



Growing public attention to violence and discrimination against sub-Saharan Africans in Morocco has recently opened a debate on the issue of “anti-black racism” and its connections to the history of slavery. The parallel between current racism and historical slavery offers a powerful narrative to draw attention to the very difficult situations of many sub-Saharan African migrants in Morocco, as well as to the lived effects of the contemporary racial legacies of slavery. Yet, conflating the two issues in linear and unproblematic ways may not help us to unravel the complexity of the socio-political dynamics underway. This paper seeks to unpack the issue of anti-black racism by examining the diverse ways in which the different social actors (sub-Saharan African migrants, students and activists, as well as Moroccan people and human rights activists) I met in Rabat in 2014 engaged with these debates. The paper suggests that current racism against sub-Saharan Africans cannot be conceptualized simply as a living remnant of the Moroccan history of slavery and its 17th century racialization. On the contrary, it contends that historically rooted anti-black prejudices are deeply entangled with and shaped by current media and political discourses, transnational geopolitics delegating border control to North African states and Morocco’s current position in the international political arena.

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