[My personal best of]

BLACK REDNECKS AND WHITE LIBERALS

by Thomas Sowell

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Black Rednecks and White Liberals

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. . . In the early nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville contrasted white Southerners with white Northerners in his classic Democracy in America and Frederick Law Olmsted did the same later in his books about his travels through the antebellum South, notably Cotton Kingdom. De Tocqueville set a pattern when he concluded that "almost all the differences which may be noticed between the Americans in the Southern and in the Northern states have originated in slavery."

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 2-3). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

REDNECK CULTURE

Emigration from Britain, like other migrations around the world, was not random in either its origins or its destinations. Most of the Britons who migrated to colonial Massachusetts, for example, came from within a 60-mile radius of the town of Haverhill in East Anglia. The Virginia aristocracy came from different localities in southern and western England. Most of the common white people of the South came from the northern borderlands of England—for centuries a no-man's land between Scotland and England—as well as from the Scottish highlands and from Ulster County, Ireland. All these fringe areas were turbulent, if not lawless, regions, where none of the contending forces was able to establish full control and create a stable order. Whether called a "Celtic fringe" or "north Britons," these were people from outside the cultural heartland of England, as their behavior on both sides of the Atlantic showed. Before the era of modern transportation and communication, sharp regional differences were both common and persistent.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 3-4). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

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Scotland in particular progressed enormously in the eighteenth century. The level from which it began may be indicated by the fact that a visitor to late eighteenth-century Edinburgh found it noteworthy that its residents no longer threw sewage from their chamber pots out their windows into the street—something that passersby had long had to be alert for, to avoid being splattered. Such crude and unsanitary living had long been characteristic of earlier times, when rural Scots lived in the same primitive shelters with their animals, and vermin abounded. A similar lack of concern with cleanliness was found among others in the borderlands of Britain—and among their descendants on the other side of the Atlantic in the antebellum South. For example, a nineteenth-century politician "built up a political machine in the poor white districts of Mississippi" by such practices as this:

He did not resort to any conventional tactics of kissing dirty babies, but he pleased mothers and fathers in log cabins by taking their children upon his lap and searching for red bugs, lice, and other vermin.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 4). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The cultural values and social patterns prevalent among Southern whites included an aversion to work, proneness to violence, neglect of education, sexual promiscuity, improvidence, drunkenness, lack of entrepreneurship, reckless searches for excitement, lively music and dance, and a style of religious oratory marked by strident rhetoric, unbridled emotions, and flamboyant imagery. This oratorical style carried over into the political oratory of the region in both the Jim Crow era and the civil rights era, and has continued on into our own times among black politicians, preachers, and activists. Touchy pride, vanity, and boastful self-dramatization were also part of this redneck culture among people from regions of Britain "where the civilization was the least developed." "They boast and lack self-restraint,"

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 6). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Pride and Violence

Centuries before "black pride" became a fashionable phrase, there was cracker pride—and it was very much the same kind of pride. It was not pride in any particular achievement or set of behavioral standards or moral principles adhered to. It was instead a touchiness about anything that might be even remotely construed as a personal slight, much less an insult, combined with a willingness to erupt into violence over it. New Englanders were baffled about this kind of pride among crackers. Observing such people, the Yankees "could not understand what they had to feel proud about." However, this kind of pride is perhaps best illustrated by an episode reported in Professor Machinery's *Cracker Culture*:

> When an Englishman, tired of waiting for a Southerner to start working on a house he had contracted to build, hired another man to do the job, the enraged Southerner, who considered himself dishonored, vowed:"to-morrow morn, I will come with men, and twenty rifles, and I will have your life, or you shall have mine."

In the vernacular of our later times, he had been "dissed"—and he was not going to stand for it, regardless of the consequences for himself or others. The history of the antebellum South is full of episodes showing the same pattern, whether expressed in the highly formalized duels of the aristocracy or in the no-holds-barred style of fighting called "rough and tumble" among the common folk, a style that included biting off ears and gouging out eyes. It was not simply that particular isolated individuals did such things; *social approval* was given to these practices, as illustrated by this episode in the antebellum South:

> A crowd gathered and arranged itself in an impromptu ring. The contestants were asked if they wished to "fight fair" or "rough and tumble." When they chose "rough and tumble," a roar of approval rose from the multitude.

This particular fight ended with the loser's nose bitten off, his ears torn off, and both his eyes gouged out, after which the "victor, himself maimed and bleeding, was 'chaired round the grounds,' to the cheers of the crowd." This "rough and tumble" style of fighting was also popular in the southern highlands of Scotland, where grabbing an opponent's testicles and attempting to castrate him by hand was also an accepted practice. Scottish highlanders were, in centuries past, part of the "Celtic fringe" or "north Britons," outside the orbit of English culture, not only as it existed in England but also in the Scottish lowlands.

The highlanders lagged far behind the lowlanders in education and economic progress, as well as in the speaking of the English language, for Gaelic was still widely spoken by highlanders in the nineteenth century, not only in Scotland itself but also in North Carolina and in Australia, where immigrants from the Scottish highlands were unable to communicate with English-speaking people, including lowland Scots who had also immigrated. In the Hebrides Islands off Scotland, Gaelic had still not completely died out in the middle of the twentieth century.

What is important in the pride and violence patterns among rednecks and crackers was not that particular people did particular things at particular times and places. Nor is it necessary to attempt to quantify such behavior. What is crucial is that violence growing out of such pride had *social approval*. As Professor McWhiney pointed out:

> Men often killed and went free in the South just as in earlier times they had in Ireland and Scotland. As one observer in the South noted, enemies would meet, exchange insults, and one would shoot the other down, professing that he had acted in self-defense because he believed the victim was armed. When such a story was told in court," in a community where it is not a strange thing for men to carry about their persons deadly weapons, [each member of the jury] feels that he would have done the same thing under similar circumstances so that in condemning him they would but condemn themselves."

"The actions of southern courts often amazed outsiders," Professor McWhiney said. But what may be even more revealing of widespread attitudes were the cases that never even went to trial. As another study of white Southerners put it:

> To many rural southerners, rather than a set of legal statutes, justice remained a matter of societal norms allowing for respect of property rights, individual honor, and a maximum of personal independence. Any violation of this pattern amounted to a breach of justice requiring a specific response from the injured party. Upon learning that a youthful neighbor had approached his wife in an overly friendly manner, Robert Leard of Tangipahoa, Louisiana, promptly tracked the young man down and killed him. Under the piney-woods code of justice, anything less would have invited shame and ridicule upon the Leard family.

"Intensity of personal pride" was connected by Olmsted with the "fiend-like street fights of the South." He mentioned an episode of public murder with impunity:

> A gentleman of veracity, now living in the South, told me that among his friends he had once numbered two young men, who were themselves intimate friends, till one of them, taking offence at some foolish words uttered by the other, challenges him. A large crowd assembled to see the duel, which took place on a piece of

prairie ground. The combatants came armed with rifles, and at the first interchange of shots, the challenged man fell disabled by a ball in the thigh. The other, throwing down his rifle, walked toward him, and kneeling by his side, drew a bowie knife, and deliberately butchered him. The crowd of bystanders not only permitted this, but the execrable assassin still lives in the community, has since married, and, as far as my informant could judge, his social position has been rather advanced then otherwise, from thus dealing with his enemy.

Again, what is important here is not the isolated incident itself but the set of social attitudes which allowed such incidents to take place publicly with impunity, the killer knowing in advance that what he was doing had community approval. Moreover, such attitudes went back for centuries, on both sides of the Atlantic, at least among the particular people concerned.

During the era when dueling became a pattern among upper-class Americans—between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War—it was particularly prevalent in the South. As a social history of the United States noted:"Of Southern statesmen who rose to prominence after 1790, hardly one can be mentioned who was not involved in a duel."37 Editors of Southern newspapers became involved in duels so often that cartoonists depicted them with a pen in one hand and a dueling pistol in the other.38 Most duels arose not over substantive issues but over words considered insulting. 39 At lower social levels, Southern feuds such as that between the Hatfields and the McCoys—which began in a dispute over a pig and ultimately claimed more than 20 lives—became legendary.

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In colonial America, the people of the English borderlands and of the "Celtic fringe" were seen by contemporaries as culturally quite distinct, and were socially unwelcome. Mob action prevented a shipload of Ulster Scots from landing in Boston in 171942 and the Quaker leaders of eastern Pennsylvania encouraged Ulster Scots to settle out in western Pennsylvania, where they acted as a buffer to the Indians, as well as being a constant source of friction and conflict with the Indians. It was not just in the North that crackers and rednecks were considered to be undesirables. Southern plantation owners with poor whites living on adjoining land would often offer to buy their land for more than it was worth, in order to be rid of such neighbors.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 7-11). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Even where there was no conflict or hostility involved, Southerners often showed a reckless disregard for human life, including their own. For example, the racing of steamboats that happened to encounter each other on the rivers of the South often ended with exploding boilers, especially when the excited competition led to the tying down of safety valves, in order to build up more pressure to generate more speed. An impromptu race between steamboats that encountered each other on the Mississippi illustrates the pattern:

On board one boat "was an old lady, who, having bought a winter stock of bacon, pork, &c., was returning to her home on the banks of the Mississippi. Fun lovers on board both boats insisted upon a race; cheers and drawn pistols obliged the captains to cooperate. As the boats struggled to outdistance each other, excited passengers demanded more speed. Despite every effort, the boats raced evenly until the old lady directed her slaves to throw all her casks of bacon into the boilers. Her boat then moved ahead of the other vessel, which suddenly exploded: "clouds of splinters and human limbs darken[ed] the sky." On the undamaged boat passengers shouted their victory. But above their cheers could "be heard the shrill voice of the old lady, crying, 'I did it, I did it—it's all my bacon!'

"On the Mississippi and other "western" rivers of the United States as it existed in the early nineteenth century, it has been estimated that 30 percent of all the steamboats were lost in accidents. Part of this may have been due to deficiencies in the early steamboats themselves but much of it was due to the recklessness with which they were operated on Southern rivers. The comments of a fireman on a Mississippi steamboat of that era may suggest why a river voyage was considered more dangerous than crossing the Atlantic—at a time when sinkings in the Atlantic were by no means rare:

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. . . Among the steamboat explosions in the South, one on the Mississippi in 1838 killed well over a hundred people, and another near Baton Rouge in 1859 killed more than half of the 400 people on board and badly injured more than half the survivors. Southerners were just as reckless on land, whether in escapades undertaken for the excitement of the moment or in the many fights and deaths resulting from some insult or slight among people "touchy about their honor and dignity." Again, all of this went back to a way of life in the turbulent regions of Britain from which white Southerners came. Nor is it hard to recognize in these attitudes clear parallels to the behavior and attitudes of ghetto gangs today, who kill over a look or a word, or any action that can be construed as "dissing" them.

Pride had yet another side to it. Among the definitions of a "cracker" in the Oxford dictionary is a "braggart"—one who "talks trash" in today's vernacular—a wise*cracker*. More than mere wisecracks were involved, however. The pattern is one said by Professor McWhiney to go back to descriptions of ancient Celts as "boasters and threateners, and given to bombastic self-dramatization." Examples today come readily to mind, not only from ghetto life and gangsta rap, but also from militant black "leaders," spokesmen or activists. What is painfully ironic is that such attitudes and behavior are projected today as aspects of a distinctive "black identity," when in fact they are part of a centuries-old pattern among the whites in whose midst generations of blacks lived in the South.

Any broad-brush discussion of cultural patterns must, of course, not claim that all people—whether white or black—had the same culture, much less to the same degree. There are not only changes over time, there are cross-currents at a given time. Nevertheless, it is useful to see

the outlines of a general pattern, even when that pattern erodes over time and at varying rates among different subgroups.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 11-13). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Economic Activity

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One reason for the contrast between the abundance of butter and cheese produced by German farmers in states like Wisconsin, for example, and the scarcity of butter and cheese in the South was that German farmers, wherever they were located, tended to build fences and huge barns for their livestock, and to feed them there during the winter. Southerners more often let their cows and hogs roam freely during the winter, even though this meant that "in the spring they turned up half starved and it took the summer for them to put on normal weight." This too was a continuation of patterns found among their ancestors in the British Isles, and was part of a more general pattern of carelessness:

> Many other observers noticed the broken fences and the stunted cattle running at large, unfed and unprotected. Their manure was put to no use. Artificial pasture long remained a rarity, and few farmers stored feed for the winter. In Virginia a French traveler of the late 17th century saw "poor beasts of a morning all covered with snow and trembling with the cold, but no forage was provided for them. They eat the bark of the trees because the grass was covered." Wild animals—wolves, bears, and savage dogs—attacked the helpless cattle, and made the raising of sheep difficult.

Germans were better able than Southerners to milk their cows regularly and prepare dairy products, while cows owned by Southerners were more likely to run dry after calves were weaned. A contemporary observer said that even Southern farmers with many cows "will not give themselves the trouble of milking more than will maintain their Family." As late as the 1930s, a scholar studying the geography and economy of the South wrote:"The close attention to duty, the habits of steady skillful routine accepted by butter fat producers of Wisconsin as a matter of fact, are traits not yet present in southern culture." At that point, the Southern states, with 26 percent of the country's dairy cows, produced just 7 percent of processed dairy products such as butter, cheese, ice cream and condensed milk.

There was a similar contrast between German farmers and Southern farmers when it came to clearing land for farming back in pioneering days. Germans cleared frontier land by both chopping down trees and laboriously removing their stumps and roots, so that all the land could be plowed thereafter. Southerners more often cut down the tree, or even simply girdled it and left it to die and rot, but in any case leaving the stump in the ground and plowing around it. Although the erosion-prone soils of the Southern uplands have been blamed for the poverty

of the whites living on them, nevertheless on that same land Germans "were able to cultivate the hill soil, so as to avoid erosion and were willing to expend upon it the additional labor which its topography required" so that these soils in their hands "yielded excellent regular returns."

Comments on the lack of enterprise by Southern whites were made by numerous observers in various parts of the South. In Alexis de Tocqueville's classic Democracy in America, he contrasted the attitudes toward work among Southern and Northern whites as being so great as to be visible to the casual observer sailing down the Ohio River and comparing the Ohio side with the Kentucky side. These were not just the prejudices of outsiders. "No southern man," South Carolina's famed Senator John C. Calhoun said, "not even the poorest or the lowest, will, under any circumstances … perform menial labor…. He has too much pride for that." General Robert E. Lee likewise declared:"Our people are opposed to work. Our troops officers community & press. All ridicule & resist it." "Many whites," according to a leading Southern historian," were disposed to leave good enough alone and put off changes till the morrow." Very similar kinds of comments were made about these Southerners' ancestors in the parts of the British Isles from which they came.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 16-18). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Even the poorest highland Scots would not skin their horses when they died. Instead, "Scots sold their dead horses for three pence to English soldiers who in turn got six pence for the skinned carcass and another two shillings for the hide." This was not due to a lack of knowledge of skinning. In earlier times, when Scotland and England were at war, one of the atrocities committed by the Scots was skinning captured English officers alive. During the sixteenth century border feuds, the "Johnston-Johnson clan adorned their houses with the flayed skins of their enemies the Maxwells." It was not the skill that was lacking, but the enterprise.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 21). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

BLACK REDNECKS

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… another study of racial attitudes noted "the intimidating ethnic style of many underclass black males," and noted that nearly half of all murder victims in America were black, and that 94 percent of them were killed by other blacks. Many of these killings were due to gang members who killed for such reasons as "Cause he look at me funny,""Cause he give me no

respect," and other reasons reminiscent of the touchy pride and hair-trigger violence of rednecks and crackers in an earlier era.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 30). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Nowhere was the effect of the white liberalism of the 1960s on the social evolution of black culture more devastating than in the disintegration of the black family. The raw facts are these: As of 1960, 51 percent of black females between the ages of 15 and 44 were married and living with their husbands, another 20 percent were divorced, widowed, or separated, and only 28 percent had never been married. Twenty years later, only 31 percent of black women in these age brackets were married and living with their husbands, while 48 percent had never married. By 1994, an absolute majority—56 percent—of black women in these age brackets were never married and only 25 percent were married and living with their husbands. Accordingly, while two-thirds of black children were living with both parents in 1960, only one-third were by 1994. While only 22 percent of black children were born to unmarried women in 1960, 70 percent were by 1994.

