



# Loud and proud: Passion and politics in the English Defence League (New Ethnographies MUP)

By Hilary Pilkington

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The book uses interviews, informal conversations and extended observation at EDL events to critically reflect on the gap between the movement's public image and activists' own understandings of it. It details how activists construct the EDL, and themselves, as 'not racist, not violent, just no longer silent' *inter alia* through the exclusion of Muslims as a possible object of racism on the grounds that they are a religiously not racially defined group. In contrast activists perceive themselves to be 'second-class citizens', disadvantaged and discriminated by a 'two-tier' justice system that privileges the rights of 'others'. This failure to recognise themselves as a privileged white majority explains why ostensibly intimidating EDL street demonstrations marked by racist chanting and nationalistic flag waving are understood by activists as standing 'loud and proud'; the only way of 'being heard' in a political system governed by a politics of silencing.

This book brings a new perspective because unlike most studies of 'far right' movements, it focuses not on the EDL as an organisation its origins, ideology, strategic repertoire and effectiveness but on the individuals who constitute the movement. Its ethnographic approach challenges stereotypes and allows insight into the emotional as well as political dimension of activism. At the same time, the book recognises and discusses the complex political and ethical issues of conducting close-up social research with 'distasteful' groups.

The book will be of value to those researching or studying in the disciplines of Sociology, Political Science and Anthropology as well as those with an interest in contemporary political issues and the populist and radical right.

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#### **Review**

'These voices of English nationalism make for difficult listening. The great strength of Hilary Pilkington's unflinching ethnography is her capacity to confound and challenge our political preconceptions and makes us think harder. This is an important, difficult and brave book.' Les Back, Professor of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London 'Pilkington offers fresh and crucial insights into the politics of fear. Her unflinchingly honest depiction of the EDL breaks apart stereotypes of rightist activists as simply dupes, thugs, and racists and makes us confront the complexities of anti-Islamist/anti-Muslim fervor. This terrific, compelling book is a must-read for scholars and readers concerned about the global rise of populist movements on the right.'

Kathleen Blee, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research Distinguished Professor of Sociology Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences -- .

#### **About the Author**

Hilary Pilkington is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester

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