



The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race

Jemima Pierre

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What is the meaning of blackness in Africa? While much has been written on Africa's complex ethnic and tribal relationships, Jemima Pierre's groundbreaking *The Predicament of Blackness* is the first book to tackle the question of race in West Africa through its postcolonial manifestations. Challenging the view of the African continent as a nonracialized space—as a fixed historic source for the African diaspora—she envisions Africa, and in particular the nation of Ghana, as a place whose local relationships are deeply informed by global structures of race, economics, and politics.

Against the backdrop of Ghana's history as a major port in the transatlantic slave trade and the subsequent and disruptive forces of colonialism and postcolonialism, Pierre examines key facets of contemporary Ghanaian society, from the pervasive significance of "whiteness" to the practice of chemical skin-bleaching to the government's active promotion of Pan-African "heritage tourism." Drawing these and other examples together, she shows that race and racism have not only persisted in Ghana after colonialism, but also that the beliefs and practices of this modern society all occur within a global racial hierarchy. In doing so, she provides a powerful articulation of race on the continent and a new way of understanding contemporary Africa—and the modern African diaspora.

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