



After the fall of former dictator Ben Ali in 2011, questions of race have come to the forefront in Tunisia, along with the quests for equality for ethnic minorities. Several associations and TV programs began tackling the everyday reality of social discrimination and violent attacks suffered by Black Tunisians and Black Foreign Nationals. Their discourse, however, tends to borrow the concept of human rights and values from the West, and rests ideologically and linguistically on American models—Martin Luther King—, French words—racisme—, and on an idea of race which risks to conflate Blacks' categories and to overlook different historical trajectories behind every actor. Addressing life histories of Black sub-Saharan new comers in the Southern region of Mednine allowed me to question racial concepts in Southern Tunisia by drawing comparisons with the other biggest group of Blacks who were present on the same territory: Black slave descendants. This paper suggests that Blackness in this region is an ascription from the outside, and does not confine in one trait, that is, colour. It points at a conceptualization of race where racial prejudices are constructed, and come at play with other coordinates: lineage, Arab ethnocentrism, institutional and legal positioning, and the status of outsiders.

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