

In Switzerland, over 40% of the population has a migrant background, and migrants constitute the majority of trade union members. Yet addressing racism remains a persistent challenge, as the very notion of race is largely rejected in public discourse. How, then, can racism be confronted in a country that portrays itself as raceless?

This thesis historicizes race and the processes of racialization in the Swiss context, tracing how these have evolved across time and shaped social hierarchies. Building on this historical lens, it explores the antiracist practices and discourses developed by marginalized groups that have organized and resisted, bridging past and present forms of struggle. Combining historical and archival research with ethnographic inquiry, this multidisciplinary and polyphonic project brings to light voices and experiences often silenced in official narratives. At the same time, it opens a reflection on whiteness and its specific articulations, examining how certain migrant communities – especially Italians – underwent a gradual process of integration through its performance. In doing so, the thesis contributes to a broader understanding of the ongoing redefinition of racial capitalism and the forms of differentiation it produces, while inviting renewed reflection on the meaning and practice of solidarity.