



Black Rednecks and White Liberals

Thomas Sowell

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This book presents the kind of eye-opening insights into the history and culture of race for which Sowell has become famous. As late as the 1940s and 1950s, he argues, poor Southern rednecks were regarded by Northern employers and law enforcement officials as lazy, lawless, and sexually immoral. This pattern was repeated by blacks with whom they shared a subculture in the South. Over the last half century poor whites and most blacks have moved up in class and affluence, but the ghetto remains filled with black rednecks. Their attempt to escape, Sowell shows, is hampered by their white liberal friends who turn dysfunctional black redneck culture into a sacrosanct symbol of racial identity. In addition to Black Rednecks and White Liberals, the book takes on subjects ranging from Are Jews Generic? to The Real History of Slavery.

Black Rednecks and White Liberals Details

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From Reader Review Black Rednecks and White Liberals for online ebook

Seth says

Fantastic approach to race and discrimination. I enjoyed his research about the roots of "redneck culture" originating in Scotland and other fringe areas of the Brittish Empire.

I thought the views on "middle-men minorities" and "segregated schools" were especially insightful. He approaches every topic with a balanced yet incisive perspective.

For example, he forgives Washington's slave ownership. He reminds us that men of fortune during the colonial period viewed their family fortunes as something to preserve and to be passed down to others. Washington viewed his role as a steward and not as an owner of his property (implying that he wasn't at liberty to free his slaves because they were not his to free but his entire family's). Washington freed his slaves in his will because there were no heirs to his estate, thus, releasing Washington from the responsibility of preserving it. Washington thoroughly explained in the will how his slaves would be supported by the estate. Some of his slaves were supported for decades after Washington's death.

He makes a similar defense for Jefferson. He dismisses any historical perspective that pretends the "west" is the originator of evils such as slavery, violence, and conquest. He compares the "west's" treatment of slaves to the "east's" and finds middle eastern and Asian countries less civil and more barbaric in regards to slavery, racism, and conquests. He persuasively argues that had it not been for the West's views of freedom and moral objections to slavery then the rest of the world would never have seen a problem with it. The uniqueness of the West is in the fact that they globally abolished it even when the rest of the world resisted.

Sowell is smart, hard hitting, honest, and freshly independent. His approach to black school's and western slavery will fascinate you. His essays on German culture are especially rewarding. The fact that he is black gives him a certain level of freedom in his criticism of black culture and liberal correctness that makes this book one of a kind.

Void Ion iXaarii says

I tend to follow experts in their fields... which often doesn't translate to other fields, as many people successful in one field turn out to be not that knowledgeable or skilled in another. Thomas Sowell is, for me, one of the few exceptions i know of. I Started reading his books because of his economics knowledge but i can so relate to his way of viewing the world that I can't stop following his books even when they're not directly in the field. Why? Because unlike many others he doesn't take things for granted, and instead applies solid research to presuppositions which many others take for granted.

This book hasn't only opened my eyes to many historical truths, facts about about the actions and structures of whole societies but even more valuably about the HUGE impacts that certain ways of thinking have across humanity, often regardless of place, time, biological or social backgrounds.

The book feels huge as it goes through several apparently independent sections jumping across fields like cultural European very white roots of some ghetto behaviors, the historic costs of violent machismo, the universal hate towards middleman minorities, analysis weather or not stigmas associated with certain peoples like the Germans are in fact reasonable and so on, the biggest and most costly totally surprising shift in

thinking of humanity that i never knew of in terms of slaves...

More than once i've wondered what the unifying theme of the book might be... hard to say, but for me, personally, it is being blown away by just how huge an impact ways of thinking/behavior (with an accent on the latter, not very into intellectuals) cross any and all borders of space and time, for bad and for good.

Jeanette says

It's beyond my ability to relate to the review readers the hefty substance of this book.

The research and the source material alone are treasures, but the encapsulation of these subject (chapter headings) all combined and with threads in the dozens that entwine each other! Beyond my ability to sufficiently describe. How different cultures have formed over centuries and movements and have kept their original cultures in stronger flavors than the original populations that stayed "put". That alone was some of the most intriguing proofs of empirical data I've read in twenty years.

