounded account of how racial boundaries are drawn and contested in contemporary Spain.

Together, these contributions offer a rich and nuanced portrait of racialisation in Spain, foregrounding the voices and experiences of those most affected by racism. They challenge dominant narratives of colour-blindness and exceptionalism, and call for a rethinking of race as a central axis of social analysis and political struggle. By situating Spain within broader global and postcolonial dynamics, this special issue not only advances the theorisation of race in the Spanish context, but also contributes to transnational dialogues on racial justice and decolonial futures. The articles collectively demonstrate that race is not an imported or marginal issue, but a constitutive dimension of Spanish modernity—one that must be confronted if we are to imagine more just and inclusive futures.

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