

Generous Betrayal: Politics of Culture in the New Europe

Unni Wikan



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All over Western Europe, the lot of many non-Western immigrants is one of marginalization, discrimination, and increasing segregation. In this bold and controversial book, Unni Wikan shows how an excessive respect for "their culture" has been part of the problem. Culture has become a new concept of race, sustaining ethnic identity politics that subvert human rights—especially for women and children. Fearful of being considered racist, state agencies have sacrificed freedom and equality in the name of culture.

Comparing her native Norway to Western Europe and the United States, Wikan focuses on people caught in turmoil, how institutions function, and the ways in which public opinion is shaped and state policies determined. Contradictions arise between policies of respect for minority cultures, welfare, and freedom, but the goal is the same: to create a society committed to both social justice and respect for human rights.

Writing with power and grace, Wikan makes a plea for a renewed moral vitality and human empathy that can pave the way for more effective social policies and create change.

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