It's just exceptional in the fact data alone- but the mix of cause and effect and his observations of results long term- not only the most clear intelligence but the least bias of direction in these fields of multi-cultural mix effects and progressions. Quite beyond the prediction, into the data of "after".

But as fabulous as this book was in the clear "eyes" and historical context of the fact/data history and the interpreted to "causes" history- the last chapter was the one that I consider priceless. Especially within the time frame in which it was written. Because he's a true prophet.

"History Versus Visions" is the best prose length I've ever read upon history and the recording of the past itself. And how when we revise it and "take sides" it is no longer history. Not because of objectivity but primarily for the faults of omission. And the implications of fault, blame or honest differences- his explanations are correct, masterful. Please read this chapter if nothing else.

How could he have had a thick enough skin to have written all of these studies and conclusions when he did? What a intellect. My summation of about 1/2 of the conclusions he has defined here! Not an explanation, but just my reaction of awe. Honesty coupled with immense strength, courage and a logic of analysis that is genius perfection.

The chapters upon the "Real History of Slavery", "Are Jews Generic", and "Germans and History" were, for my reading them, entire books within themselves. And they took that long to read too.

With that second, I have always noted the reactions to "middle men" (bankers, tax collectors, shop keepers, merchants) in present day cultures, myself. Because most, if not all, of my ancestors were "middle men" and also in great numbers migrant over generations by the fact.

Lastly, when I read some of these reviews for this book now after I have read it? Amazing that any reader could begin to assume that Thomas Sowell has reached conclusions before assembling the factors towards it. All of his thought processes are exactly the opposite.

So many common day Western world "assumptions" upon culture and society "help" are absolutely just that, assumptions. Growth in educational aptitudes and innovative completions, better living conditions over generations of health/art/literature/longevity and much else that results in "better" needs to be very much

reevaluated in this century, IMHO, in that criteria light.

Leslie Wiewel says

Fascinating review of historical race data with bold, honest evaluation from an astounding mind

Tamila says

Steven Percifield says

A few years after reading "A conflict of Visions" by Sowell a friend of mine (who is African-American) recommended this book to me. We had been debating our individual impressions of racial relationships between black and white friends. I had made the comment that there were "archetypal motifs" common to persons on both sides of the color line.

Although my friend agreed with me "...on average," he suggested that I read this book as it would give me a new perspective of a black intellectual's opinions on the entire subject of race relations.

I did.

It did.

Vannessa Anderson says

It's not often that a reader opens a work of non-fiction and the words written on the first page has such an

impact that it smacks the reader so hard the reader has to rub his/her cheek to soothe the blow.

This is the impact I felt with Black Rednecks and White Liberals. The first page drew me in and made it a challenge not to call work and say I wouldn't be in because I didn't want to put the book down.

What I liked about Black Rednecks and White Liberals is that it reinforced what I already knew and set me straight on things I thought I knew. For those who are not bogged down in denial or racism, they will have to accept the information, digest, it, adopt it and bring themselves out of ignorance.

The words written therein quash the stereotype. Readers will learn where his/her prejudices and bias originated. The author backs up his research by listing credible references. The material contained therein is invaluable.

Black Rednecks and White Liberals should be required reading at the high school level then again at the college level.

If you read non-fiction to learn, then you will not want to pass up reading Black Rednecks and White Liberals.

Individuals who see the glass half-empty, or who sees the world through rose-tinted lens might want to pass up Black Rednecks and White Liberals because they will, most likely miss the point the author conveyed.

Kevin Heldt says

Okay, this guy is a stud. I love the rare academic who will actually shoot straight with you. This was a collection of 6 refreshingly incisive essays that systematically debunked many of the pet beliefs and agendas of today's intelligentsia.

Douglas Wilson says

Dense. Thorough. Balanced. Eye-opening. Magnificent.

Andy says

Update, 2018: I used to give blahblah like this the benefit of the doubt as a “conversation starter” but given the obvious and real current dangers of BS, I’m lowering the rating to 1*. Please see comment stream for additional details.

This can be a good conversation starter, but it has flaws.

One of the main excuses Sowell brings up over and over for why whites in the South wouldn't end slavery is that they were afraid of a race war because of the rebellion on Santo Domingo (Haiti). What he never clarifies is that those slaves had been liberated previously by the republic founded in the French Revolution and were then re-enslaved by Napoleon a few years later. That's a rather important detail . (A captivating recent book about this is The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo). The relevant part of the story for the white Americans' fear of race war is what happened after the initial emancipation. Did the newly freed blacks kill the whites? No. So the story of Santo Domingo is actually not a legitimate excuse for fear of race war, and could be used more accurately to make the opposite point!

The biggest disappointment is a lack of evidence-based recommendations for what will work here and now. Sowell makes a really big deal about evidence, so that is a fair expectation. He praises KIPP schools, but KIPP so far has failed in the long-term. He doesn't talk at all about the experience of the schools in Raleigh, North Carolina, which as far as I know is the one example of an entire American metropolitan area with children succeeding: see Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh . I would have liked much more about that and other programs that actually work to move from a culture of failure to a culture of success.

One of the main points of the book is that black people in America mainly jumped in prosperity before the Civil Rights Act, not after, and the implication of that is that government programs don't help. But there were many factors involved. In the years from 1945 to 1965, middle-class prosperity overall in America jumped a lot, much of that on the strength of government policies designed to increase middle class prosperity. Did the prosperity of black people jump less, the same, or more than that of other people during this time? That, for starters, would be very important to know for the argument.

The book goes off on a tangent about German anti-semitism. Sowell quotes Hitler as saying that if Jews didn't exist, he would have had to invent them. I can't find a source verifying where Hitler said this. It seems hard to believe. I think the actual quote is from Sartre's "Reflections on the Jewish Question" where he writes that If the Jew did not exist, the anti-semit would invent him. This is a political opinion book, not serious history, but then it is annoying how much Sowell trumpets his own supposed thoroughness and objectivity.

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Philip Maher says

The book is a perfect example of confirmation bias, as the author starts with a conclusion and gives cherry-picked facts to support it. Indeed, what he calls facts are actual facts, but one should think critically of them. If I formulate a hypothesis that the sun revolves around the earth then I can state the supportive observation that the sun moves across in the sky, certainly a fact. We obviously know that my original hypothesis is

wrong but I use this example because this book is littered with similar ones. As a scientist, this flawed method of analysis is my biggest pet peeve in people. It tends to lead to two fallacies that are used in this book: using anecdotes as evidence and using facts as knowledge.

The notion that a culture was transplanted from Scotland to blacks in the American south had promise but fell flat because of the above. Consequently, be careful, because the author is excellent at convincing people that he employs an unbiased approach to his inquiry. It's subtle to see his trickery masquerading as objectivity but it's there. When you read the book I recommend that one pays attention to the vector employed by the author: conclusion (although he would claim hypothesis) to facts rather than facts to conclusion. You can observe in other reviews people who fell for his masterfully subtle sleight of hand with lots of back slapping and claims that the book reinforced what they already knew.

Tammy McNeil says

WOW! This book was a complete eye-opener and changed how I viewed the history of slavery and blacks in America. As a white person, I'm shocked, appalled and relieved at the same time.

What my intuition told me was wrong about massive social programs was vocalized and backed up by facts for me with this book. A lot of what I thought about slavery and oppression was turned on its head. I was appalled that I was never taught ANY of this in school, and I have extensive college education. What I realized, was that in order to find out the facts, you must not rely on what you are spoon-fed by formal educators. You must go out and research and think critically.

This book made me realize how much I still have to learn and when I read books like that, I'm inspired. This is a book that should be in college classrooms and it is one that will stay in my library and in my head. It will be a book I come back to for reference.

Bob Anderson says

This book is a collection of a few long essays from Sowell, an economist of some fame, and of special value to conservatives because he is an African-American conservative intellectual. I'll be discussing only the first, titular, essay in this book, because it's the one I was most interested in. I think it's fair to judge a book on its most advertised section, don't you? Sowell's thesis here is that nearly all of serious problems facing black Americans today come from a culture they shared during slavery with white Southerners which those white people cast aside and those black people spread these last decades, and from the condescension of white liberals (by which he means programs such as welfare in its various forms and affirmative action). He claims that this culture, a violent "cracker" culture of machismo from England's borderlands in pre-colonial times that was transplanted by a few immigrants to the American South, is the explainer of current economic disadvantage much more so than racism or prejudice, and that black people will have to voluntarily discard it and not receive welfare in order to prosper.