White liberals, instead of comparing what has happened to the black family since the liberal welfare state policies of the 1960s were put into practice, compare black families to white families and conclude that the higher rates of broken homes and unwed motherhood among blacks are due to "a legacy of slavery." But why the large-scale disintegration of the black family should have begun a hundred years after slavery is left unexplained. Whatever the situation of the black family relative to the white family, in the past or the present, it is clear that broken homes were far more common among blacks at the end of the twentieth century than they were in the middle of that century or at the beginning of that century—even though blacks at the beginning of the twentieth century were just one generation out of slavery. The widespread and casual abandonment of their children, and of the women who bore them, by black fathers in the ghettos of the late twentieth century was in fact a painfully ironic contrast with what had happened in the immediate aftermath of slavery a hundred years earlier, when observers in the South reported desperate efforts of freed blacks to find family members who had been separated from them during the era of slavery. A contemporary journalist reported meeting black men walking along the roads of Virginia and North Carolina, many of whom had walked across the state—or across more than one state—looking for their families. Others reported similar strenuous and even desperate efforts of newly freed blacks to find members of their families.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 34-35). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

WHITE LIBERALS

<u>By projecting a vision of a world in which the problems of blacks are consequences of the actions of whites, either immediately or in times past, white liberals have provided a blanket excuse for shortcomings and even crimes by blacks</u>. …

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 52). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Blaming Others

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Riots by blacks are almost automatically blamed on whites, whether in the Kerner Report on the riots of the 1960s or in the reactions among white liberals to the Los Angeles riots of 1992. In some white liberal circles—the *New York Times*, for example—the police are almost automatically at fault in confrontations with black criminals, hoodlums, or rioters. When the police arrive on a scene of crime or violence in black communities, whatever they do is likely to be categorized later as either having let the situation get out of hand or as having used excessive force. Any force sufficient to prevent the situation from getting out of hand is almost certain to be called excessive force by white liberals in the media, so that—by definition—the police will have acted badly, no matter what they did or failed to do. Should the police arrive in such overwhelming numbers as to bring the disorder to a quick halt without any need to use force at all, then they will often be said to have "over-reacted" by sending so many cops to deal with unresisting people.

One of the reactions of the police to such predictable scapegoating in the media has been to "de-police" some of the most violent black neighborhoods, looking the other way rather than risk seeing a whole career ruined by media charges of racism. This gives criminals, hoodlums and rioters a freer hand—at the expense of law-abiding blacks, who may be the great majority, even in a high-crime neighborhood. There is evidence that this is in fact what happens after a barrage of adverse media coverage against the police.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 53-54). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The thuggish gutter words and brutal hoodlum lifestyle of "gangsta rap" musicians are not merely condoned but glorified by many white intellectuals—and "understood" by others lacking the courage to take responsibility for siding with savagery. The National Council of Teachers urged the use of hip hop in urban classrooms. The cultural editor of the *San Francisco*

Chronicle characterized rapper Tupac Shakur as "a lightning rod of insurrection in the name of social justice." *USA Today* said," gangsta rap is rooted in part in underfunded school systems which fail to equip students with the skills to speak out effectively and intersect with larger communities." An article in the *New Republic* said that rap music "has become the nearest thing to a political voice of the poor." Mikal Gilmore of *Rolling Stone* wrote of "all the terrible forces" responsible for "such a wasteful, unjustifiable end" to the life of rapper Tupac Shakur by the very lawless violence he had sung of and lived, not by some mysterious "forces."

The blaming of gangsta rap barbarism on social conditions takes many forms, such as that of a *Boston Globe* columnist who depicted it as deriving from "the institutional indifference that thrives wherever poor people assemble in America: struggling schools, dangerous streets, long-gone factories, hospital emergency rooms or EMTs substituting for family doctors, futures measured by sunsets and sunrises and the dull feeling that nearly everything is against you." A *New York Times* essay dismissing critics of gangsta rap referred to "the poverty and hopelessness that foster vicious behavior."

The general orientation of white liberals has been one of "What can *we* do for them?"What blacks can do for themselves has not only been of lesser interest, much of what blacks have in fact already done for themselves has been overshadowed by liberal attempts to get them special dispensations—whether affirmative action, reparations for slavery, or other race-based benefits—even when the net effect of these dispensations has been much less than the effects of blacks' own self-advancement. For example, although the greatest reduction in poverty among blacks occurred *before* the civil rights revolution of the 1960s, the liberal vision in which black lags are explained by white oppression requires black advances to be explained by the fight against such oppression, symbolized by the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. This scenario has been repeated so often, through so many channels, that it has become a "well-known fact" by sheer repetition. Moreover, this protest-and-government-action model has become the liberals' preferred, if not universal, model for future black advancement.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 55-58). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Misconceptions of History

Many of the prevailing misconceptions of the histories of both blacks and whites in America derive from trying to amalgamate morality and causation, so as to make the moral evil of slavery a causal explanation of contemporary negative social phenomena which have in fact had entirely different historical bases.

The touchy "pride" of white Southerners, ready to explode into deadly violence, has often been explained as being a result of whites being used to unbridled domination over slaves. But the very same attitudes existed among their ancestors in Britain, where slavery did not exist, as those attitudes also existed in those parts of the South where slaves were virtually nonexistent and among people who were in no economic condition to buy slaves. When discussing both blacks and Southern whites, slavery has served as an all-purpose explanation of many social phenomena, ranging from broken families to poor education, lower labor force participation rates, and high rates of crime and violence. Often evidence has been neither asked for nor given. Not surprisingly, many of these explanations do not stand up under scrutiny. Census data, for example, show that labor force participation rates were higher among non-whites than among whites in 1920 and 1930.

No matter what the origin of counterproductive behavior, such behavior must be changed if progress is the goal. On the other hand, if the real agenda is to score points against American society, then blacks can be used as a means to that end. <u>More generally, a pro-black stance by white intellectuals enhances the latter's moral standing and self-esteem, whether or not the particular manifestation of that stance helps or harms blacks on net balance</u>.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 55-56). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The "Identity" Fetish

Intellectuals in the 1960s began promoting the idea that those blacks who exhibited a culture different from the ghetto or black redneck culture were not "really" authentic blacks. . . .

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The notion that the ghetto black was the authentic black not only spread among both white and black intellectuals, it had social repercussions far beyond the intellectual community. Rooting black identity in a counterproductive culture not only reduced incentives to move beyond that culture, it cut off those within that culture from other blacks who had advanced beyond it, who might otherwise have been sources of examples, knowledge, and experience that could have been useful to those less fortunate. But more successful blacks were increasingly depicted as either irrelevant non-members of the black community or even as traitors to it. In turn, this meant that many blacks who had a wider cultural exposure and greater socioeconomic success felt a need to conform, to some degree or another, to a more narrow ghetto view of the world, perhaps using ghetto language, in order to prove their "identity" with their own race.

Such social pressures become especially acute for young blacks in the schools and colleges. One consequence of this has been that counterproductive attitudes toward education have filtered upward into black middle-class young people raised in racially integrated middle-class communities such as Shaker Heights, who spend less time on their studies than their white or Asian American classmates—under the overhanging threat of being accused of "acting white" if they devote themselves to their studies, instead of to various social activities in which other black students indulge.

The painful irony is that those who make this accusation are themselves "acting white" when they perpetuate a redneck culture from a bygone era. Even such a modern ghetto creation as gangsta rap echoes the violence, arrogance, loose sexuality, and self-dramatization common for centuries in white redneck culture, and speaks in exaggerated cadences common in the oratory of rednecks in both the antebellum South and those parts of Britain from which their ancestors came.

It is not only the cultural peculiarities of the black ghetto culture which has been perpetuated by the identity fetish developed in the post-1960s era. What has also been promoted has been a conformity of beliefs and affirmations among blacks, with those with different viewpoints being banished from consideration intellectually and ostracized socially— at least in so far as "identity" advocates succeed in imposing their straitjacket on others. Not only behavioral litmus tests but ideological litmus tests have been used by those promoting a black identity fetish, with those who do not pass such litmus tests being dismissed as not "really" black.

This post-1960s black identity intolerance—promoted by white intellectuals as well as black leaders and activists—is a painful parallel to the post-1830s intolerance among white Southerners against anyone who questioned slavery in any way. Maintaining what has been aptly called an "intellectual blockade" against ideas differing from those prevailing in the South, antebellum Southerners not only insulated themselves from ideas and viewpoints originating outside the region but, at the same time, in effect drove out of the South independent-minded people who would not march in lockstep. The resulting narrow and unquestioning conformity of that era led the South into the blind alley of a Civil War that devastated wide sections of the region and left a legacy of bitterness that lasted for generations. It can only be hoped that today's narrow intolerance promoted by a black identity fetish will not lead into similarly disastrous blind alleys.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 57-59). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The counterproductive redneck culture that eroded away over the generations, among both whites and blacks, has been rescued after the 1960s by a "multicultural" ideology that has made this residual survival among ghetto blacks a sacrosanct badge of racial identity, not to be tampered with by teachers or criticized by others, under pain of being labeled "racist." It should also be noted that both cultural transformations within the South and a large return migration of blacks to the South in the late twentieth century make the redneck culture no longer a regional phenomenon but a largely urban ghetto phenomenon, North and South, with a certain amount of outward diffusion, to middle-class black youngsters especially.

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In short, cultural differences have had a major economic and social impact. Despite a tendency to attribute black-white differences in the United States to "a legacy of slavery," blacks from the West Indies also had a history of enslavement but brought with them to the United States a very different culture that was reflected in such things as differences from the native-born black population in entrepreneurship, education, and imprisonment rates. In short, what the two groups of blacks shared was a history of enslavement but what they did not share was the redneck culture. …

While only circumstantial evidence is possible on the connection between the cultural characteristics of Southern rednecks or crackers in the past and those of ghetto blacks today, that evidence is considerable. However, even if one were to dismiss all of that evidence as sheer coincidence, the redneck culture would still not be irrelevant, for it provides a demonstration of the counterproductive effects of such a way of life.

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. . . As Eric Hoffer put it:

There are many who find a good alibi far more attractive than an achievement. For an achievement does not settle anything permanently. We still have to prove our worth anew each day: we have to prove that we are as good today as we were yesterday. But when we have a valid alibi for not achieving anything we are fixed, so to speak, for life.

However, as he said elsewhere:

America is the worst place for alibis. Sooner or later the most solid alibi begins to sound hollow.

Those who provide black rednecks with alibis do not favor to them, to other blacks, or to the larger society in which we all live. In American society, achievement is what ultimately brings respect, including self-respect. Only for those who have written off blacks' potential for achievement will alibis be an acceptable substitute. The liberal vision of blacks' fate as being almost wholly in the hands of whites is a debilitating message for those blacks who take it seriously, however convenient it may be for those who are receptive to an alibi.

Whether black redneck values and lifestyle are a lineal descendant of white redneck values and lifestyle, as suggested here, or a social phenomenon arising independently within the black community and only coincidentally similar, it is still a way of life that has been tested before and found wanting, as shown by its erosion over the generations among whites who experienced its counterproductive consequences. By making black redneck behavior a sacrosanct part of black cultural identity, white liberals and others who excuse, celebrate, or otherwise perpetuate that lifestyle not only preserve it among that fraction of the black population which has not yet escaped from it, but have contributed to its spread up the social scale to middle class black young people who feel a need to be true to their racial identity, lest they be thought to be "acting white." It is the spread of a social poison, however much either black or white intellectuals try to pretty it up or try to find some deeper meaning in it.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 61-64). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Are Jews Generic?

THE ECONOMIC ROLE

Social Prerequisites

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. . . People who do not save … are able to get loans or to buy on credit from middleman minorities precisely because the latter do save. If middleman minorities were as improvident as their customers or clients, they would have nothing to offer them and their businesses would be very short-lived.

The ability to save has played a key role in the rise of middleman minorities. An observer in India noted: "Gujaratis were rigorous savers, and their families worked endless hours and lived abstemiously to ensure their success." The same thing could be said of the Jews, the Koreans, the Lebanese and many other middleman minorities. Although middleman minorities often began at the bottom, it was typically at the bottom in entrepreneurial activities, often as peddlers with packs on their backs, the more fortunate ones with pushcarts, and—usually somewhat later—small shops. Even such large enterprises as Macy's, Bloomingdale's, and Levi Strauss among the Jews, and Haggar and Farah among the Lebanese, began at the level of the lowly peddler.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 73-74). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

… While Jewish peddlers often worked in isolation among a non-Jewish population, they were nevertheless tied to a wider Jewish community, not only by commercial ties to Jewish wholesalers and manufacturers, but also to family members in Europe and America. They often saved money to pay for transatlantic passage for relatives in Europe to come and join them.

These savings at some point also allowed the peddler to set up a little shop in town, settle down, get married, and raise a family. The wives and children then worked in the same little business. Often the Jewish shopkeeper or other small businessman and his family lived above or behind the store. Milton Friedman's family lived this way when he was growing up, a pattern that he described as common among the immigrants to America in that era. Yet this pattern was by no means confined to Jews or to America. Similar economic and social patterns could be found among the Lebanese in Sierra Leone and among other middleman minorities in other parts of the world. The overseas Chinese store-keeper in the Philippines was likewise "willing to live in a small corner of his store."

As among the Jews, Lebanese children were initiated into their family businesses in the United States, as were the children of other middleman minorities in other countries:

> Whereas a minority of sons and daughters peddled at an early age, many, perhaps the majority of store owners' children were prepared for life behind a counter. School-age children, when not in school, were at their parents' elbows, waiting on customers, making change, stocking shelves, and imbibing the shrewdness of operating an independent business on meager resources. They were inculcated with the parents' work and thrift ethics and the lesson that family unity and self-denial was essential to the family's goals.

. . .

A similar pattern could be found among Korean shopkeepers in late twentieth-century New York, where family members contributed many hours of unpaid labor toward the family business. For example:

> Mr. Kim … and his son daily purchase vegetables: at four o'clock every morning when the dawn is coming, they get up and drive to Hunts Point in the Bronx, where a city-run wholesale market is located.…

> In the market they run and run in order to buy at low prices as many as one hundred and seventy different kinds of vegetables and fruits. All the transactions are made in cash. At 7 o'clock they return to the store and mobilize the rest of the family members in order to wash and trim vegetables.

While Korean greengrocers in New York worked long hours by doing wholesale shopping early in the morning at Hunts Point, other greengrocers waited for a delivery service to bring fruits and vegetables to them. The Koreans not only saved the cost of the delivery service, they were able to pick the best quality fruits and vegetables available and, by having the family wash, clip, and sort them, reduce the rate of spoilage. But it took a toll:"They use expressions such as 'bloody urine,' 'drastic loss of weight,' and 'benumbed fingers like a leper's' when they describe the daily struggle of operating their businesses." In Atlanta, Korean store-owners worked an average of 63 hours per week, with one-fifth working 80 hours or more."

. . .

Because being a peddler or even a small storeowner does not require any large amount of capital, these are occupations open to innumerable people, so that widespread competition has been common—and that in turn means that profits cannot come easily or without long hours of work and much attention to the business, as well as living within limited means. Nevertheless, such sacrifices tend eventually to pay off. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 74-76). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

While some observers might regard such determination and resourcefulness as admirable or inspiring, to others the rise of middleman minorities from poverty to prosperity has been like a slap across the face. If accepted as an achievement, it raises painful questions about others who have achieved nothing comparable, despite in some cases being initially more fortunate. Someone who was born rich represents no such assault on the ego and creates no such resentment or hostility. Anyone who can offer an alternative explanation of these middlemen's successes—such as calling them "parasites" or "bloodsuckers" who have prospered at the expense of others—has been popular in many countries and some have built entire careers and whole movements on such popularity. When people are presented with the alternatives of hating themselves for their failure or hating others for their success, they seldom choose to hate themselves. More commonly they will listen to even inconsistent or irrational arguments against middlemen, as for example against the Chinese in the Philippines:

> Pressed as to his case against the Chinese, the Filipino politician would say that the Chinese were too numerous, that they had more than half of the retail business in their hands, that they charged too high prices, cheated in weights and measures, and made high profits. Should it be objected that if this were so all the Filipino has to do was to open up a tienda of his own and put the Chinese out of business in the village, the politician would probably shift his ground. He would now say that the Chinese standard of living is deplorably low; the owner of a Chinese tienda is willing to live in a small corner of his store, that he eats almost nothing and works day and night; so does his family and his assistant if he has one. The Chinese in Manila, he says, persistently disregard the eight-hour law. In fine, the charge now is that the Chinese runs his business with too little, not with too great, overhead expenses and profits. If this is true, then the Chinese gives excellent service to the community as distributors. The Filipino can buy cheaply because the Chinese live so meagerly.

A common charge against middleman minorities in countries around the world is that they operate illegally and often corrupt the authorities with bribes. What is often overlooked by those who make such charges is that discriminatory restrictions and prohibitions against middleman minorities make it virtually impossible for them to operate legally and still make a living. Sometimes they have been deprived of citizenship in the land of their birth, even when their families have lived there for generations, or the citizenship available to them does not include the same rights as those of indigenous citizens. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 76-78). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The idea that middleman minorities are deceptive, unscrupulous and unreliable people is far more widespread in political and intellectual circles than among those in the business of extending credit to them. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 78). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Economic Success

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. . . Korean shopkeepers in American black ghettos did not come from a farm or business background in Korea, but from an urban background. They had no special training in retailing, and the great majority had not even been salespeople before opening their own businesses. Most relied on their own savings, rather than bank loans or government loans, and these savings came chiefly from working at low-paid jobs, including two jobs at a time for about one-fourth of the Korean businessmen in Atlanta. They worked an average of nearly four years before saving enough money to set up their own business. In short, they worked their way up from the bottom, . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 81). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SOCIAL PATTERNS

Family Ties

. . .

