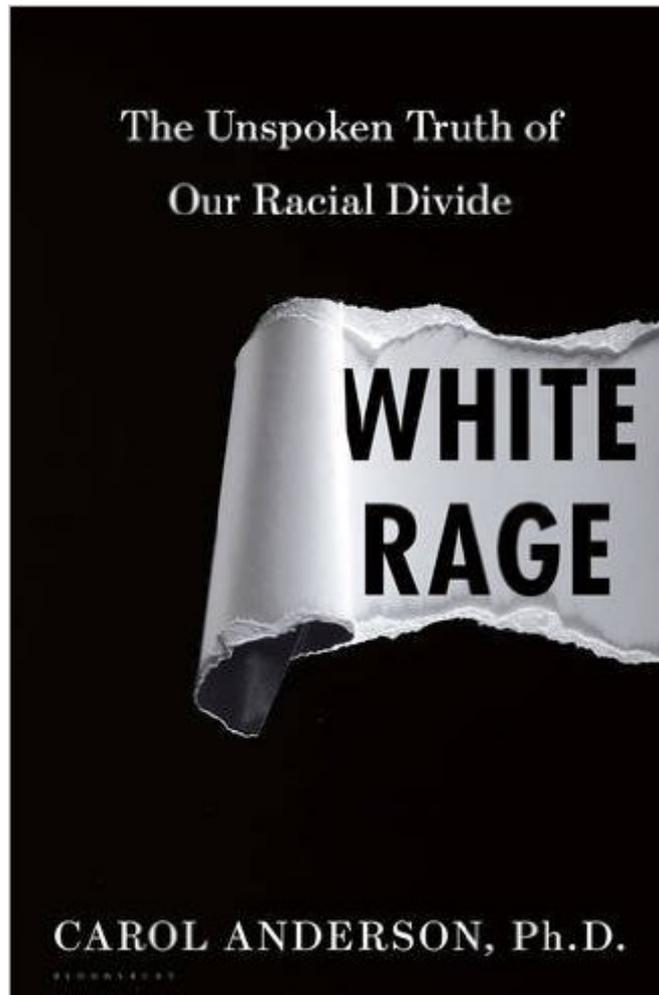


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White Rage: The Unspoken Truth Of Our Racial Divide



Synopsis

As Ferguson, Missouri, erupted in August 2014, and media commentators across the ideological spectrum referred to the angry response of African Americans as "black rage," historian Carol Anderson wrote a remarkable op-ed in the *Washington Post* showing that this was, instead, "white rage at work. With so much attention on the flames," she writes, "everyone had ignored the kindling." Since 1865 and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, every time African Americans have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled a deliberate and relentless rollback of their gains. The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction was greeted with the Black Codes and Jim Crow; the Supreme Court's landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South while taxpayer dollars financed segregated white private schools; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 triggered a coded but powerful response, the so-called Southern Strategy and the War on Drugs that disenfranchised millions of African Americans while propelling presidents Nixon and Reagan into the White House. Carefully linking these and other historical flashpoints when social progress for African Americans was countered by deliberate and cleverly crafted opposition, Anderson pulls back the veil that has long covered actions made in the name of protecting democracy, fiscal responsibility, or protection against fraud, rendering visible the long lineage of white rage. Compelling and dramatic in the unimpeachable history it relates, *White Rage* will add an important new dimension to the national conversation about race in America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“White Rage” is a needed and timely book largely based on secondary literature and internet research with uneven results. It grew out of a 2014 Washington Post op-ed article Professor Carol Anderson of the Emory History Department wrote in response to the Ferguson, Missouri protests but also has root in her revulsion for the racially motivated attacks on the character and policies of President Obama. The title is something of a misnomer “White Fear” fits better as she portrays the cultivation and exploitation of white fear for political and economic ends. I accept her central argument that Black economic and political advances since the Civil War have prompted systematic politically motivated backlash. I would, however, characterize this as a tactic that while usually racially motivated also has an economic and class division dimension that is under developed in this short polemic. Edward Baptist’s “The Half has Never Been Told” is better on the history and Ta-Nehi Coates on the contemporary nexus of racism and economic discrimination. Professor Anderson’s best chapters are on the Great Migration and resistance to the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown decision repudiating the legal doctrine of separate but equal segregation. “Derailing the Great Migration” draws on Isabel Wilkerson’s “The Warmth of Other Suns” and Kevin Boyle’s “Ark of Justice” to portray first the failed Southern effort from World War I thru the 1920s to halt Southern African Americans fleeing savage repression and economic destitution. Using Detroit and Chicago as examples she pivots to enforced housing segregation. This is a persistent problem, my Bethesda, Maryland neighborhood was informally red-lined into the 1990s.

In clinical academic fashion, this author tells the story of “the America that white racist rage has built.” It is an un-pretty cross-generational picture, but a story that finally had to be told: a narrative that goes down the palette hard because the truth of every word will scratch your throat. The facts of the author’s truths are so contrary to the force-fed conventional wisdom about race in America that we devour daily, that the book is difficult to believe? But clearly every well-documented ugly word is true. It is the story of a sordid world of cowardly people who throughout American history, both North and South, have seen themselves as exceptional, but have only managed to live on moral credit, backed up by the one-drop law of skin color, and have used them both to squander all of our democratic ideals on the altar of white supremacy. They have misused the very language of freedom, justice and the US constitution (all of which they profess to so cherish), as mere rhetorical fodder and top cover to normalize and then to cover up crimes that (to quote Frederick Douglass)

"would discuss a nation of savages."The backside of the white American mind, filled with cross-generational racist rage, is on full display here. It is filled with the brutality of slavery, lynching, pogroms and ethnic cleansing of African Americans, and the extermination of native Americans, reversals of laws intended to make America a more perfect Union, white flight from the cities, fomenting of the drug war to increase incarceration of blacks, and repeated defiance of the laws of the land enacted to foster racial harmony and equality.

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