

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

EVELYN KALLEN *Ethnicity and Human Rights in Canada - A Human Rights Perspective on Race, Ethnicity, Racism, and Systemic Inequality (Third Edition)*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. 2003, vii + 320 p.

This book examines key issues of ethnicity and human rights in the context of principles derived from international human rights interests. It describes how human rights violations, discriminating on the basis of race and ethnicity, create and sustain the minority status of diverse racial and ethnic groups across Canada. Kallen uses case studies to create a typology of rights in relation to various ethnic groups. The book focuses on Canada's three major ethnic constituencies and highlights human rights issues of central concern to each: self-determination of aboriginal nations, anti-racism strategies of racial and ethnic immigrant groups, and the national sovereignty of the Franco-Quebecois.

This book offers a human rights-oriented conceptual framework that is built on the twin foundations of human unity and cultural diversity. It is in the unity of the human species that the biological roots of human rights are grounded. Based on internationally endorsed human rights instruments, like the International Bill of Human Rights and related Covenants, the author posits that all human beings share the same fundamental human rights and freedoms. The most challenging issue the book attempts to tackle is how cultural diversity is conceived and why inequality still plagues ethno-racial minorities in a country that endorses principles of universal human rights.

This publication calls into question the pseudo-biological concept of 'pure race'. It disputes any claim of essentialized meanings, or sealed or closed totality, and suggests that race and ethnicity are socially constructed and contested. Arguing via Fredrik Barth and his followers, Kallen sees ethnicity as a social formation operating through boundary-maintaining mechanisms, and by which individuals and communities negotiate their relations. It is a dual process of self-ascription and ascription by others. In other words, the ethnic boundaries are continuously being redrawn to serve processes and interests that form part of a diverse number of economic and political projects. In this processes, ethnic/ racial groups, as collective actors, could be the perpetrators and resisters. More importantly, this boundary maintaining/ resisting process is embedded in power and domination. Given unequal power relations, a hierarchy of racial/ethnic inequality is sustained and human rights violations are justified.

To explicate different forms of inequality and human rights violations, the book also examines major conceptual foundations of racism- namely ethnocentrism, prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination, and how domination is perpetuated and the vertical ethnic mosaic is created under the notion of ethnic integration and multiculturalism. The readers are also reminded of the emergence of new racism, which has shifted the logic of racial ideology and discrimination from inherent (biological) racial inferiority to naturalized cultural difference and is often expressed in a language of innocence.

More importantly, the centring of human rights principles helps the readers move beyond reification of victimhood. The book establishes a framework by which individual and collective ethnic and racial subjects are no longer merely victims of racism. This framework provides all members of humanity a moral and legal base to assert the rights to identify who they are and actualize what they want to be. To illustrate the evolution of minority rights movements in Canada, the author reviews minority rights claims, put forward in cases of alleged racial/ethnic discrimination, brought before statutory human rights commissions, tribunals and court in Canada. In the concluding chapter, the author outlines suggestions for human rights-oriented changes in law, public policy and practice that could drive Canada towards the goal of ethno-racial justice and equity across the country.

Comparing the changes Kallen has made in the second edition, this third edition is not substantially different from the second edition in its major texts. However, the readers will find it filled with up-to-date case illustrations and research findings. Moreover, the book is re-engineered into a textbook style and notably crafted for teaching purposes. Each chapter has boxed inserts of case examples and reference materials, and critical thinking questions. It also comes with a glossary of key concepts and annotated reference readings and websites.

While the book is not one that I would be drawn to at first glance on the bookshelf, it is a useful publication for students and researchers who are interested in ethnic/racial equality and human rights issues. It provides the reader a snapshot of a great variety of theoretical constructs and social issues that scholars in the area of ethnic relations and human rights advocacy have been debating for over three decades. It is an extremely accessible and informative introduction to a critical and challenging topic.

Rick Sin *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto*