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Race, Racism, and Antiracism: UNESCO and the Politics of Presenting Science to the Postwar Public FREE

Michelle Brattain

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IN DECEMBER 1949, WITH THE HOLOCAUST still a raw, immediate memory, an international group of scholars gathered in Paris to author a final authoritative rebuttal to Nazi-style scientific racism. Organized under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the project reflected postwar liberal optimism about the power of internationalism and science itself to prevent human tragedy, as well as a collective sense of remorse. Just thirty years earlier, according to a project director, “Europeans could still regard race prejudice as a phenomenon that only affected areas on the margin of civilization.” The war had been “a sudden and rude awakening.” Like many contemporary social scientists, the project directors believed that Nazism, and racism more generally, had “thrive[d] on scientifically false ideas and ... ignorance.” Education as a remedy for racism was...

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