. . . Some middleman minorities have been noted for their remittances to family members in the countries from which they came or in other countries in which they have settled. Local populations have long resented this as exporting their countries' wealth—a charge often made against the Chinese in Southeast Asia and the Lebanese in many countries. Even in the early years of Jewish poverty in the United States, those in America managed to send money back to family members in Eastern Europe, not only for subsistence but also to pay for their passage to the United States. These international transfers of wealth, though large in the aggregate, were no net reduction of the wealth of the country from which they were sent because the middleman minorities had already added to the pre-existing wealth of the countries in which they settled and were sending abroad only a fraction of that net addition.

. . . While intergroup comparisons have been discouraged by the taboo against "blaming the victim," blame is in fact irrelevant. Certainly no individual or group has any control over the past from which their social and cultural legacy has come. What intergroup comparisons can tell us is which things have turned out to produce what results under what circumstances. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 87-88). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Patterns within Groups

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One of the many practical benefits of close ties within a middleman minority has been an ability to conduct business with one another at lower costs because of less need to resort to precautions before making transactions or to the formal legal system afterward, both of which can be costly and time-consuming. Thus Lebanese diamond dealers in Sierra Leone have handed over diamonds to one another without even getting receipts—as Hasidic Jews have done in New York's diamond district. Such mutual trust has also been common in commercial transactions in general among the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. It was likewise the basis of international trade among the Armenians in earlier centuries:

. . .

These middleman minorities have thus been able to take advantage of business opportunities that others would either be reluctant to risk or could do so only with precautions that cost time and money. But such a mode of operation becomes practical only on the basis of strong social ties and enduring economic relationships that make cheating too costly to attempt.

Despite the frugal living common to middleman minorities around the world, they have also been notable for their donations to their own charitable institutions, such as hospitals and schools, and often to charitable institutions serving the larger society around them. At a minimum, they have avoided the social stigma of having the poorer individuals and families in their respective groups become public charges on the larger society.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 89). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Education

. . . A scholarly study found that white students had to have IQs 15 points higher to match either the educational or the economic performances of Asian Americans.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 95). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

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. . . Jews are, like every other individual and group, unique in some ways and very much like other people in other ways. Whatever has been unique, or thought to be unique, about them has been seized upon and used negatively by their enemies. Their supposed role in the crucifixion of Jesus—"Christ killers" in the bitter indictment of a bygone era of religious bigotry—can hardly have been the reason for that bigotry, for it was the Romans who actually crucified Jesus and no such guilt has been attached to the whole Italian people of later centuries. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 108). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The Real History of Slavery

SLAVERY WAS AN EVIL OF GREATER SCOPE and magnitude than most people imagine and, as a result, its place in history is radically different from the way it is usually portrayed. Mention slavery and immediately the image that arises is that of Africans and their descendants enslaved by Europeans and their descendants in the Southern United States—or, at most, Africans enslaved by Europeans in the Western Hemisphere. No other historic horror is so narrowly construed. No one thinks of war, famine, or decimating epidemics in such localized terms. These are afflictions that have been suffered by the entire human race, all over the planet—and so was slavery. Had slavery been limited to one race in one country during three centuries, its tragedies would not have been one-tenth the magnitude that they were in fact.

Why this provincial view of a worldwide evil? Often it is those who are most critical of a "Eurocentric" view of the world who are most Eurocentric when it comes to the evils and failings of the human race. Why would anyone wish to arbitrarily understate an evil that plagued mankind for thousands of years, unless it was not this evil itself that was the real concern, but rather the present-day uses of that historic evil? Clearly, the ability to score ideological points against American society or Western civilization, or to induce guilt and thereby extract benefits from the white population today, are greatly enhanced by making enslavement appear to be a peculiarly American, or a peculiarly white, crime.

This explanation is also consistent with the otherwise inexplicable contrast between the fiery rhetoric about past slavery in the United States used by those who pass over in utter silence the traumas of slavery that still exist in Mauritania, the Sudan, and parts of Nigeria and Benin. Why so much more concern for dead people who are now beyond our help than for living human beings suffering the burdens and humiliations of slavery today? Why does a verbal picture of the abuses of slaves in centuries past arouse far more response than contemporary photographs of present-day slaves in *Time* magazine, the *New York Times* or the *National Geographic*?

It takes no more research than a trip to almost any public library or college library to show the incredibly lopsided coverage of slavery in the United States or in the Western Hemisphere, as compared to the meager writings on the even *larger* number of Africans enslaved in the Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa, not to mention the vast numbers of Europeans also enslaved in centuries past in the Islamic world and within Europe itself. 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. Indeed, an Anglo-Egyptian treaty of August 4, 1877 prohibited the continued sale of white slaves after August 3, 1885, as well as prohibiting the import and export of Sudanese and Abyssinian slaves.

During the Middle Ages, Slavs were so widely used as slaves in both Europe and the Islamic world that the very word "slave" derived from the word for Slav—not only in English, but also in other European languages, as well as in Arabic. Nor have Asians or Polynesians been exempt from either being enslaved or enslaving others. China in centuries past has been described as "one of the largest and most comprehensive markets for the exchange of human beings in the world" Slavery was also common in India, where it has been estimated that there were more slaves than in the entire Western Hemisphere—and where the original Thugs kidnapped children for the purpose of enslavement. In some of the cities of Southeast Asia, slaves were a majority of the population. Slavery was also an established institution in the Western Hemisphere before Columbus' ships ever appeared on the horizon. The Ottoman Empire regularly enslaved a percentage of the young boys from the Balkans, converted them to Islam and assigned them to various duties in the civil or military establishment.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 111-113). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

RACE AND SLAVERY

The instrumental use of the history of slavery today also underlies the claim that slavery grew out of racism. For most of its long history, which includes most of the history of the human race, slavery was largely not the enslavement of racially different people, for the simple reason that only in recent centuries has either the technology or the wealth existed to go to another continent to get slaves and transport them en masse across an ocean. People were enslaved because they were vulnerable, not because of how they looked. The peoples of the Balkans were enslaved by fellow Europeans, as well as by the peoples of the Middle East, for at least six centuries before the first African was brought to the Western Hemisphere.

Before the modern era, by and large Europeans enslaved other Europeans, Asians enslaved other Asians, Africans enslaved other Africans, and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere enslaved other indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere. Slavery was not based on race, much less on theories about race. Only relatively late in history did enslavement across racial lines occur on such a scale as to promote an ideology of racism that outlasted the institution of slavery itself.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 113). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . Volumes continue to be published about the decline and fall of the Roman Empire which, for all its greatness, did not encompass one-tenth as much of the world as the institution of slavery did. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 114). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . While Africa became the main source of new slaves in later centuries, existing slaves continued to include peoples of many races living in many places around the world. Ending the slavery of all these peoples was a very difficult process and one requiring deliberate and sustained action for many generations.

Ironically, the anti-slavery ideology behind this process began to develop in eighteenth century Britain, at a time when the British Empire led the world in slave trading, and when the economy of most of its overseas colonies in the Western Hemisphere depended on slaves. Here again, <u>the baffling present-day disregard of an international saga of strife, full of individual dramas as well as historic consequences, seems explicable only in terms of today's ideological agendas. 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</u>. Today it seems so obvious that, as Abraham Lincoln said, "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." But the hard fact is that, for thousands of years, slavery was simply not an issue, even among the great religious thinkers or moral philosophers of civilizations around the world.

We may wonder why it took eighteen centuries after the Sermon on the Mount for Christians to develop an anti-slavery movement, but a more profound question is why not even the leading moralists in other civilizations rejected slavery at all. "There is no evidence," according to a scholarly study, "that slavery came under serious attack in any part of the world before the eighteenth century." That is when it first came under attack in Europe.

Themselves the leading slave traders of the eighteenth century, Europeans nevertheless became, in the nineteenth century, the destroyers of slavery around the world—not just in European societies or European offshoot societies overseas, but in non-European societies as well, over the bitter opposition of Africans, Arabs, Asians, and others. <u>Moreover, within Western civilization, the principal impetus for the abolition of slavery came first from very conservative religious activists—people who would today be called "the religious right." Clearly,</u>

this story is not "politically correct" in today's terms. Hence it is ignored, as if it never happened.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 115-116). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

WESTERN AND NON-WESTERN SOCIETIES

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Slavery was destroyed within the United States at staggering costs in blood and treasure, but the struggle was over within a few ghastly years of warfare. Nevertheless, the Civil War was the bloodiest war ever fought in the Western Hemisphere, and more Americans were killed in that war than in any other war in the country's history. But this was a highly atypical—indeed, unique—way to end slavery. In most of the rest of the world, unremitting efforts to destroy the institution of slavery went on for more than a century, on a thousand shifting fronts, and in the face of determined and ingenious efforts to continue the trade in human beings.

Within the British Empire, the abolition of slavery was accompanied by the payment of compensation to slave owners for what was legally the confiscation of their property. This cost the British government £20 million—a huge sum in the nineteenth century, about 5 percent of the nation's annual output. A similar plan to have the federal government of the United States buy up the slaves and then set them free was proposed in Congress, but was never implemented. The costs of emancipating the millions of slaves in the United States would have been more than half the annual national output—but still less than the economic costs of the Civil War, quite aside from the cost in blood and lives, and a legacy of lasting bitterness in the South, growing out of its defeat and the widespread destruction it suffered during that conflict.

While the British could simply abolish slavery in their Western Hemisphere colonies, they faced a more daunting and longer-lasting task of patrolling the Atlantic off the coast of Africa, in order to prevent slave ships of various nationalities from continuing to supply slaves illegally. Even during the Napoleonic wars, Britain continued to keep some of its warships on patrol off West Africa. Moreover, such patrols likewise tried to interdict the shipments of slaves from East Africa through the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf. Brazil capitulated to British demands that it end its slave trade, after being publicly humiliated by British warships that seized and destroyed slave ships within Brazil's own waters. In 1873, two British cruisers appeared off the coast of Zanzibar and threatened to blockade the island unless the slave market there shut down. It was shut down.

It would be hard to think of any other crusade pursued so relentlessly for so long by any nation, at such mounting costs, without any economic or other tangible benefit to itself. These costs included bribes paid to Spain and Portugal to get their cooperation with the effort to stop the international slave trade and the costs of maintaining naval patrols and of resettling freed slaves, not to mention dangerous frictions with France and the United States, among other countries. Captains of British warships who detained vessels suspected of carrying slaves were legally liable if those vessels turned out to have no slaves on board.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 122-123). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Although by 1860 the Atlantic slave trade had been effectively stopped, the slave trade from East Africa across the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf took longer to be reduced significantly. Off the east coast of Africa, smaller Arab vessels called dhows hugged the coastlines, in waters too shallow for the British warships to enter.44 One British commodore estimated that he captured one dhow for every eight that escaped.45 Nevertheless, during the period from 1866 to 1869, 129 slave vessels were captured and 3,380 slaves were freed. When the threat of being boarded seemed imminent, the Arabs would throw slaves overboard to drown, rather than have them be found on board, which could lead to British seizure of the vessel and punishment of those who manned it:

> The worst that could befall the slaves was when the slaver was overhauled by a British cruiser, and they might then be flung overboard to dispose of all evidence. Devereaux mentions a case where the Arabs, when pursued by an English cruiser, cut the throats of 24 slaves and threw them overboard. Cololm also states that Arabs would not hesitate to knock slaves on the head and throw them overboard to avoid capture.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 124). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

None of this means that the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade should be ignored, downplayed, or excused. Nor have they been. A vast literature has detailed the vile conditions under which slaves from Africa lived—and died—during their voyages to the Western Hemisphere. But the much less publicized slave trade to the Islamic countries had even higher mortality rates en route, as well as involving larger numbers of people over the centuries, even though the Atlantic slave trade had higher peaks while it lasted. By a variety of accounts, most of the slaves who were marched across the Sahara toward the Mediterranean died on the way. While these were mostly women and girls, the males faced a special danger—castration to produce the eunuchs in demand as harem attendants in the Islamic world. Because castration was forbidden by Islamic law, the operation tended to be performed—usually crudely—in the hinterlands, before the slave caravans reached places within the effective control of the

Ottoman Empire. The great majority of those operated on died as a result, but the price of eunuchs was so much higher than the prices of other slaves that the practice was still profitable on net balance.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 125-126). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . An estimated one-third of the "free persons of color" in New Orleans were slaveowners and thousands of these slaveowners volunteered to fight for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Black slaveowners were even more common in the Caribbean.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 127). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

THE MORAL DIMENSIONS OF SLAVERY

If slavery is not morally wrong, it is hard to imagine what else could possibly be wrong. Yet when Lincoln expressed this view, which was gaining currency in his time, it was a belief less than a century old in the West and still virtually non-existent outside the West.

In ancient times, Aristotle had attempted to justify slavery, but many other Western and non-Western philosophers alike took it so much for granted that they felt no need to explain or justify it at all. Some Moslems regarded attempts to abolish slavery as impious, since the Koran itself accepted slavery as an institution, while trying to ameliorate the lot of the slave. Only in the American South did a large apologetic literature develop, seeking to justify slavery, because only there was slavery under such large-scale and sustained attacks on moral grounds as to require a response. While slavery was referred to in antebellum America as a "peculiar institution," in an international perspective and in the long view of history it was not this institution that was peculiar but the principles of American freedom, with which slavery was in such obvious and irreconcilable conflict.

If all men were created equal, as the Declaration of Independence proclaimed, then the only way to justify slavery was by depicting those enslaved as not fully men. A particularly virulent form of racism thus arose from a particularly desperate need to defend slavery against telling attacks that invoked the fundamental principles of the American republic. Nowhere else in the world was slavery in such dire straits ideologically and nowhere else did racism reach such heights (or depths) in defense of the institution. As a noted study of Brazil observed, "the defenders of slavery on clearly racist grounds were as rare among public supporters of slavery in Brazil as they were common in the United States." If slavery is not morally wrong, it is hard to

imagine what else could possibly be wrong. Yet when Lincoln expressed this view, which was gaining currency in his time, it was a belief less than a century old in the West and still virtually non-existent outside the West. In ancient times, Aristotle had attempted to justify slavery, but many other Western and non-Western philosophers alike took it so much for granted that they felt no need to explain or justify it at all. Some Moslems regarded attempts to abolish slavery as impious, since the Koran itself accepted slavery as an institution, while trying to ameliorate the lot of the slave. Only in the American South did a large apologetic literature develop, seeking to justify slavery, because only there was slavery under such large-scale and sustained attacks on moral grounds as to require a response. While slavery was referred to in antebellum America as a "peculiar institution," in an international perspective and in the long view of history it was not this institution that was peculiar but the principles of American freedom, with which slavery was in such obvious and irreconcilable conflict. If all men were created equal, as the Declaration of Independence proclaimed, then the only way to justify slavery was by depicting those enslaved as not fully men. A particularly virulent form of racism thus arose from a particularly desperate need to defend slavery against telling attacks that invoked the fundamental principles of the American republic. Nowhere else in the world was slavery in such dire straits ideologically and nowhere else did racism reach such heights (or depths) in defense of the institution. As a noted study of Brazil observed, "the defenders of slavery on clearly racist grounds were as rare among public supporters of slavery in Brazil as they were common in the United States."61 Brazil was not a democracy and so had no such ideological contradictions to overcome.

In short, racism was neither necessary nor sufficient for slavery, whose origins antedated racism by centuries. Racism was a result, not a cause, of slavery and not all societies that enslaved people of another race became pervaded with racism to the extent that the American South did.

The stark contrast between the slave and the free which made slavery a moral issue in the Western world in modern times was simply not there for most societies and for most of history in most of the world. In hierarchical societies, where people were born into their stations in life, ranging through many gradations from royalty to bondage, slavery was simply the bottom rung on a ladder based on the accident of birth—one notch below the serf, who was bought and sold with the land, instead of individually.

This is not to say that being a slave was a matter of indifference. A horror of becoming a slave has been widespread around the world, but this is wholly different from a reluctance to enslave others. Christians, Moslems, and Jews all forbad the enslavement of their own respective fellow religionists—though they did not always honor even this ban—but all considered it permissible to enslave others. Clergy themselves had slaves and both Christian

monasteries in Europe and Buddhist monasteries in Asia owned slaves. Even Sir Thomas More's fictional ideal society, Utopia, had slavery.

It was not until the late eighteenth century that there was even an intellectual movement, much less a political movement, for the abolition of slavery, and those in these movements were distinctly in the minority, even in the West—and had no counterparts outside the West. What was historically unusual was the emergence in the late eighteenth century of a strong moral sense that slavery was so wrong that Christians could not in good conscience enslave anyone or countenance the continuation of this institution among themselves or others. Nor was this view confined to religious leaders or congregations. Adam Smith in Britain and Montesquieu in France were among the secular intellectuals who wrote against slavery in the eighteenth century.

