

## *Acknowledgments*

We first met in 1996, during a panel about integrating race into the teaching of French history, held at the annual meeting of the Western Society for French History. Both of us had been working on the topic for several years and had often felt that our concerns definitely lay outside the mainstream of our profession. Yet our modest panel was packed with colleagues interested to learn about our ideas, and about the history of race in France as a whole. That panel marked the true inception of this book. Over the last twenty-five years, questions of racial difference have become ever more salient in the cultural and political life of contemporary France, most recently in Jean-Marie Le Pen's impressive showing in the May 2002 presidential elections. At the same time, a number of scholars, especially graduate students and younger professors, have begun to investigate the historical roots of this phenomenon in France, critically interrogating traditional notions of French color blindness, French national identity, and the relationship between metropole and overseas empire. This edited volume represents some of the best of this new research, and we hope it will prompt reflection on the nature of French history and of race in general.

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