

Streszczenie popularnonaukowe

Genealogies of peripheral whiteness. Polish identities in the perspective of racialization theories

The issue of whiteness in relation to the Polish context has not been systematically analyzed so far. It is due to the fact that, historically, whiteness has not been a foreground issue in Polish culture, social relations and politics; it has been experienced and discussed rather occasionally and indirectly. This clearly distinguishes Poland from the USA and the societies of Western Europe, which in the past were colonial empires and then, after World War II, thanks to immigration from former colonies, became multicultural ('multiracial'). The idea of the project stems from the observation that the issue of whiteness is more and more frequently articulated in Polish social life today. On the one hand, it is related to the processes of intensified globalization, characteristic for late modernity, which result in an increasingly strong and direct involvement of Polish society in global cultural, political and economic structures. On the other hand, the reason for this is the growing importance of trends, in both Polish and international politics, which refer to nationalist and ethnocentric ideas, postulating the protection of pure cultural identities and reconstruction of former intergroup hierarchies. These rapidly changing circumstances have been an inspiration for addressing the problem of whiteness and indicate the cognitive significance that the results of the project will potentially have.

The project refers to the field of research called *whiteness studies*, which has been devoted to analyzing social, cultural and political mechanisms that have led to the systemic privileging of whiteness, both in Western as well as global contexts. Theories developed in this field assume that whiteness does not reduce to the color of the skin, although it is related to it in various complicated ways. They also show that, while whiteness marks the position of superiority, it is not a monolithic phenomenon with fixed meanings, but is subject to historical change and is modified by factors such as national, class and gender belonging (among others). The project assumes that the character of Polish relations to whiteness is closely linked to the fact of peripheral location of Poland in Europe, which, on the one hand, has an economic and social dimension, on the other hand - symbolic, referring to the place that Poland has occupied in broader cultural structures of Europe or the West. The project thus deploys the concept of *peripheral whiteness* and aims, first, to examine the most important forms that identification with whiteness has taken in Polish culture, second, to show how it has linked and merged with other (social, cultural, political) dimensions of identity. Realization of this objective requires analysing complex processes of *racialization* that have contributed to the construction of various Polish identities, both historical and contemporary. The project focuses on the five spheres of relations that have had a key significance for these identities. These spheres concern: (1) the attitudes towards Jews, (2) the nobility/peasants relations and then the class relations, (3) the attitudes towards non-European others (Africans, Arabs, other non-Western peoples), (4) attitudes towards European centres and the ways in which these centres have perceived Poles, (5) the attitudes towards 'more peripheral' Europeans in which Polish 'more central' character could be emphasised. The theoretical framework of the project is based on the idea of 'genealogical' research proposed by Michel Foucault. The primary objective of the research is elaboration of the original conception of the *genealogies of peripheral whiteness*.