



"Ethnically Qualified": Race, Merit, and the Selection of Urban Teachers, 1920 - 1980

Christina Collins

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Why did the New York City school district once have the lowest ratio of minority teachers to minority students of any large urban school system in the country? Using an array of historical sources, this provocative book explores the barriers that African American and Latino candidates faced in attempting to become public school teachers in New York from the turn of the century through the end of the 1970s. Christina Collins argues that no single institution or policy was to blame for the city's low numbers of non-white educators during this period. Instead, she concludes in this deeply researched book that it was the cumulative effect of discriminatory practices across an entire system of teacher training and selection that created New York's unique lack of racial diversity in its teaching force.

Because of its size and diversity, New York represents a particularly valuable case study to learn more about the history of urban teachers in the United States. And, with the current mandate for "qualified teachers" under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, this fascinating historical account will be essential reading as we debate who is qualified to teach in public school classrooms now and in the future.

Christina Collins is a researcher and policy analyst at the United Federation of Teachers and a former post-doctoral fellow at Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

"Tina Collins' *Ethnically Qualified* is a must read. This groundbreaking work fills an important gap in the historical literature, and will serve as an important text in the field of the history of education in the United States."

—**James W. Fraser**, Professor of History and Education at New York University and Senior Vice President for Programs at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation

"Embedding fundamental questions about teacher education, certification, sorting, and recruitment within a deep historical account of political power, ethnic competition, and organizational design, this resonant and riveting volume clarifies institutional racism's means and meanings well beyond the scope of its central subject. *Ethnically Qualified* thus can be read fruitfully as a history of schooling's rules, as an analysis of urban politics and conflict, and as an uncommonly insightful account of often contradictory racial dynamics in American society."

—**Ira Katznelson**, Ruggles Professor of Political Science and History, Columbia University

“In this deeply researched and powerfully argued book, Christina Collins explains why the ratio of minority students to minority teachers in New York City in the 1960s and 1970s was the lowest of any urban school system in America. By tracing the careers of teachers through the myriad institutions of the city’s public education bureaucracy Collins shows how institutional racism, often masquerading as meritocracy, resulted from officially race-neutral processes of teacher recruitment, education, licensing, and placement. This outcome, she makes clear, has national importance because of New York City’s prominence, the diffusion of its practices throughout the nation, and the story’s resonance with issues still unresolved today.”

—**Michael B. Katz**, Walter H. Annenberg Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania

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