Slavery was one of a number of long-standing institutions and traditions which were being questioned in the eighteenth century in the West. Before then, both secular and religious philosophers going back to Plato had seen the mundane physical world as being far less important than the ideal or spiritual world, so that being right and free in one's mind was more important than one's fate in the physical world. Dissipating one's energies trying to reform the practices of a sinful world was considered less important than bringing one's own soul into line with spiritual imperatives. To the religious, the world of the here and now was a transient thing, a prelude and a testing ground for the world that really mattered, the world of eternity. However, as a humanistic philosophy began to affect both secular and religious thought, what happened in the mundane physical world began to assume greater importance than it had before in the eyes of intellectuals, philosophers, and religious leaders.

As the fate of human beings in the here and now loomed larger as a moral concern, the fate of slaves became part of the intellectual and moral agenda of the times. Over the centuries, established religious institutions in the West—notably the Catholic Church, but later including also established Protestant denominations—had made their peace with the institution of slavery as a fact of life and produced traditional rationales to reconcile it with the message of Christianity. Now these institutions, traditions, and rationales came under fire from within, as well as outside, the religious community across a broad front, of which slavery was just one battleground. Religious minorities, such as the Quakers or the Evangelicals within the Anglican Church, could not simply rely on religious tradition and authority because their very existence was based on a questioning of, and in some cases a break with, those traditions and authorities.

These insurgents had to think independently about slavery, as about other things, and derive their own conclusions—as most people do not have to think through things which have been accepted facts of life for centuries. The rising class of secular intellectuals in the West

could even less rely on the authority of established religious institutions. This did not mean that either secular or religious insurgents were automatically anti-slavery. What it meant was that they both had to evolve some intellectually and morally defensible position because they could not simply base themselves on existing beliefs or practices. Different individuals resolved the issues differently but out of this process came some who began to see slavery as an intolerable evil.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 127-130). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

While Britain spearheaded the anti-slavery movement in the world, the nineteenth century saw anti-slavery feelings spread until they became common throughout Western civilization—and only in Western civilization. By 1888, every country in the Western Hemisphere had abolished slavery, as had all European and European-offshoot nations around the world.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 132). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Where European colonial military forces were spread thin and relied on "indirect rule" through indigenous authorities, as in much of Africa, local European colonial officials often found it expedient to turn a blind eye to the continued existence of slavery and the slave trade among the indigenous peoples, who saw nothing wrong with it and depended on it for a livelihood. However, this simply provided more fuel for exposés by European missionaries and journalists, leading eventually to still more pressure from the home governments to stamp out slavery. As one British historian put it, "public opinion would not tolerate even vestigial slave trading in an area controlled by Britain."

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 133). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Even independent non-Western nations were pressured to end slavery, both directly and by a desire not to be embarrassed in the eyes of the world—meaning, during the nineteenth century, mostly the powerful European world. In short, where European and European-offshoot societies held direct and effective power in the nineteenth century, slavery was simply abolished. But where the Western world's power and influence were mediated, reduced or otherwise operated only indirectly, there non-Western peoples were able to fight a long war of attrition and evasion in defense of slavery—a war which they had, however, largely lost by the middle of the twentieth century, but which they had not yet wholly lost even at the beginning of the third millennium, when vestiges of slavery remained in parts of Africa.

Despite all this, those with an instrumental view of history have managed to turn things upside down and present slavery as an evil of "our society" or of the white race or of Western civilization. One could as well do the same with murder or cancer, simply by ignoring these evils in other societies and incessantly denouncing their presence in the West. Yet what was peculiar about the West was not that it participated in the worldwide evil of slavery, but that it later abolished that evil, not only in Western societies but also in other societies subject to Western control or influence. This was possible only because the anti-slavery movement coincided with an era in which Western power and hegemony were at their zenith, so that it was essentially European imperialism which ended slavery. This idea might seem shocking, not because it does not fit the facts, but because it does not fit the prevailing vision of our time.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 134-135). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Anachronistic Morality

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Robert E. Lee likewise declared in 1856 that he regarded slavery as an evil that he wished to see somehow gradually ended.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 140). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Few who actually lived in antebellum America thought that slavery could be ended in the South by simple fiat, even though it was abolished that way without incident in most Northern states. The situation was radically different in the two parts of the country. Slaves were only a relatively minor part of the Northern population and plantation slavery was virtually unknown, partly because the climate and soil did not lend themselves to the kinds of crops that could be grown efficiently on cotton plantations in the South or on sugar plantations in the Caribbean. Therefore in the North the question of abolishing slavery as an institution did not raise serious questions about what to do with the people who had been enslaved. Some affluent whites in the North lost their black household servants, or re-hired them as employees, or sold them to the South, where slavery was still prevalent. But the relatively small numbers of people involved meant that it was not a major problem for the North in any case.

Southerners faced a very different situation, with momentous economic and social implications. Blacks were a much higher percentage of the total Southern population than in the Northern states, and in some places were an absolute majority. From the first census of 1790 to the last census before the Civil War in 1860, slaves were approximately one-third of the

total Southern population. As of 1860, slaves were more than 40 percent of the population of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana—and more than half the population of Mississippi and South Carolina. Freeing in their midst millions of people of an alien race and unknown disposition, and with no history in either Africa or America that would prepare them to be citizens of a society such as the United States, was not an experiment that many were willing to risk in these states. Not when it could mean risking their lives.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 140-141). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Fears of a race war were not confined to Southerners, however, or even to Americans. Alexis de Tocqueville saw a race war in the South as a very real possibility in the wake of mass emancipation and one of many painful prospects created by the institution of slavery, especially a slavery in which the freed people and their descendants would be physically distinct and could not readily vanish by assimilation into the larger society, as in some earlier times and in other parts of the world. Moreover, slavery was a very poor preparation for freedom for blacks, economically, socially or otherwise. Free blacks were already very disproportionately represented in prison populations, creating fears of what would happen if the much larger slave population were suddenly freed.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 141-142). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Today, slavery is too often discussed as an abstract question with an easy answer, leading to sweeping condemnations of those who did not reach that easy answer in their own time. In nineteenth-century America, especially, there was no alternative that was not traumatic, including both the continuation of slavery and the ending of it in the manner in which it was in fact ended by the Civil War—at a cost of one life for every six slaves freed. Many problems can be made simple, but only by leaving out the complications which those in the midst of these problems cannot so easily escape with a turn of a phrase, as those who look back on them in later centuries can.

Even at the individual level, it was not always legally possible for a slaveowner to simply set a slave free, for authorities had to approve in many states. When a motion was introduced into the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769 to allow slaveowners to free their slaves unilaterally—a motion seconded by Thomas Jefferson—there was anger at such a suggestion and the motion was roundly defeated. An unlimited power to release slaves into the larger society was considered too dangerous to leave in private hands.

Many who have dismissed the anti-slavery words of the founders of the American republic as just rhetoric have not bothered to check the facts of history. Washington, Jefferson, and other founders did not just talk. They acted. Even when they acted within the political and legal constraints of their times, they acted repeatedly, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. One of the early battles that was lost was Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration of Independence, which criticized King George III for having enslaved Africans and for over-riding colonial Virginia's attempt to ban slavery. The Continental Congress removed that phrase under pressure from representatives from the South.

When Jefferson drafted a state constitution for Virginia in 1776, his draft included a clause prohibiting any more importation of slaves and, in 1783, Jefferson included in a new draft of a Virginia constitution a proposal for gradual emancipation of slaves. He was defeated in both these efforts. On the national scene, Jefferson returned to the battle once again in 1784, proposing a law declaring slavery illegal in all western territories of the country as it existed at that time. Such a ban would have kept slavery out of Alabama and Mississippi. The bill lost by one vote, that of a legislator too sick to come and vote. Afterwards, Jefferson said that the fate "of millions unborn" was "hanging on the tongue of one man, and heaven was silent in that awful moment."

Three years later, however, Congress compromised by passing the Northwest Ordinance, making slavery illegal in the upper western territories, while allowing it in the lower western territories. Congress was later authorized to ban the African slave trade and Jefferson, now President, urged that they use that authority to stop Americans "from all further participation in those violations of human rights which has been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa."

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 144-146). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . The free black population, which had been growing faster than the slave population in the decades of large-scale private manumissions immediately following the American Revolution, now grew much more slowly than the slave population in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Southerners with a variety of views on the slavery issue were bitter against Northern abolitionists, who were seen as imposing dangers on the South that the distant abolitionists themselves would never have to face. Out of this bitterness came a sectionalism and intolerance in the South that led, especially from the 1830s on, to suppression of criticisms of slavery in the region, including restrictions on academic freedom and freedom of the press, state censorship of the U.S. mails, and a campaign to stop sending Southern young men to Northern colleges.

Ultimately, such fears, bitterness, and sectionalism led to secession and the ensuing Civil War.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 146-147). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Some Americans—including Washington, Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln—sought a way out of the painful dilemma by sending freed slaves "back to Africa." However, by the time this idea became widespread, most of the slaves in the United States had never seen Africa and neither had their grandparents. They spoke no African languages and had no idea where their forebears had originated, on a continent more than twice the size of Europe, and one where local and tribal origins were—and still are—crucial to one's acceptance or even toleration by other Africans.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 147). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . Modern historian David Brion Davis denounced Congressman John Randolph for "hypocrisy" because Randolph publicly condemned the slave trade during a visit to England, while he himself continued to hold slaves in the United States. However, Randolph was not just speaking for public consumption in England. He said similar things both in public and in private letters to friends in the United States. Why, then, did Randolph not simply free his own slaves? This question reaches beyond one man and has implications for the whole set of contradictions which slavery presented in a free society.

At a personal level, the answer was clearest: Randolph could not simply free his own slaves legally, since he had inherited a mortgaged estate and the slaves were part of that estate. Only after he had removed both financial and legal encumbrances was freeing his slaves possible, and only after he made some provision for their economic viability as free people did he consider it humane. During hard economic times, Randolph wrote to a friend of "more than two hundred mouths looking up to me for food" and though it would be "easy to rid myself of the burthen," morally it would be "more difficult to abandon them to the cruel fate to which our laws would consign them than to suffer with them." Thomas Jefferson likewise owned a plantation encumbered by debt, as did many other Southerners, so emancipation of all of Jefferson's slaves was never a real possibility, though he did manage to free nine of them.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 148). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

George Washington was one of those who had inherited slaves and, dying childless, freed his slaves in his will, effective on the death of his wife. His will also provided that slaves too old or too beset with "bodily infirmities" to take care of themselves should be taken care of by his estate, and that the children were to be "taught to read and write" and trained for "some useful occupation." His estate in fact continued to pay for the support of some freed slaves for decades after his death, in accordance with his will.

The part of Washington's will dealing with slaves filled almost three pages, and the tone as well as the length of it showed his concerns:

> The emancipation clause stands out from the rest of Washington's will in the unique forcefulness of its language. Elsewhere in it Washington used the standard legal expressions—"I give and bequeath,""it is my will and direction." In one instance he politely wrote, "by way of advice, I recommend to my Executors…" But the emancipation clause rings with the voice of command; it has the iron firmness of a field order:"I do hereby expressly forbid the sale…of any Slave I may die possessed of, under any pretext whatsoever."

Long before reaching this point in his personal life, George Washington had said of slavery as a national issue:"There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it." But, like Burke, he saw a need for a *plan* of some sort, rather than simply freeing millions of slaves in a newly emerging nation surrounded by threatening powers, just as the freed slaves themselves would be surrounded by a hostile population. In short, the moral principle was easy but figuring out how to apply it in practice was not.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 149-150). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Slaves that Washington took north with him when he entered public life he quietly left behind when he returned to Virginia after completing his terms as President—in effect freeing them "on the sly," as one biographer put it, at a time when to free them officially could have set off controversies that neither he nor the new nation needed. George Washington was, after all, trying to hold together a fragile coalition of states bearing little resemblance to the world power that the United States would become in later centuries.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 150). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Washington's behavior as a slaveowner is also worth noting:

> Beginning in the early 1770s, he rarely bought a slave and he would not sell one, unless the slave consented, which never happened. Not selling slaves was an economic loss. Slave labor on a plantation with soil as poor as Mount Vernon brought in little or nothing….The only profit a man in his position would make was by selling slaves to states where agriculture was more flourishing. Washington would not. "I am principled against

selling negroes as you would do cattle at a market….” From 1775 until his death, the slave population at Mount Vernon more than doubled.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 150-151). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

In the case of John Randolph, the charge of hypocrisy is hard to sustain in view of the events surrounding his death. Never married, and so without heirs to his estate, he made provision in his will, years before his death, that his slaves were to be not only freed but provided with land in a free state, on which they might hope to live in peace and be self-supporting. In a will written a dozen years before his death, Randolph wrote: “I give and bequeath all my slaves their freedom, heartily regretting that I have ever been the owner of one.” An earlier will said:“I give my slaves their freedom to which my conscience tells me they are justly entitled.” That this was said by a conservative white Southerner—a bitter political opponent of the abolitionists and a man who asserted the right of secession long before the Civil War—suggests something of the complexity of the issue confronting those who faced it directly as a human reality, rather than as an abstract question.

Knowing the stringency of the laws of the South when it came to the freeing of slaves, when Randolph felt that he was dying he summoned a doctor whom he wanted, ostensibly for medical treatment, but in fact as a white witness whose testimony would be accepted in a Southern court as to his dying wishes. Once the doctor was present, Randolph ordered his black servant not to let the doctor leave the room until he—Randolph—was dead, so that there would be no legal question about what he had done. This was the scene:

> Randolph was propped up in the bed with pillows at his back…. With his last remaining strength, eyes flashing, he pointed his long, bony index finger at the assembly:“I confirm all the directions in my will, respecting my slaves, and direct them to be enforced, particularly in regard to a provision for their support.” Raising his arm as high as he could, he brought it down with his hand open on Johnny’s shoulder.“Especially for this man.” He then asked whether each of the witnesses understood him. Immediately, Randolph’s keen, penetrating gaze clouded, his mind gave way, and he slumped down.

Randolph’s will provided money to purchase land for his freed slaves in a free state, in order to give them a chance to be self-supporting as free people. But, even in the free state of Ohio, the opposition of local whites made it impossible for them to live on the land he had provided. The racial animosity that he had feared from the beginning would blight their chances was rampant even in the North. Whatever the merits or demerits of Randolph’s personal or public policy conclusions, “hypocrite” hardly seems the right word for him. Abstract moral decisions are much easier to make on paper or in a classroom in later centuries than in the midst of the dilemmas actually faced by those living in very different circumstances, including serious dangers.

The Civil War that grew out of tensions over slavery was the bloodiest war ever fought in the Western Hemisphere and cost more American lives than any other war in the country's history. Whether or not those fighting on either side thought of their battles as being over slavery, as distinguished from secession, without slavery there would have been no secession and no Civil War. The states that first seceded were states where slaves were the highest percentage of the population. Contemporary words and deeds by the leaders of the Confederacy made unmistakably clear that slavery was at the heart of their secession and at the heart of the constitution that they established for their own new government. In later times, as slavery became ever more repugnant to people throughout Western civilization and even beyond, apologists for the South would stress other factors. But the real question is what factor moved Southern leaders when the fateful decision was made to secede—and that was "unashamedly," as a Civil War historian put it, slavery.

Among the other examples of anachronistic moral principles being applied in our own times to earlier times have been the many complaints that the Constitution of the United States did not abolish slavery. This was never a viable option because the South would not have remained united with the North if there had been such a clause. . . .

Those preoccupied today with the contemporary instrumental use of history have scored many talking points by referring to the Constitution's allowance of additional representation for the South in Congress by counting the three-fifths of the slave population in determining the number of Congressmen to which the Southern states would be entitled. Like many political compromises, this one made no sense except as a means of obtaining agreement in a situation where a dangerous stalemate threatened. The talking point made today is that this political arrangement amounted to saying that a black man was only three-fifths as important as a white man. But would those who say this have preferred that the slave population had been counted as requiring the same representation in Congress as the free? What would have been the consequences? Or do consequences matter to those trying to score points?

