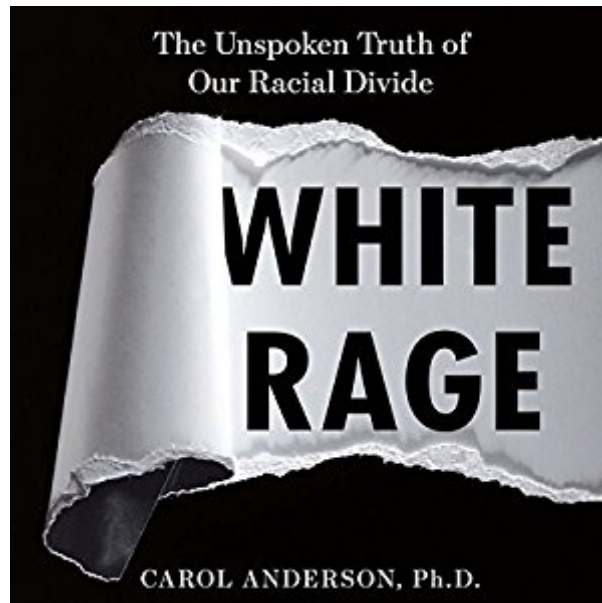


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# White Rage: The Unspoken Truth Of Our Racial Divide



## 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 wrote, '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

This is a necessary complement to the recent spate of books that ask readers to empathize with white feelings of poverty and disenfranchisement (like *Hillbilly Elegy* and *Strangers in Their Own Land*). The research is thorough, the writing is direct and rather dispassionate as it builds a devastating picture of how white citizens, neighbors, propagandists, and legislators have aimed unrelenting violence and intimidation against black communities. The book indicts both northern and southern states, which complicates the grade-school stereotype of a racist white South and an innocent, non-racist white North. It shows how dedicated White northern communities were/are to segregating housing and education. As a Northern-identified white person I found that sobering - to think about how the suburban towns and schools I grew up with were also the result of racist agendas and values. It also reveals a lot about complex systems of local/state-level policy and governance work, which could be valuable for activists who want to use those systems to expand and protect human rights.

“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 oped 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-Nehisi 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.

“Burning Brown to the Ground” examines the successful 1950s-60s Southern Massive Resistance campaign to thwart the school integration. I attended a totally segregated Fairfax County, Virginia public elementary school from 1957-62. Subsequent chapters outline the Nixon-Reagan era backlash against the Lyndon Johnson era Great Society programs and the contemporary concerted Republican effort to suppress voting in response to President Obama’s 2008 and 2012 elections. Professor Anderson’s treatment of the Nineteenth Century is weaker. Her Lincoln portrait sets up a strawman racist whose growth seems to stop in early 1862. She argues that Lincoln rejected extending the franchise to Black voters which is wrong. By the end of the Civil War Lincoln had publicly endorsed limited franchise for Black veterans and a literacy test for non-veterans. This was imperfect but radical for 1865 and may have triggered Lincoln’s murder. Booth heard Lincoln lay out this proposal, told a compatriot it meant Black equality and vowed to “put him over.” We can’t know what Lincoln would have done in the face of persistent resistance to emancipation and Reconstruction but I believe it would have resembled the Civil Rights measures the Republican Congress passed. Conversely, Anderson’s discussion of Andrew Johnson is much of it based on a short biography Annette Gordon-Reed wrote a few years back which is very good. The blame Anderson ascribes to the Supreme Court for Reconstruction’s failure is simplistic. It does not distinguish between the cautious and unimaginative Waite Court (1874-88) and the hostile Fuller Court (1888-1910) which repudiated every opinion the Waite Court issued that could “with vigorous DOJ prosecution” have protected at least federal voting rights. It lets the Court serve as a scapegoat for increasing Northern voter resistance to vigorous Army and DOJ suppression of terrorism. She never mentions the financial crash of 1873 and ensuing loss of the House which hamstrung Grant. Anderson also neglected the 1890 failure of a Republican Senate majority to pass voting rights enforcement legislation the House crafted to build on Waite Court Fifteenth Amendment opinions. The Senate leadership traded election safeguards to secure tariff reform. That is the point the Republican Party abandoned Black Americans. Examining Ferguson Professor Anderson missed an opportunity to deliver a strong message on the impact of raising revenue to fund police thru fines, bench warrants and jailing people for non payment of abuses present in Ferguson. They are far too common in poor and predominantly minority communities. They undercut employment opportunities and foster a climate of hopeless frustration. Similarly the book suffered from not discussing the scandal that

asset forfeiture has become, an issue that is getting serious attention from Attorney General Lynch and the DOJ. I found some of the sourcing dubious, especially for asserting that the Reagan Administration knowingly sought and used crack cocaine money to fund the Contras. That rests on discredited conspiracy theories. It hurts an otherwise strong argument made on the disproportionate sentences legislated for cocaine and crack cocaine offenses and the decision to treat drug addiction in purely criminal terms. There is no bibliography but interested readers should consult the extensive footnotes which are a roadmap for those interested in exploring topics in greater depth.

Truly inspiring book by a truly inspiring person.

Thank you.

This is a must read for those who would understand the history of Race relations in America.

A necessary book for both academics and non-academics alike, *White Rage* is well-organized, thoroughly researched, and accessible to a large range of readers. Rather than simply accepting the tired phrase "black rage," which reflects a nation's color-blind disregard for the etiology of our current racial divide, Dr. Anderson reveals the true motivation for much of the legal, cultural, and even physical (such as murder) behaviors which have been exhibited. Refusing to accept the scapegoating which underpins much of these decisions, she labels it exactly what it was and is: far-reaching, aggressive, and often virulent attempts to subordinate one group of people such that the other can maintain dominance. As she points out, this rage is in response to African American attempts to be equal, successful, and simply to have the same opportunities; sadly, the many egregious attempts to prevent this reflect continued attempts to simply maintain the status quo. Dr. Anderson's section on Neshoba and Ronald Reagan's speech--packed to the brim with dog whistle references--which even in its choice of venue reflects that administration's agenda, as well as the section on the war on drugs which follows are excellent: clearly written and successful in their exposition of the roots of this rage. Her sections on the multitude of efforts--especially at higher levels in the legal world/Supreme Court--to turn back hard-won Civil Rights and educational opportunities are both cogent and readily accessible to both academics and lay people. By showing the many ways in which attempts have been made to hold back African Americans, Dr. Anderson also underlines the importance of awareness, thereby dispelling the notion that a color-blind approach to racism--a "just get over it (slavery)" attitude--is acceptable. I also applaud her

willingness to broach the topic of others who are disenfranchised, which include Native Americans, Latinos/Latinas, Asians, Iraqis, and Afghanis, as it opens the arena to discussion about other people of color in the US. As she imagines in the brief concluding chapter, what if all of this anger, rage, and ultimately many resources were devoted to something more positive than maintaining one group's dominance? Spot-on book, necessary reading for all. It's hard to imagine someone of any "race" or ethnicity who would not benefit from reading this one.

Excellent quality, price

It's history

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