However much this theory sounds like the academic equivalent of blaming rap music and sagging pants for inner-city violence, such easy mockery doesn't actually disprove his claims. There is either significant evidence against or no real evidence for the two parts of his argument, though: there is no reason to suggest that this "cracker" culture spread from Renaissance-era Britain to modern black people, and there is evidence

that such a culture isn't the explainer of modern racial economic inequality. To support his theory that ruffians from England's hinterlands are the primary cultural influences on modern black people, he cites a book called *Cracker Culture* published in the 1980s by a fringe scholar named Grady McWhiney. This book was not widely accepted, to say the least, not least because of the problems with its theory: Celtic immigrants of the type he talks about were influential in both the North and the South instead of just the latter, and genteel Englishmen were certainly not unrepresented in the Southern culture. And none of this explanation of antebellum North/South differences, if true, can serve to replace an actual cultural history of black people in America from the 1800s to today with the convenient explanation Sowell needs for his thesis.

As to the second part of Sowell's argument, that for black people in America to prosper they must receive no government help, forsake their violent culture, and copy the successful white people around them, it doesn't hold up. Certainly violence in black communities is a problem and unwanted, but the arrow of cause and effect doesn't match Sowell's model: violence doesn't create and perpetuate poverty, but poverty can create and perpetuate violence. Some simple points: the antebellum South was very prosperous despite having one of the most insanely violent systems on the planet in place (it was slavery, not "cracker culture"), whereas the correlation between long-poor populations and high rates of violence is omnipresent in the world. Populations don't start off rich, begin tolerating violence and so become poor. Furthermore, cutting off black children from food stamps, housing assistance and public schools would in absolutely no way produce a new generation more likely to succeed because they were "hungrier"; you'd see a lot more homeless children of billionaires if this were a logic designed for use on anyone other than poor minorities. And emulation of whites is not a surefire way to the top either; the quality Sowell would most like to see is a strong work ethic, and many studies that research this exact phenomenon show that if anything, black people work harder than white people. Still not sweeping economic justice. Sowell's arguments have many holes like these, based on insufficient evidence or wishful thinking, or even counter-factual claims about reality. Sowell is correct when he states that race is not a cause of this inequality; race is not, in fact, a determiner of skill, motivation, etc. But he is wrong to suggest that racism isn't. There is a wealth of evidence that points at the great importance of racism in the history of America, and none that points away. Read this book only with these grains of salt in mind.

Two stars for being interestingly written even if I disagree with nearly every word on some pages.

Don Fox says

Wow, what an achievement. Though a more accurate title might have been "Essays in Ethnology", "Black Rednecks and White Liberals" consists of six amazing essays, which collectively constitute the best book I've ever read. Every page presents startling, important, and little known facts that are apparently little known because they contradict the prevailing narrative about race and ethnicity. Did you know, for example, that:

* "...labor force participation rates were higher among non-whites than among whites in 1920 and 1930"?

* Hatred of the Jews is but one example of almost universal hatred of "middleman minorities", other examples of which include the Ibos in Nigeria, the Chinese throughout Southeast Asia, the Armenians in Turkey, the Lebanese in Africa, the Japanese in Peru, and the Indians in Burma?

* "At least a million Europeans were enslaved by North African pirates alone from 1500 to 1800, and some European slaves were still being sold on the auction block in Egypt, years after the Emancipation Proclamation freed blacks in the United States"?

* Slavery has been universal in human history, such that we are all almost inescapably the descendants of slaves and slave-owners alike?

* "While slavery was common to all civilizations, as well as to peoples considered uncivilized, only one civilization developed a moral revulsion against it, very late in its history — Western civilization"?

* "Europeans became the destroyers of slavery around the world, over the bitter opposition of Africans, Arabs, Asians, and others"?

* Slavery was destroyed as an institution only because "Western civilization had the power to prevail against all other civilizations" at that point in time?

I could give literally hundreds more examples. And Dr. Sowell marshals all his facts (supported by more than 60 pages of notes) into thoroughly compelling arguments rendered in exceptionally clean prose. This book should be required reading in every high school in America. Superb.