Since slaves had no voice in the selection of Southern Congressman, counting the slave population at full strength would only have given white Southerners a stronger pro-slavery

contingent in Congress. Scoring points today and being serious are two different things. It should be noted that the Constitution's distinction in counting people for representation in Congress was between slave and free, not black and white. Free blacks were counted the same as whites—and free blacks existed before the Constitution existed.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 155-156). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY

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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Those who view slavery as an abstract moral issue are as disappointed with Lincoln today as William Lloyd Garrison was at the time. Garrison was dissatisfied with the language of the Emancipation Proclamation and with the fact that it did not decree "the total abolition of slavery," rather than just its abolition in the Southern states at war. He seemed oblivious to the huge legal and political risks that Lincoln was taking—as many in later times would be when they criticized the limits of his actions and words. But had Lincoln's real concerns extended no further than the military effects of the Emancipation Proclamation, it would be hard to explain his many and strenuous behind-the-scenes efforts to get slave-holding border states and the Congress of the United States to extend the ban on slavery to the whole country. Garrison's rhetoric may look better to a later generation but the cold fact is that William Lloyd Garrison did not free a single slave, while Abraham Lincoln freed millions.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 164). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The idea that slavery was based on race or racism is yet another popular notion that will not stand up to a scrutiny of history, as we have already seen. Yet beliefs about the innate ability of blacks in the United States by prominent American leaders of an earlier era have been invested with great moral implications by those seeking to score points. But beliefs are neither moral or immoral. They may be accurate or inaccurate, founded or unfounded, but they acquire moral significance only when they are shaped to serve some ulterior purpose that is either moral or immoral. Belief in the innate equality of all people has been promoted in order to promote equal treatment of all people, and belief in innate inferiority has been promoted in order to justify discrimination against some people, but it is these goals which have moral significance. In the absence of such goals, the beliefs themselves are subject to the tests of evidence and logic, rather than the test of moral principles.

Abraham Lincoln, for example, said of blacks that their abilities were no measure of their rights. Thomas Jefferson likewise said:

> Be assured that no person living wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a complete refutation of the doubts I have myself entertained and expressed on the grade of understanding allotted to them by nature, and to find that in this respect they are par with ourselves. My doubts were the result of personal observation on the limited sphere of my own State, where the opportunities for the development of their genius were not

favorable, and those exercising it still less so. I express them therefore with great hesitation; but whatever their degree of talent it is no measure of their rights. Because Sir Isaac Newton was superior to others in understanding, he was not therefore lord of the person or property of others.

That took the question of Jefferson's beliefs about the innate ability of blacks out of the realm of morality. Elsewhere Jefferson pointed out how tentative any conclusion must be about the innate ability of blacks, given the lack of scientific precision possible on such questions. Although Jefferson has been criticized for having expressed doubts—what he called "a suspicion only"—about the innate ability of black people, his obvious pleasure at discovering the able work of Benjamin Banneker suggests that his beliefs were not the servant of some ulterior purpose. The vast majority of blacks that Thomas Jefferson saw were illiterate people whose development had been stunted by slavery. He never in his entire life saw a black American who had a college degree because there were none. The first black man to receive a college degree in the United States did so two years after Jefferson's death and the first black woman more than a quarter of a century after that. As Jefferson himself realized, his observed sample of black people was inherently biased by time and place, which is an empirical deficiency of his circumstances, rather than a moral choice of his own

Others, however, used their belief that blacks were innately lacking in ability to justify, for example, forbidding the teaching of blacks. Frederick Law Olmsted's response to the claim that blacks were no more capable of being educated than animals were was to ask why there were no laws forbidding animals from being educated. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 166-168). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

It was not because people thought slavery was right that it persisted for thousands of years. It persisted largely because people did not think about the rightness or wrongness of it at all. In very hierarchical societies, where most people were born into their predetermined niches in the social complex, slaves were simply at the bottom of a long continuum of varying levels of subordination based on birth. Even in colonial America, white indentured servants were a major part of the population and they were auctioned off just like black slaves. It was the rise of modern free societies and their accompanying ideologies in the West which made slavery stand out in stark contrast, and it was the emergence of a general questioning of institutions and beliefs in the eighteenth century—also in the West—that brought slavery into question.

Once that happened, slavery could not stand up under moral scrutiny. Outside the West, it did not have to, at least not until after the spread of Western ideas of individual freedom belatedly took hold in some other societies. That such an institution could last so long

unchallenged, on every inhabited continent, is a chilling example of what can happen when people simply do not think.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 168-169). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

GERMANS AND HISTORY

THE GERMAN NATION

. . . While Germans were economically more advanced than the peoples of Eastern Europe, they lagged behind other countries in Western Europe in technology and in sophisticated commercial and financial institutions. But all of that changed during the course of the nineteenth century.

At first, the Germans simply borrowed the more advanced methods of the British in industry and agriculture. Britons installed industrial equipment and built railroads in Germany, and taught Germans how to operate both. British capital financed the industrial production of wool and helped created the German steel industry, with Belgians and the French also contributing technology to German economic development. Yet, once launched into the industrial age, the German surpassed their mentors before the end of the nineteenth century. The number of German steam engines tripled between 1834 and 1850 and, between 1815 and 1850, coal production increased more than tenfold. Germans had nearly double the railroad mileage of the French by the middle of the nineteenth century. In the crucial area of steel production, Germany overtook Britain by the last decade of the nineteenth century and, on the eve of the First World War, German steel production was double that of the British.

Political developments were equally dramatic. When the German states and principalities were consolidated into a nation in 1871, it was the most economically advanced nation in Europe and militarily the most powerful, as demonstrated in its crushing victory over France that same year and its seizing of the iron and coal deposits of Alsace-Lorraine. Strong nationalistic fervor accompanied these dramatic economic, political, and military developments, not only among Germans in Europe but also as far away as Australia. German immigrants from the new era when Germany reached the forefront of industrial development brought with them more industrial skills, more science and technology. Others took abroad artisan skills as before. While artisans and craftsmen were being superseded by modern industry in Germany, their skills were still in demand in other countries that had not yet reached that same level of technology.

Germany's belated but dramatic emergence among the great powers of the world, like that of Japan in the same era, led to an aggressive nationalism that provoked armed conflicts with its neighbors. Although the First World War began with the Hapsburg Empire's military action

against Serbia, in response to a Serbs' assassination of the heir to the imperial throne, it was Germany's military backing and urging that led the Hapsburg Empire to take that fatal step, with the full knowledge that existing alliances and alignments risked bringing Russia, France, and Britain into the war. The same nationalistic overconfidence which led to Germany's willingness to challenge these powers later led to the sinking of American ships bound for Britain, bringing the United States into the war, thereby tipping the military balance toward the defeat of Germany and the dismemberment of its allies, the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires.

The rise of Adolf Hitler to power in 1933 and his swift transformation of Germany into a militaristic and totalitarian dictatorship set the stage for a new and more bloody World War and, in the end, a more catastrophic defeat that now led to the dismemberment of Germany. While Germany rose from the rubble of wartime destruction to recover economically and eventually was reunited politically, the unprecedented horrors inflicted by the Nazis at home and abroad raised questions about the whole German culture and character that have not yet been put to rest in the twenty-first century.

What the Nazis had done went far beyond launching a war. Their conscienceless persecutions at home and abroad, their racial fanaticism, and the murders of millions of unresisting civilians of both sexes and all ages reached unprecedented depths of depravity. As *Time* magazine commented after the collapse of that regime:

> This war was a revolution against the moral basis of civilization. It was conceived by the Nazis in conscious contempt for the life, dignity and freedom of individual man and deliberately prosecuted by means of slavery, starvation and the mass destruction of noncombatants' lives. It was a revolution against the human soul.

> *Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 185-186). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.*

Political Developments

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What did putting Hitler in power say about the German people? Strictly speaking, it could reflect only on those Germans who voted Hitler into office in a democratic election, after which he seized dictatorial powers. Hitler never received a vote of a majority of the citizens of Germany, even to be put into office as chancellor, much less to become dictator. The millions of Germans outside of Germany of course had no part in any of this. Yet, when all is said and done, there can be little question that Hitler's massive support in Germany reached levels of adoration seldom seen in any country before or since. How much of that was support for the Nazi ideology or its known agenda, much less for its hidden agenda that unfolded later to shock and outrage the world?

While Hitler himself was even more ruthless and reckless than the Kaiser who led Germany into the First World War, there was among the German people no such exaltation at the launching of the Second World War as had existed in countries across Europe when the First World War began with both sides full confidence of quick and easy victories. William L. Shirer's monumental eye-witness history of Nazi Germany described the scene in Berlin on the first day of World War II this way:

> The people in the streets, I noticed, were apathetic despite the immensity of the news which had greeted them from their radios and from the extra editions of the morning newspapers. Across the street from the Adlon Hotel the morning shift of laborers had gone to work on the new I.G. Farben building just as if nothing had happened, and when newsboys came by shouting their extras no one laid down his tools to buy one. Perhaps, it occurred to me, the German people were simply dazed at waking up on this first morning of September to find themselves in a war which they had been sure the Fuehrer somehow would avoid. They could not quite believe it, now that it had come.

> What a contrast, one could not help thinking, between this gray apathy and the way the Germans had gone to war in 1914. Then there had been a wild enthusiasm. The crowds in the streets had staged delirious demonstrations, tossed flowers at the marching troops and frantically cheered the Kaiser and Supreme Warlord, Wilhelm II.

Hitler counted on no enthusiasm for war on the part of the German people. On the contrary, he preceded his invasion of Poland with elaborate charades of seeking peace. In order to make it appear that the Poles had attacked Germany, he even staged border incidents, using Germans in Polish uniforms to fire weapons and leaving concentration camp inmates dying as "casualties" of the purported Polish attacks. None of this was expected to fool the outside world. That it was considered necessary to fool the German people, insulated by a government-controlled press, suggests a serious difference between the aims and values of the Nazis and the aims and values of the people whom they were leading and misleading. Differences between the goals and imperatives of the Nazis and those of the millions of Germans living outside the Reich were even clearer.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 187-188). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Racial Fanaticism

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. . . The eugenics movement sought to limit the reproduction of "inferior" individuals and races, so as to prevent the lowering of the national intelligence in future generations. <u>Planned Parenthood was founded not simply as an organization for limiting the size of families in general but more particularly to reduce the reproduction of the black population in the United</u>

<u>States, as Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger herself noted. Such ideas were common among intellectuals who considered themselves "progressive" at the beginning of the twentieth century.</u>

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 193). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Racism in our narrow modern sense has been a significant force for little more than a century, while violent and lethal hatred of other groups goes back thousands of year. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 194). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Comparing Germans with other Europeans for the sake of convenience, it seems clear that whatever differences there were historically tended to show the Germans not as intolerant as most Eastern Europeans, for example, toward the Jews. Jews fleeing from Eastern Europe to Germany constituted about one-fifth of the Jewish population in Germany when Hitler came to power. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 194). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

German American immigrant communities welcomed German Jewish immigrants as members of their *Turnvereine*, singing groups, and other cultural organizations. Nineteenth-century German Jews living in Chile and Czechoslovakia likewise took part in the general cultural life of German communities in those countries. Jewish views of pre-Hitler Germany were very favorable, not only in Germany itself but overseas. . . . Even some Zionists in Palestine returned to Germany during the First World War to fight for the Fatherland.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 194-195). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . A history of the antebellum South referred to a "colony of antislavery Germans" who settled in Texas, as well as Germans in Virginia who were "antagonistic to slavery" and Germans in St. Louis who were "strongly antislavery."

When whites in early nineteenth-century North Carolina voted to deny the franchise to free blacks, this disenfranchisement was opposed by voters in almost all of the western counties of the Piedmont region—where the Germans and the Scotch-Irish were concentrated. While Germans were split on many of the complex issues revolving around race and slavery, no

prominent German American leader was pro-slavery and, when the Civil War came, the large German population in Missouri was credited with keeping that state in the Union, despite many Confederate sympathizers among other Missourians.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 195). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The history of pre-Hitler Germans, whether at home or abroad, can readily stand comparison with that of most Europeans, just as the record of Europeans can stand comparison with that of most other races around the world. That is what makes what happened under Hitler and the Nazis even more chilling. If this could happen with Germans, it could happen with any other people. There were anti-Semites in Germany, as in other countries, and their words can now be read as alarming warnings in light of our knowledge of what lay ahead. But there was little at the time to serve as a credible warning of such a monstrous and almost inconceivable event as the Holocaust.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 196). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Hitler's speeches during the election campaigns of 1928, 1930, and 1932 made no specific proposals on what he intended to do about Jews. He apparently did not see German public opinion as ready for any of the actions that he would in fact later take against the Jews. When the desperation of Germans in the fact of severe economic and social crises created by the worldwide Great Depression of the 1930s elevated Hitler from a fanatic in the streets to a dictatorial ruler, the die was cast, fatally. From that point on, it no longer mattered what most other Germans thought, whether about race or war or anything else. But, before then, when voters in Germany had their last free choice, what were Hitler's supporters supporting? What did they know and when did they know it? A study that attempted to answer these questions concluded:

> Middle-class and other voters did not vote for Hitler because he promised to exterminate European Jewry. Neither did they vote for him because he promised to tear up the constitution, impose a police stated, destroy labor unions, eradicate rival political parties, or cripple the churches. Even Hitler's *Mein Kampf* did not forecast these events.

During the years leading up to the Second World War, Hitler moved against the Jews in orchestrated stages, allowing him to gauge the extent to which German public opinion supported his actions. A Nazi-sponsored boycott of Jewish stores in 1933 failed so badly that it was called off after four days, rather than have it be an ongoing fiasco. Even after five years of anti-Jewish propaganda in Germany, when the Nazis in November 1938 unleashed

Kristallnacht-the night of broken glass, featuring violence against Jews, their homes and their businesses—the negative reactions of Germans, including some Nazi party members, led Hitler to proceed against the Jews thereafter with as much secrecy as possible. Even when Jews were rounded up and sent off to concentration camps, there was nothing at the point to indicate the grisly fate awaiting them and it was a crime punishable by death to reveal the extermination program.

Rumors circulated and some undoubtedly knew more than rumors but rumors and speculations always abound in wartime. Moreover, even those who were certain of what was happening had no ability to stop it in a totalitarian state and they and their families could pay with their lives for publicly protesting. . . .

Genocide against the Jews was a government program, not the lethal mob violence unleashed against the Jews in earlier pogroms in Eastern Europe or against the Armenians in Turkey during the First World War or against the Ibos in Nigeria in the 1960s or against the Chinese in a number of Southeast Asian countries on a number of occasions over the centuries. Given the fact that Jews had been stripped of legal protections early in the Nazi regime, any of these things might have been done by the German people. Indeed, Hitler tried to represent Kristallnacht as a spontaneous burst of public outrage, rather than as the staged event that it was. But what the German people did not do in these circumstances may be more revealing about their own attitudes. None of this denies that there were anti-Semitic fanatics in Germany, both in the Nazi party and among the German public. It simply makes the dimensions and duration of anti-Semitism among Germans at large subject to question.

What must also be noted is that Jews were a very small minority in pre-Hitler Germany— never as much as two percent of the population, despite their prominence of even predominance in particular fields such as medicine, journalism, or banking. The average German had no compelling reason to be thinking about Jews, one way or another, and indications are that most were apathetic about anti-Semitism, both before and during the Nazi era.

Nevertheless, the egregious behavior of the Nazis toward the Jews prompted some Germans to come to their aid, even during wartime, when that meant risking death for themselves and their families. Estimates of the number of Jews hidden in Berlin alone during the Second World War run into the thousands.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 196-198). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SUMMARY AND APPLICATIONS

. . . the dictatorship, war, and Holocaust that we associate with the Nazi regime in retrospect was not on the ballot, or even on the horizon, of those who voted for Hitler in 1933. They were seeking a political savior in a chaotic and economically depressed time. The relative political apathy of Germans and their historic law-abiding habits enabled Hitler to seize far more power than he was elected to, with perhaps less resistance than such an action might have provoked in some other societies, and the German military tradition and military prowess made him more dangerous than he might have been as the leader of some other nation.

. . .

The racial fanaticism of Hitler and the Nazi movement, which spread to the German generation of their day and led ultimately to the Holocaust, were not historically distinct characteristics of Germans as a people. On the contrary, the rise of such a man as the leader of such a people should serve as a permanent warning to all people everywhere who are charmed by charisma or aroused by rhetoric.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 200). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Black Education

Achievements, Myths and Tragedies

WILL ROGERS ONCE SAID THAT IT WAS not ignorance that was so bad but, as he put it, "all the things we know that ain't so." Nowhere is that more true than in American education today, where fashions prevail and evidence is seldom asked for or given. Nowhere does this do more harm than in the education of black children.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 203). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SCHOOLS: PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

High-Performance Schools

In 1899, there were four academic public high schools in Washington, D.C.—one black and three white. In standardized test given that year, students in the black high school averaged higher test scores than students in two of the three white high schools. Today, more than a century later, it would be considered Utopian even to set that as a goal, much less expect it to actually happen. Yet what happened back in 1899 was no isolated fluke. That same school repeatedly equaled or exceeded national norms on standardized tests in the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s. Back in the 1890s, it was called the M Street School and in 1916 it was renamed Dunbar High School.

When this information on Dunbar High School was first published in the 1970s, those few educators who responded at all dismissed the relevance of these findings by saying that these were "middle class" children and therefore their experience was not "relevant" to the education of low-income minority children. Those who said this had no factual data on the incomes or occupations of the parents of these children—and the data that existed said just the opposite. The problem, however, was not that these dismissive educators did not have evidence. The more fundamental problem was that they saw no *need* for evidence. According

to their doctrines, children who did well on standardized tests were middle class. These children did well on such tests, so therefore they must be middle class.

It so happens that there was evidence on the occupations of the parents of the children at this school as far back as the early 1890s. As of academic year 1892-93, of the known occupations of these parents, there were 51 laborers, 25 messengers, 12 janitors, and *one* doctor. That hardly seems middle class. Over the years, a significant black middle class did develop in Washington and most of them may well have sent their children to the M Street School or to Dunbar High School, as it was later called. But that is wholly different from saying that most of the children at that school came from middle-class homes.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 204-205). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

A related stereotype is that the children who went to Dunbar High School were the light-skinned descendants of the black elite that derived from miscegenation during the era of slavery. Here again, the facts have been readily available—and widely ignored. Photographs in old yearbooks from the era of Dunbar's academic success show no such preponderance of light-skinned blacks. Here again, there is a fundamental difference between saying that certain types of people were more likely to send their children to Dunbar, or that such children were over-represented, and saying that most of the children who went to Dunbar came from such families.

Whether in economic or other terms, the families from which the students of Dunbar High School came cannot be nearly so atypical as suggested by those who say that they were mostly "Washington's growing black bourgeoisie." For many years, there was only one academic high school for blacks in the District of Columbia and, as late as 1948, one-third of all black youngsters attending high school in Washington attended Dunbar High School. "If we took only the children of doctors and lawyers," a former Dunbar principal asked, "how could we have had 1400 black students at one time?" This was not a "selective" school in the sense in which we normally use that term—it was not necessary to take tests to get in, for example—even though there was undoubtedly *self-selection* in the sense that students who were serious went to Dunbar and those who were not had other places where they could while away their time, without having to meet high academic standards.

A spot check of attendance records and tardiness records showed that the M Street School at the turn of the century and Dunbar High School at mid-century had less absenteeism and less tardiness than the white schools in the District of Columbia at those times. In the nineteenth century, tardiness had at first been a problem, but it was a problem that was apparently not tolerated. The school had a tradition of being serious, going back to its founders and early

principals, who reflected the influence of the New England culture which contrasted so much with that of the culture of most blacks.

Among those early principals was the first black woman to receive a college degree in the United States—Mary Jane Patterson from Oberlin College, class of 1862. At that time, Oberlin had different academic curriculum requirements for women and men. Latin, Greek and mathematics were required in the "the gentlemen's course," as it was called, but not in the curriculum for ladies. Miss Patterson, however, insisted on taking Latin, Greek, and mathematics anyway. We can only imagine what fortitude and sense of purpose that must have taken, at a time when no black woman had ever gotten a college degree in the entire history of the country, and when most members of her race were still slaves in the South. Not surprisingly, in her later 12 years as principal of the black high school in Washington during its formative period, Mary Jane Patterson was noted for "a strong forceful personality," for thoroughness, and for being an "indefatigable worker." Having this kind of person shaping the standards and traditions of the school in its early years undoubtedly had something to do with its later success. Other early principals included the first black man to graduate from Harvard, class of 1870. Three of the school's first ten principals had graduated for Oberlin, two from Harvard, and one each from Amherst and Dartmouth. Because of restricted academic opportunities for blacks, Dunbar could get teachers with very high qualifications, and even had Ph.D.s among its teachers in the 1920s. Mary Gibson Hundley pointed out, in her history of Dunbar High School: "Federal standards providing equal salaries for all teachers, regardless of sex or race, attracted to Washington the best trained colored college graduates from Northern and Western colleges in the early days, and later from local colleges as well."

One of the other educational dogmas of our times is the notion that standardized tests do not predict future performances for minority children, either in academic institutions or in life. Innumerable scholarly studies have devastated this claim intellectually, though it still survives and flourishes politically. But the history of this black high school in Washington likewise shows a pay-off for solid academic preparation and the test scores that result from it.

Over the entire 85-year history of academic success in this school, from 1870 to 1955, most of its graduates went on to higher education. This was very unusual for either black or white high-school graduates during that era. Because these were usually low-income students, most went to a local free teachers college or to relatively inexpensive Howard University, but significant numbers won scholarships to leading colleges and universities elsewhere.

Early in the twentieth century, some M Street School graduates began going to Harvard—the first in 1903—and other academically elite colleges. A French educator who visited the M Street School that year described its students as "pursuing the same studies as our average college student." During the period from 1918 to 1923, graduates of this school went on to earn

25 degrees from Ivy League colleges, Amherst, Williams, and Wellesley. At one time during this era, there were nine black students at Amherst—six from Dunbar High School. Over the period from 1892 to 1954, Amherst admitted 34 graduates of M Street School and Dunbar. Of these, 74 percent graduated from Amherst and 28 percent of these graduates were Phi Beta Kappas. Nor was Amherst unique; Dunbar graduates also became Phi Beta Kappas at Harvard, Yale, Williams, Cornell, Dartmouth, and other elite institutions.

At one time, the reputation of Dunbar graduates was such that they did not have to take entrance examinations to be admitted to Dartmouth, Harvard, and some other selective colleges. When Robert N. Mattingly graduated from the M Street School in 1902, he entered Amherst College, receiving credit for freshman mathematics and first-year college physics—and he graduated in three years, Phi Beta Kappa. Yet, far from being one of the elite, Mattingly was, in his own words, "at Amherst on a shoestring."

No systematic study has been make of the later careers of graduates of M Street and Dunbar High School. However, when black educator Horace Mann Bond studied the backgrounds of blacks with Ph.D.s in 1970, he discovered that more of them had graduated from M Street-Dunbar than from any other black high school in the country. "The first black who" pioneered in a number of fields also came from this school.

The first black man to graduate from Annapolis came from Dunbar. The first black enlisted man in the army to rise to become a commissioned officer also came from this same institution. So did the first black woman to receive a Ph.D. from an American university. So did the first black full professor at a major American university (Allison Davis at the University of Chicago). So did the first black federal judge, the first black general, the first black Cabinet member, the first black senator elected since Reconstruction and, among other notables, the doctor who pioneered the use of blood plasma, historian Carter G. Woodson, author and poet Sterling Brown, and Duke Ellington, who studied music at Dunbar. During World War II, when black military officers were rare, there were among this school's graduates "many captains and lieutenants, nearly a score of majors, nine colonels and lieutenant colonels, and one brigadier general."

All this contradicts another widely believed notion—that schools do not make much difference in children's academic or career success because income and family background are much larger influences. If the school do not differ very much from one another, then of course it will not make much difference which one a child attends. But, when the differ dramatically, the results can also differ dramatically.

This was not the only school to achieve success with minority children. But, before turning to other examples, it may be useful to consider why and how this 85-year history of dramatic

success was abruptly turned into all too typical failure, virtually overnight, by the politics of education.

The landmark racial desegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education* initially led to a strong resistance to school desegregation in many white communities, including that in Washington, D.C. Ultimately a political compromise was worked out in the District of Columbia: In order to comply with the Supreme Court decision, without having a massive shift of students, the D.C. school officials decided to turn all public schools into neighborhood schools. By this time, the neighborhood around Dunbar High School was rundown and there was a local saying that children who lived near Dunbar didn't go to Dunbar. This had not affected the school's academic standards, however, because black students from all the rest of the city went to Dunbar.

When Dunbar became a neighborhood school, however, the whole character of its student body changed radically—as did the character of its teaching staff. In the past, many Dunbar teachers continued to teach for years after they were eligible for retirement because it was such a fulfilling experience. Now, as inadequately educated, inadequately motivated, and disruptive students flooded into the school, teachers began retiring, some as early as 55 years of age. Dunbar quickly became just another failing ghetto school, with all the problems that such schools have, all across the country. Eighty-five years of achievement simply vanished into thin air.

It is a very revealing fact about the politics of education that no one tried to stop this from happening. When I first began to study the history of this school, back in the 1970s, it seemed to me inconceivable that this could have been allowed to happen without a protest. The Washington school board in the 1950s had included a very militant and distinguished black woman named Margaret Just Butcher, who was also a graduate of Dunbar High School. Surely Dr. Butcher had not let all this happen without exercising her well-known gifts of withering criticism.

Yet I looked in vain through the minutes of the school board meetings for even a single sentence by anybody expressing any concern whatever about the fate of Dunbar High School under the new reorganization plan. Finally, in complete frustration and bewilderment, I phoned Dr. Butcher herself and asked: Was there anything that was said off the record about Dunbar that did not find its way into the minutes that I had read? "No," she replied. Then she reminded me that racial "integration" was the battle cry of the hour in the 1950s. No one thought about what would happen to black schools, not even Dunbar.

Now, decades later, we still do not have racial integration in many of the urban schools around the country—and we also do not have Dunbar High School. Such are the ways of

politics, where the crusade of the hour often blocks out everything else, at least until another crusade comes along and takes over the same monopoly of our minds.

Ironically, black high schools in Washington today have many of the so-called "prerequisites" for good education that never existed during the heyday of Dunbar High School—and yet the educational results are abysmal. "Adequate funding" is always included among these "prerequisites" and today the per pupil expenditure in the District of Columbia is among the highest in the nation, while its test scores are among the lowest. During the years of Dunbar's success, it was starved for funds and some of its classes had more than 40 students. As a failing ghetto school today, Dunbar has a finer physical plant than it ever had when it was an academic success. Politics is also part of this picture. Immediate, tangible symbols are what matter within the limited time horizon of elected politicians. Throwing money at public schools produced such symbolic results, even if it cannot produce quality education.

The aftermath of the decline and academic collapse of Dunbar High School is also revealing. With a new school building, the question arose as to the disposition of the original building. Dunbar alumni wanted that building preserved as some sort of memorial to an historic achievement, but Washington's political leaders—representing the kind of people who had not gone to Dunbar—were bitterly opposed. This became a heated legal issue, fought all the way up to the federal Circuit Court of Appeals. After the political leaders won in court, one of them spoke for those "who say that the school represents a symbol of an elitism among blacks that should never happen again. I say we should raze it." They did. The dog in the manger triumphed once more.

Washington Post columnist William Raspberry summarized the conflicting feelings about Dunbar High School in the black community when he wrote:

> Fill a room with middle-aged blacks who grew up in Washington, mention the word "Dunbar," and then take cover. That one word will divide the room into two emotion-charged, outraged, warring factions: those who did and those who didn't attend Dunbar High School "when it was Dunbar."

> *Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 204-211). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.*

A particularly painful example of contemporary failure is this account of Dunbar High School in 1993:

> Rodney McDaniel is a senior at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. He is the captain of its football team, which is the best in the city. . . . Rodney McDaniel evidently has the ability to take harder courses than he does. But he, like other students at Dunbar, has been held to low standards by teachers unwilling or unable to demand more. . . . A smaller percentage of Dunbar students go to college now than did 60 years ago.

Sixty years earlier would have been in the depths of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 213). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SCHOOLS: CONTEMPORARY ACHIEVEMENTS

. . .

The principal of Bennett-Kew Elementary School in Inglewood, California, whose student body is 52 percent Hispanic and 45 percent black, raised these children's reading levels from the third percentile to the fiftieth percentile in just four years. But she was threatened with loss of money because she used phonics instead of the mandated "whole-language" teaching methods and taught exclusively in English, instead of using the "bilingual" approach required by education authorities. The fact that she was succeeding where others were failing carried no weight with state education officials. Fortunately, it carried enough weight with the parents of her students that they bombarded these officials with protests that caused them to relent and let this principal continue to succeed in her own way, instead of failing in their way.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 216). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Portland Elementary School in Portland, Arkansas, has multiple violations of prevailing educational dogmas—and such academic success that it is besieged with requests from parents who want to transfer their students in. Ironically, white students were once transferring out, back in 1970, in response to racial desegregation. Until recent years, declining educational standards were painfully visible in the fact that half the students in the fourth through sixth grades were scoring two or more years below grade level. Then dame a new principal with old-fashioned ideas about education who began to get old-fashioned results. Now 100 percent of the students are reading at grade level or higher and a majority of the students are above the national average on both reading and math tests.

One of these old-fashioned ideas is called "Directed Instruction"—what used to be called just plain teaching, as distinguished from the more trendy notion that teachers are to be "facilitators" on the sidelines, letting students "discover" and "create" knowledge students "discover" and "create" knowledge themselves. In Portland Elementary, Directed Instruction has proven to be especially effective with "at risk" students. In other words, kids who have nobody to teach them at home improve greatly when there is somebody to teach them at school, instead of using them as guinea pigs for experiments.

Not satisfied with violating educational dogma by plain old teaching, Principal Ernest Smith also groups students by ability and gives them tests every ten lessons or about every seven or eight days—all of which is taboo in educational establishment circles. So successful has this approach turned out to be that whites have been transferring back in and now constitute a majority of the students.

Another successful minority school-99 percent black with 80 percent of its students coming from low-income families—is Cascade Elementary School in Atlanta. Although its demographics would be considered to be a formula for automatic failure by those in the education establishment, in fact these students have scored at the 74th percentile on reading tests and at the 83rd percentile on math tests. Principal Alfonso L. Jessie is so old-fashioned that he will not tolerate misbehavior:

> . . . Jessie explains to parents at the beginning of the year that if their children misbehave in school, they will be personally escorted to the parents' place of work. Not surprisingly, Cascade has almost no discipline problems.

Such a principal might well be accused of stereotyping or racism by civil rights groups, community activists, or white liberals—if he were not black.

Like other schools for minority children, the Marva Collins Preparatory School in Chicago has its founder's "no-nonsense, back-to-basics curriculum that is centered on phonics and memorization for the younger students, and higher-level reasoning and literary analysis for the older ones." It also features "weekly tests in all subjects every Friday." It is not hard to understand why Marva Collins was unpopular with education authorities when she taught in the public schools, and had to go set up her own private school in order to teach the way that she wanted to.

Chicago public schools were declared to be the worst in the nation back in the 1980s by William J. Bennett, then U.S. Secretary of Education. Despite some improvements, even as late as 1996 half of all the children in Chicago schools were performing below grade level in four-fifths of the city's schools. Yet even here there has been an exception, using methods that are and exception to the prevailing educational dogmas. Children in Earhart Elementary School, in Chicago's south side ghetto, score at the 70th percentile in reading and the 80th percentile in math. Ninety nine percent of these children are black and more than four-fifths of them qualify for the free lunch or reduced-price lunch program.

Taking advantage of a 1988 law that allowed individual schools more leeway to escape rigid educational dogmas, a new principal began teaching reading based on phonics and memorization of sight-words, devoting an hour and a half each morning exclusively to reading. During this reading period, all physical education, music, art, and library activities were brought

to a halt so that the entire support staff could help the children with their reading. The school taught things like grammar and composition, which are considered passé in educational circles. But it achieved success—which is also passé in too many public schools today.

. . .

What are the "secrets" of such successful schools?

The biggest secret is that there are no secrets, unless work is a secret. Work seems to be the only four-letter word that cannot be used in public today.

Aside from work and discipline, the various successful schools for minority children have had little in common with one another—and even less in common with the fashionable educational theories of our times. Some of these schools have been public, some private. Some have been secular and some have been religious. Dunbar High School had an all-black teaching staff but St. Augustine in New Orleans began with an all-white teaching staff. Some of these schools were housed in old rundown buildings and others in new, modern facilities. Some of their principals were finely attuned to the social and political nuances, while others were blunt people who could not have cared less about such things and would have failed Public Relations One.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 220-221). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

MYTHS AND TRAGEDIES

The Racial Mix

Perhaps the most widespread and most consequential of these myths, promulgated by the Supreme Court of the United States, is that racially separate schools cannot achieve quality education. In addition to all the black schools that have belied that assumption, there have been successful all-Chinese schools in the United States, all-Tamil schools in Sri Lanka, and all-Armenian schools in the Ottoman Empire, among others.

Sometimes the unspoken assumption is that a racial mix of students is helpful, or even necessary, because students from one group need to acquire better educational habits and attitudes from another group. That attitude has been found among those Malay parents in Singapore who want their children to emulate the more serious and hard-working attitudes of the Chinese students there. But that same assumption cannot be openly avowed about black students in the United States, in the skittish atmosphere surrounding racial issues. Yet the long,

bitterly decisive, and ultimately futile campaign of busing students to schools far from home for the sake of racial "balance" is hard to understand without the underlying assumption that black students need to be with white students in order to learn. Thus "the white man's burden" doctrine of nineteenth-century imperialism became in effect white child's burden doctrine of twentieth-century education.

A later variation on this theme has been a "diversity" rationale that all students learn more in an environment where there are children from other racial, cultural, or other social backgrounds. While more politically palatable than the separate-is-inferior doctrine, this diversity rationale has had no more empirical evidence to support it, unless endlessly repeating the word "diversity" and rhapsodizing over its presumed virtues is considered to be evidence. If one seriously wished to test this doctrine, it would be hard to explain how a racially homogeneous nation like Japan could have its students better educated than those in the United States, especially since Japan is one of the most culturally insular contemporary nations, with nothing like the interest in multiculturalism found in Britain and in British-offshoot societies like the United States and Australia. But neither this nor any of innumerable other possible empirical tests has been applied to the diversity doctrine. It has simply become dogma, like so much else in education circles.

The opposite dogma, that black children require a separate, racially oriented of "Afrocentric" education, has seized the imagination of many, with no more empirical evidence to support it than its Eurocentric counterpart. This vision has spawned such subsidiary notions as a need for racial "role models" for inspiration and a "critical mass" of black students, in order for these students to feel socially comfortable enough for any of these beliefs has been neither asked for nor given. Moreover, such evidence as exists points in the opposite direction.

One of the few attempts to examine the facts, as study titled *Increasing Faculty Diversity*, found no empirical evidence to support the belief that same-sex, same-ethnicity role models are any more effective than white male role models at the college level. This is consistent with the experiences of successful black schools examined here, some of these schools having all-black, others all-white, and still others a racially mixed assortment of teachers. If role models of the same race are so important for successful education, then it is virtually impossible to explain the spectacular rise of second-generation Japanese Americans after World War II. The great majority of the previous generation of Japanese Americans were farmers and it is doubtful whether most of the second generation children ever saw a Japanese-American teacher or professor, much less Japanese Americans who were successful in the fields in which the Nisei generation would rise, such as science and engineering.

What of the "critical mass" theory that has been used to support preferential college admissions for black students? Do black students do better educationally where there are

enough other black students to create a socially comfortable subculture in schools or on college campuses? As with so many other educational doctrines, the issue is not even posed in such empirical terms. It is simply stated as an imperative and those who question it are scorned as having uncomprehending minds or unworthy motives. But what do the facts show?

Again, there have been remarkably few systematic studies of this or many other educational doctrines, especially those involving racial issues. Certainly the remarkable educational success of Dunbar High School graduates who went on to Amherst College from the late nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century cannot be attributed to either a critical mass of black students on that campus, or to black role models on the faculty, because they had neither. Studies from more recent times have shown that the education of black students has been negatively affected by the presence of large numbers of other black students.

An empirical published by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that "a higher percentage of Black schoolmates has a strong adverse effect on achievements of Blacks and, moreover, that the effects are highly concentrated in the upper half of the ability distribution." Another study, focusing on the effect of ability-grouping on the performances of students in general, mentioned among its conclusions: "Schooling in a homogeneous group of students appears to have a positive effect on high-ability students' achievements, and even stronger effects on the achievements of high-ability minority youth." In other words, a "critical mass" of black students seems to drag down the academic performance of high-ability black students.

Yet another study, this one about black students in the affluent suburb of Shaker Heights, Ohio, showed a pervasive pattern of not only neglecting school work, but even of disdaining it to the point of resenting those black students who applied themselves, or who spoke standard English, denouncing them for "acting white." Similar social patterns among black students have been found around the country and are much more consistent with Berkeley Professor John McWhorter's thesis that there is an anti-intellectual black subculture which keeps many black students from doing their best. No wonder that a "critical mass" of black students has the opposite effect on education from what its advocates claim.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 221-224). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

History

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False history is not unique to black Americans. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan said of his fellow Irish Americans:

The cruel part of this history is that by 1916 Irish nationalism in America had little to do with Ireland. It was a hodgepodge of fine feeling and bad history with which immigrants filled a cultural void.

Much of what calls itself "Afrocentric" education is similarly filling a cultural void. But now there is huge political support for such things and that has brought forth large amounts of money to subsidize these escapisms. Moreover, these are now regarded as sacrosanct parts of black culture, which insulates them from inquiries into either their authenticity or their educational consequences.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 226). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Cultural Handicaps

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. . . Black students, by and large, lag appallingly behind whites, and still more so behind Asian Americans, in those skills. In 2001, for example, there were more than 16,000 Asian American students who scored above 700 on the mathematics SAT, while fewer than 700 black students scored that high—even though blacks outnumbered Asian Americans several times over.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 226). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

One of the most obvious reasons for the deficient educational performances of blacks is also one of the most overlook or suppressed: By and large, black students do not work has hard as white students, much less Asian students. The Shaker Heights study is just one that has found this to be so, though many have been reluctant even to investigate this factor that will be very unsurprising to anyone who has taught black students, white students, and Asian students. The remarkable exceptions in schools where substandard work has not been tolerated only reinforce this point. If the fundamental problem were income, segregation, or even innate inferiority, there would be no such dramatic contrasts among black schools. Although each of these explanations has been common at various times and places, none of them stands up to empirical scrutiny.

. . . Of 4.3 million black families in the United States in 1966, a mere 5.2 thousand produced *all* the black physicians, dentists, lawyers, and academic doctorates in the country. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 227). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

HIGHER EDUCATION

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. . . In the first decades after the Civil War, the American Missionary Association, established thousands of schools for blacks in the South. Most of the teachers in these schools were young, unmarried women from New England, bringing with them not only academic education but also a whole culture very different from that of Southern society. Many black children thus acquired advantages that they would take with them into the adult world. As a noted historian observed: "It was no accident that so many black leaders of twentieth century civil rights movements came from missionary schools."

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 230). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

The Du Bois-Washington Controversy

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. . . By linking rights and responsibilities, Washington was able to address both the blacks and the whites in the audience on common ground. And by linking the fates of the two races, he was able to enlist the support of some whites by arguing that blacks would either help lift up the South or help to drag it down. W. E. B. Du Bois likewise said to Southern whites: "If you do not lift them up, they will pull you down."

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 232). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . .

Just as Du Bois acknowledged the need for vocational education for many blacks, so Washington acknowledged the need for academic education for other blacks. He served on the board of trustees for Howard University and Fisk University, whose educational missions were very different from that of Tuskegee Institute, and he used his influence to get financial support for Howard and other black academic institutions such as Talladega College and Atlanta University. He declared: "I would say to the black boy what I would say to the white boy, Get all the mental development that your time and pocket-book will allow of," though he saw most blacks of his time as needing to acquire practical work skills first. Still, he said, "I would not have the standard of mental development lowered one whit for, with the Negro, as with all races, mental strength is the basis of all progress." . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 233). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

As regards civil rights, although Booker T. Washington wrote in 1899, "I do not favour the Negro's giving up anything which is fundamental and which has been guaranteed to him by the Constitution of the United States," his general public posture was that he was too busy with the self-improvement of blacks to become involved in political controversies. Yet, when his papers were examined after his death, it became clear that he had privately goaded other blacks to crusade for civil rights, and had even secretly financed legal challenges to the Jim Crow laws in the South.

Washington was fully aware that to have done these things publicly would have jeopardized the white financial support on which Tuskegee Institute depended. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 234). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Black Colleges

. . . Prior to the First World War, only fourteen black Americans had ever received a Ph.D. from a recognized American or European university.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 235). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . Professor Frazier described them this way in the middle of the twentieth century:

> Unlike the missionary teachers, the present teachers have little interest in "making men," but are concerned primarily with teaching as a source of income which will enable them to maintain middle-class standards and participate in Negro "society." It appears that the majority of them have no knowledge of books nor any real love of literature. Today many of the teachers of English and literature never read a book as a source of pleasure or recreation.

In short, the black colleges retrogressed toward the black redneck culture. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 234). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

White Colleges

Although black students were admitted to some white colleges—notably Oberlin, Bowdoin, Hillsdale, and Western Reserve—even before the Civil War, most post-bellum black students pursued their higher education at the black colleges until the 1960s. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 239). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Not only are there far fewer black students than Asian American students who reach the usual test score levels found at selective colleges, this shortfall is even more drastic at the postgraduate level, where future faculty members are produced. In some years, the absolute numbers of blacks receiving Ph.D.s in mathematics did not reach double digits.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 234). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

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How did this translate into economic change? As of 1940, more than four-fifths of black families—87 percent, in fact—lived below the official poverty level. By 1960, this had fallen to 47 percent. In other words, the poverty rate among blacks had been nearly cut in half before either the civil rights revolution of the Great Society social programs began in the 1960s. The continuation of this trend can hardly be automatically credited to these political developments, thought such claims are often made, usually ignoring the pre-existing trends whose momentum could hardly have been expected to stop in the absence of such legislation. By 1970, the poverty rate among blacks had fallen to 30 percent—a welcome development, but by no means unprecedented. A decade after that, with the rise of affirmative action in the intervening years, the poverty rate among black families had fallen to 29 percent. Even if one attributes all of this one percent decline to government policy, it does not compare to the dramatic declines in poverty among blacks when the only major change was the rise in their education.

. . . Frederick Douglas warned, as far back as the 1870s, that blacks should "cultivate their brains more and their lungs less."

While no one can deny the existence of racial discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas, the assumption that the magnitude of employment discrimination can be measured by relative numbers of blacks in particular occupations ignores the huge quantitative and qualitative differences in education between blacks and whites which existed in past

generations—often as a result of government discrimination in the provision of educational resources. Without an understanding of the reasons for both the lags and the progress of blacks in the past, policy prescriptions for future advancement risk misplaced emphases. More specifically, it risks under-estimating the importance of the quantity and quality of education, which depends upon both students and teachers, and much less on the amount of money fed into education bureaucracies or on the fads and panaceas that come and go in the schools and colleges. While the New England culture that was transplanted into various Southern enclaves after the Civil War had remarkable successes, later successful black schools a century later usually had no New England origins but, like New England, they represent a culture very unlike the black redneck culture. Ralph Ellison has pointed out the such stellar singers as Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson "received their development from an extensive personal contact with European culture, free from the influences which shape Southern Negro personality in the United States."

For those who are interested in schools that produce academic success for minority students, there is no lack of examples, past and present. Tragically, there has been an utter lack of interest in academically successful black schools by most educators. Among the few who have even bothered to take notice, too many have been as dogmatic as Kenneth B. Clark, who said that "excellence at Dunbar represented the few," that Dunbar "is the only example in our history of a separate black school that was able, somehow, to be equal," a result of unique circumstances "that could scarcely have existed in any other part of the country." Every one of these unsubstantiated claims was demonstrably untrue. One-third of all the black high school students in Washington were not "the few"; there were and are other black schools that met or exceeded national norms, as examples discussed here have shown—and, far from being confined to Washington, they have been found from New England to California.

Why this ignoring or dismissal of examples of black educational success? Sometimes the reason is ideological: Some, like Professor Clark, have a vest interest in the doctrine that separate is inferior, which underpinned the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, in which his research was cited. To say that mixing and matching racial groups is not a prerequisite for quality education would call into question the decades-long school busing struggle, which might then be seen in retrospect as a costly and divisive wild goose chase, and questions might be raised about the current mantra of "diversity."

Other reasons for ignoring or down-playing successful black schools include the fact that there is no political mileage or financial benefits to be gotten from focusing on such schools, despite how much of an educational gold mine their experience might be for black children. Put bluntly, failure attracts more money than success. Politically, failure becomes a reason to demand more money, smaller classes, and more trendy courses and programs, ranging from

"black English" to bilingualism and "self-esteem." Politicians who want to look compassionate and concerned know that voting money for such projects accomplishes that purpose for them and voting against such programs risks charges of meanspiritness, if not implications of racism.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 241-244). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Despite the heartening achievements of some black schools, which have repeatedly demonstrated what is possible even with children from low-income backgrounds, the general picture of the education of black students is bleak. Much of what is said—and not said—about the education of black students reflects the political context, rather than the educational facts. Whites walk on eggshells for fear of being called racists, while many blacks are preoccupied with protecting the image of black students, rather than protecting their future by telling the blunt truth. It is understandable that some people are concerned about image, about what in private life might be expressed as: "What will the neighbors think?" But, when your children are dying, you don't worry about what the neighbors think.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 244). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

History versus Visions

HISTORY AND CAUSATION

Japan

The isolation which has often kept some societies lagging far behind others was a self-imposed isolation for Japan. From 1638 to 1868, emigration from Japan was forbidden, on pain of death, and foreigner and foreign trade and foreign cultures were kept out. In short, Japan was one of the most self-insulated countries in history—and was also very poor and backward.

This era ended dramatically when American warships under the command of Commodore Matthew Perry entered Japanese waters in 1854 and demanded that Japan open its ports to the outside world. Helpless in the face of such overwhelming modern force, Japan had no choice but to submit to this demand. It was a turning point in the country's history. This painful demonstration of Japan's weakness and backwardness, before its own people and before the world, set in motion internal reforms and an agenda for national development that dominated the country's history for the next century.

Japan's leaders in that era held up the West in general, and the United States in particular, as examples to be emulated. Western technology was imported and Japanese students were sent to study in the West. The English language began to be taught in Japanese schools and there was even a suggestion at one point that English be made the national language of Japan. Textbooks issued by the Japanese government held up Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin as models for the young to imitate, even more so than Japanese heroes. There were euphoric descriptions of the United States as "an earthly paradise." It would be hard to find a more striking example of the "cultural cringe" than nineteenth-century Japan.

An episode shortly after Americans force Japan to open up to the outside world illustrates the situation at that time. Commodore Perry presented a train as a gift and the Americans proceeded to demonstrate it:

> At first the Japanese watched the train fearfully from a safe distance, and when the engine began to move they uttered cries of astonishment and drew in their breath. Before long they were inspecting it closely, stroking it, and riding on it, and they kept this up throughout the day.

No one could have predicted then that, a century later, Japan would produce its own "bullet train" that surpassed anything available in the United States. But it happened only because the Japanese recognized their own initial backwardness and were determined to overcome it. They began by learning all that they could from the West and emulating the West until they reached the point when they had amassed the knowledge, skill, and experience to

take their own independent direction. In the first half of the twentieth century, Japanese products were widely known as cheap, inferior imitations of European or American products. Even after Japan later began to produce higher quality products, such as cameras, the first Canon was an imitation of the German Leica and the first Nikon was an imitation of its German rival, the Contax. Over time, however, these and other Japanese cameras evolved into the leading cameras in the world, both technologically and in terms of sales. Similarly spectacular developments occurred when the Japanese entered the electronics, automotive, and other fields.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 259-260). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Black Americans

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Freed after the Civil War but poverty-stricken, illiterate, unskilled and unacculturated to the demanding way of life in a free republic with a market economy, blacks began their history as a free people at the bottom of American society. . . .

. . .

Among both blacks and white liberals there were those who thought that cultural changes among blacks were unnecessary, that there could be progress without internal cultural change, effects without causes. In the post-1960s world, such views gained the ascendancy—and those who held these views often wondered why it was so hard to raise ghetto blacks out of poverty and social disintegration. Their answer was usually a call for more welfare state programs, more "pride" and "self-esteem," more steeping in the history of black achievement or white injustice. . . .

Fortunately, in the decades before this mindset became fixed, most blacks had become better educated and had lifted themselves out of poverty at a rate *higher* than that after the civil rights revolution of the 1960s. For example, more blacks rose into professional and other higher level occupations in the years preceding the Civil Rights Act of 1964 than in the years following its enactment. This factual history served no one's political agenda and has since been replaced by a fictional history that does.

The economic advancement of blacks has been widely portrayed as due to the civil rights movement, and to political leaders—black and white—who have proclaimed themselves champions of black Americans. Since no one has as large a vested interest in opposing this view

as its proponents have in perpetuating it, the politically more convenient view has prevailed, . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 261-262). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

COSMIC JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE

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One of the strongest arguments against the injustice explanation of intergroup differences is that, in many countries around the world, minorities with virtually no political power or other means of discriminating against the majority population have nevertheless been far more successful—economically, educationally, or otherwise—than those who constitute the bulk of the nation's people. This has long been true of the Chinese in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, Germans in Russia and Brazil, Jews in Eastern Europe and the United States, Lebanese in West Africa, Scots in North America and Australia, and the Japanese in Brazil, Canada, the United States, and Peru. Clearly, in these and other cases, the minority has simply outperformed the majority population, often in both the educational system and the economic system.

Even when it is clear that some groups have excelled without any power to suppress or oppress other groups, there is often still a ranking sense of the injustice of it all—that a child born into one group has so much greater prospects of success in life than a child of no greater innate ability born into another group. Sometimes this is blamed on a lack of "social justice," though the causes of such differences extend well beyond things controlled by any society and which could therefore legitimately be called "social." Each group trails the long shadow of its own history and culture, which influence its habits, priorities, and social patterns, which in turn affect its fate. If there is an injustice, it is an injustice which extends beyond the control of any existing government, institution, or society, because it involves the confluences of history, demography, culture, geography, and other factors, including luck. If there is an injustice, it is at this cosmic level in the vagaries of fate.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 263-264). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

THE WEST IN HISTORY

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. . . After the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, it was centuries—some estimate a millennium—before the standard of living in Western Europe rose again to the level it had reached in Roman times. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 268). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Conquest

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Conquest, like slavery, existed on every inhabited continent and involved all the races of mankind as both conquerors and subjugated peoples. Slavery and conquest existed in the Western Hemisphere before the first white set foot on the shores of the Americas. The Zulus were conquering other African peoples when the British arrived in Southern Africa and conquered them all. Europeans also displaced other conquerors in Asia and among the Polynesians. What was different about European imperialism was how widely scattered its empires were, which was possible only because of revolutions in naval technology and pre-existing base of wealth available to finance overseas expansion. But, morally, what the Europeans did was the same as what non-Europeans had been doing for thousands of years. This is not a moral justification for either. But it is an argument against the selective localization of evil.

Against that background, it is possible to see what a gross distortion of history it is for schools to be asking American school children such questions as how they would feel if they were the indigenous American Indians being forced from their land by the westward movement of invaders from Europe. These children, with no historical background, and coming from a society which condemns conquest, cannot possibly re-create the attitudes and beliefs which prevailed among either the Indians of the Europeans of earlier centuries.

While today's American children would of course think it wrong to take other people's lands by force, the American Indians had no such conception and took one another's lands by force long before they ever laid eyes on a white man. Indeed, Indians often joined with the European invaders to attack other Indians, in order to share in the spoils or to exact revenge for these other Indians' prior spoliation of them, including the taking of their lands and the enslavement of their people. When Cortés marched against the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, he led an army of 900 Spaniards and thousands of Indians.

No doubt those Indians forced off their lands in the United States or Brazil were bitter at being on the losing end of so many battles, but that is wholly different from a belief that battles were not the way to settle such things. No one wants to be conquered or enslaved. But that is wholly different from not wanting to be a conqueror or enslaver, or thinking that either or both are morally wrong. This is not a question of moral relativism or situational ethics. We may today condemn all conquests at all periods of history but that is wholly different from imagining that such feelings were those of Indians in centuries past. Clearly, such "how would you feel" questions are put to American children—and adults—to advance a contemporary vision and a contemporary agenda, rather than to provide a realistic understanding of history. It is a betrayal of the trust of those who send their children to school to be educated, not manipulated.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 269-270). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Western Cultural Values

The misuse of history to condemn evils common around the world as if they were peculiarities of the West has serious practical implications. Two wrongs do not make a right but undermining the society which has the smaller evil only makes it more vulnerable to the greater evils in other societies and in international terrorist networks.

Far more is involved than questions of objectivity or honesty, important as such questions are. Without understanding the features of one's own society that have provided a prosperity, a freedom, and a security rare to non-existent over much of the rest of the world, one risks losing by default all these things for oneself and posterity. American society is one whose underlying bases are always under attack by both internal opportunists and external enemies. Those who have no conception of the Constitution of the United States, except as an object for nit-picking, cannot be expected to defend its integrity against the inevitable encroachments of political opportunists and judicial power-seekers. Those who have no conception of the unique heritage of Western civilization have no idea of what losing that heritage would mean—to them and to generations yet unborn—and why it must be defended against fads at home and lethal threats from abroad.

Freedom is one of those values of Western civilization whose uniqueness has been aptly highlighted by Professor Orlando Patterson of Harvard:

> For most of human history, and for nearly all of the non-Western world prior to Western contact, freedom was, and for many still remains, anything but an obvious or desirable goal. Other values and ideals were, or

are, of far greater importance to them—values such as the pursuit of glory, honor, and power for oneself one's family and clan, nationalism and valor in warfare, filial piety, the harmony of heaven and earth, the spreading of the "true faith," nirvana, hedonism, altruism, justice, equality, material progress—the list is endless. But almost never, outside the context of Western culture and its influence, has it included freedom.

Indeed, non-Western peoples have thought so little about freedom that most human languages did not even possess a word for the concept before contact with the West.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 271-272). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Perhaps the most important, and certainly the most distinctive, characteristic of Western civilization since at least the eighteenth century has been a growing universalism. Nothing has been more common among human beings around the world, and for thousands of years of history, than to disregard the troubles inflicted on other people outside the group to which they happened to belong. Some have taken positive pleasure in their ability to dominate, oppress, humiliate, or kill others. . . .

No society thus far has entirely escaped this older tendency. In other words, universalism has not yet become universal in any society. Nor did universalism in terms of having regard for other people's feeling or well-being imply any sense of equality in ability or even likeability. It simply meant that all people deserved to be treated decently and fairly, whomever they might be and whatever the state of their ability or their culture.

Nothing epitomized this universalism more than Queen Victoria's concern about the fate of slaves in other lands. When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher Stowe was granted an audience with Her Majesty during a trip to England, she found the queen able to discuss the *Dred Scott* case "in great detail," as well as saying that she had wept over some of the passages in the novel. There could hardly be a greater social distance than that between the ruler of the largest empire the world had ever known and a slave being whipped in another country on the other side of an ocean. Yet this universalism was more than an incidental phenomenon in Western civilization. It fueled a worldwide crusade against slavery for more than a century—and the fact that it took more than a century to destroy slavery over most of the world clearly indicates that this universalism did not prevail outside of Western civilization.

One of the implications of universalism is that those who are more fortunate need not be any more deserving than those in misery. For some, this suggests an imperative for redistribution of wealth, while for some others it may suggest a sharing of the knowledge and the development of the habits, priorities, and values that would enable others to create wealth for themselves. For those who believe the latter, simply giving people things is

counterproductive from the standpoint of getting them to become productive themselves. Nor is what is given likely to equal what the recipients could have created for themselves if the *sources* of productivity had been shared, rather than the fruits.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 269-273). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Another great Western advance has been the rule of law—again, as with universalism, not everywhere or at all times but sufficiently to become a characteristic distinguishing Western from non-Western societies. Every society has its rules or its laws, but the rule of law implies far more than this. When the English beheaded King Charles I, this made unmistakably clear—to all at the time and to the generations that followed, throughout the English-speaking world—that no one was above the law. Decades later, when Charles II learned that his subjects were reacting adversely to his expansive conception of his role as king, he found it prudent to sneak out of London in the middle of the night, cross the channel to France, and never return to the British Isles. In many other societies, especially non-Western societies, the notion that the supreme ruler was subject to the law would be foreign, if not incomprehensible. In many of these societies, the ruler's word was itself law.

The rule of law implies more than the principle that on one is above the law. It implies also that those with power cannot take action against individuals without some prior evidence of violations of existing laws and some prior determination through institutionally established "due process" that the individual in question is in fact guilty of transgressing specific prohibitions. . . .

Western conceptions of the rule of law in general, and the Constitution of the United States in particular, reflect a vivid awareness of the dangers of power—and the need to divide that power among different institutions that can counterbalance one another. The principles implicit in the Constitution were made explicit in *The Federalist,* the collection of popular essays designed to explain to eighteenth-century Americans why the Constitution was written as it was, in order to persuade them to ratify this new document on which a new nation would be built.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 273-274). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

A far more urgent challenge faces the West than spreading its culture to other lands. The real culture war is within Western civilization itself, and history is one of its crucial battlegrounds. In addition to the usual disputes over particular facts or their interpretation,

there is a more fundamental and more pervasive attempt to make the sins of the human race look like peculiar depravities of Western civilization. . . .

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 275). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

We do not have a choice whether or not to discuss history. History has always been invoked in contemporary controversies. The only choice is between discussing what actually happened in the past and discussing notions projected into the past for present purposes. History is the memory of the human race. For an individual to wake up some morning with no memory would be devastating. In addition to the emotional trauma of suddenly finding everything and everybody unknown and unfathomable, there would be no way to carry out the practical necessities of work or managing a home, much less maintaining or establishing relations with other human beings. It would not be much better to wake up some morning with a false memory, induced in you by some means by some other person—to serve that other person's purposes, with all memories expunged that do not serve that end and other memories twisted or created out of thin air to make you the willing instrument of some ulterior design.

Much has been written about the sheer neglect of history in our educational institutions, with students able to graduate from some of the most prestigious colleges in the land without having had a single course in the history of their own country or of the world. Far more insidious and dangerous, however, is the promotion of a history created as a projection into the past of current notions and agendas.

History, with its integrity as a record of the past intact, is a gold mine of experience from many times and peoples under a wider range of circumstances than any given generation can find in its own time. Contemporary plans, theories, beliefs, and hopes can be checked against the record of what has happened in the past when similar notions were put into practice. Merely to discover how often the same ideas have occurred to others, centuries ago, can be a sobering experience for those inclined to become carried away by supposedly new and brilliant insights about an unprecedented situation. But history cannot be a reality check for visions when history is itself shaped by visions.

There has been much hand-wringing about the difficulty or impossibility of achieving objectivity in writing history. If there is anyone who is objective, it is hard to imagine how others who are not objective would know that. The unattainability of objectivity is too often a distraction from something more mundane that is quite attainable but is often absent— honesty. When facts about racial or ethnic groups that are both known and relevant are

deliberately suppressed because they would undermine a particular vision, doctrine, or agenda, then history is prostituted and cannot serve as a check against visions, because facts have been subordinated to visions.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 276-277). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Taking Sides

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To look at history as a matter of taking sides is to turn the human failing of bias, which mars what we do to a greater or lesser extent, into a principle that is to permeate—and pollute—our whole endeavor. It is an all-or-nothing argument, that if we cannot completely eliminate bias, then we should give it free rein, perhaps even congratulating ourselves for having admitted our biases. Perfection is not attainable in any aspect of human life but does that mean we should turn imperfections into virtues? Does the fact that we cannot eliminate 100 percent of the impurities in air or water mean that should celebrate smog or polluted water and boast of our realism?

Making a case for or against an individual, group, or society is fundamentally different from seeking the facts and analyzing the context and constraints which explain those facts. Making an indictment may be easier and more emotionally satisfying than following the ancient admonition, "With all your getting, get understanding." Neither indictments nor apologies are the same as understanding. Nor is a preconceived neutrality. The truth does not necessarily "lie somewhere in between." Like anything else, only after you find it can you know where it is.

Taking sides too easily degenerates into being morally one-up and imagining that we would have handled the problems of the past so much better than those we were there. Nothing is easier than creating higher standards for judging other people. Intellectuals whose whole careers are built around words are especially vulnerable to the temptation to judge historic figures by their words. Thus the wording of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation has been a disappointment to many, then as now. . . . It was by no means a foregone conclusion that the Emancipation Proclamation would have survived such challenges—and its purpose was to survive, to free millions of human beings, not to seek a place in the anthologies.

Some historic figures—Winston Churchill for example—are renowned for both their words and their deeds. But a historic figure such as George Washington contributed little to the anthologies, while making landmark contributions to the creation of a new kind of nation and, but example, to the development of free societies in the modern world. The issue, however, is not simply one of assigning the proper stature to individuals. More fundamentally, the task is to

assess causation. But those seeking moral indictments too often condemn past leaders for not having made such futile gestures as putting a clause banning slavery in the Constitution, when such a clause would have banned the Constitution itself from the South, making that section a separate nation in which slavery is unlikely to have been ended as early as Lincoln ended it.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 278-279). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Reaching conclusions after the fact is not the same as taking sides before the facts, even if those conclusions reflect credit or discredit on different individuals or groups to differing degrees. The historian is the agent of the reader. That is whose side is supposed to be served and it is a conflict of interest to set out to serve some other cause while pretending to be informing the reader.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 281). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . the confiscation of the lands of Czech nobles who revolted against the Hapsburg Empire in 1620 meant a transfer of vast amounts of land to people of German ancestry—a process which leaders of the newly created nation of Czechoslovakia after the First World War sought to reverse in the name of "social justice" so as to "put right the historic wrongs of the seventeenth century."

Obviously, no one from the seventeenth century was still alive to be either punished or rewarded, so Germans and Czechs were being conceived of as intertemporal abstractions, and the reversal of historic wrongs was to be done with flesh-and-blood people alive in the twentieth century. Both Germans and Czechs went horrible and murderous traumas over the next several decades as a result of event set in motion to reverse what had happened three centuries earlier. These traumas included the dismemberment of the country as a result of the Munich crisis of 1938, provoked by the embittered German minority that had been discriminated against within Czechoslovakia, in the name of "social justice," and then, after the Second World War, massive and brutal expulsions of Germans from Czechoslovakia, with losses of lives by the tens of thousands. Both Germans and Czechs in the twentieth century ended up far worse off than if seventeenth-century issues had been left in the seventeenth century.

The confusion of intertemporal abstractions with living flesh-and-blood human beings has by no means been confined to Czechs and Germans, or even to people under the hypnotic sway of demagogues. A very thoughtful book about various Asian countries, for example, noted the lack of remorse among those Japanese who committed hideous atrocities against defenseless people in the lands they conquered during the Second World War, but added: "The United

States, after all, has never formally apologized for enslaving African, invading Mexico and Canada, stealing Texas, colonizing the Philippines, or Guam, or carpet-bombing Vietnam." The distinction between living, flesh-and-blood Japanese military veterans who personally committed atrocities and an intertemporal abstraction of Americans committing various acts over a period of centuries was simply ignored.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 282). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

. . . group solidarity often means letting the lowest common denominator shape the culture and life within the group and determine the direction of its future. This can range from black students' being accused of "acting white" for being conscientious about their studies to automatic criticisms of police actions against rioters or criminals. These are self-inflicted wounds that can jeopardize the whole future of a people.

. . . Contrary to popular belief, highly successful groups do not "all stick together." The history of such groups as the Jews, the Lebanese, the overseas Chinese, and others clearly belies this belief. Chinese American leaders, for example, at one time urged San Francisco policemen—mostly white—to crack down on young Chinese hoodlums and gangsters, including administering "curbstone justice" with vigorous use of billy clubs. Moreover, some elements within the Chinese American community apparently took their own actions, for the bound and gagged bodies of some of these criminals were found floating in San Francisco Bay.

Groupwide solidarity that includes hoodlums and criminals means absorbing enormous costs imposed on the rest of the ethnic community, not only directly as victims of crime, but also indirectly when businesses and jobs flee the community, leaving an economic wasteland. Chinese American leaders were particularly sensitive to this possibility because much of the prosperity of the Chinatown area in San Francisco depended on its remaining a pace attracting large numbers of tourists. By contrast, it has long been the practice of black Americans to "protect any Negro from the whites, even when they happed not to like that individual Negro," as Gunnar Myrdal put it more than half a century ago. Such tendencies have only increased since then. Such automatic group solidarity ties the fate of the community as a whole to the fate of its most unsavory elements in many

ways. It not only identifies the community with the acts of these individuals in the eyes of the larger society, it puts great leverage in the hands of the irresponsible and criminal elements, whose actions can cause backlashes against blacks in general—whether in the form of political reactions, social isolation, violence, or simply the withdrawal of businesses from black neighborhoods, taking jobs and a tax base with them.

Where a particular group culture is itself a handicap impeding the acquisition of the education, skills, and experience required for economic and other advancement, group solidarity can have huge and lifelong consequences with staggering costs. Even with such mundane things as the prices charged in local stores, group solidarity can obscure the causes of the higher prices which often confront lower income people. The costs created by crime and violence are often blamed on outsiders who charge these high prices rather than on the local delinquent and criminal elements that create the costs which these prices reflect. Group solidarity may not only seal a group off from the larger surrounding society, it may seal them off from the truth about the internal causes of their own problems, making a solution more remote.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 284-285). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Lessons of History

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While lessons of history can be valuable, the twisting of history and the mining of the past for grievances can tear a society apart. Past grievance, real or imaginary, are equally irremediable in the present, for nothing that is done among living contemporaries can change in the slightest of sins and the sufferings of generations who took those sins and sufferings to the grave with them in centuries past. Galling as it may be to be helpless to redress the crying injustices of the past, symbolic expiation in the present can only create new injustices among the living and new problems for the future, when newborn babies enter the world with pre-packaged grievances against other babies born the same day. Both have their futures jeopardized, not only by their internal strife but also by the increased vulnerability of a disunited society to external dangers from other nations and from international terrorist networks.

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One of the most chilling lessons of the history of the twentieth century is how deceptive domestic tranquility can be in a multi-ethnic society, when it takes only the right circumstances and the right demagogue to turn neighbor murderously against neighbor. There was not a single race riot between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka during the first half of the twentieth century and the relations between the two groups at mid-century were regarded by many observers as a model for how different ethnic groups could co-exist in harmony. Yet the second half of the century saw not only massive and lethal riots between these two groups, but also unspeakable atrocities inflicted on individuals from one group who just happened to fall into the hands of the other group. Moreover, all this fomented hatred and violence escalated into a full-scale civil war, in which this small country suffered more deaths than the United States suffered during all the long years of the Vietnam War. Both "sides" lost—and they lost because they became sides, instead of remaining fellow countrymen with different cultures.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (p. 290). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.

Although our misunderstanding of the past cannot affect the past, it can affect the future, sometimes catastrophically. Human beings have survived too many mistakes and misjudgments to make mere inaccuracy fatal by itself. Yet the fact that nations and whole civilizations have also collapsed, with tragic repercussions lasting for centuries, is a sobering reminder that there is not an unlimited latitude for error or misconception. Sealing ourselves off from reality within a vision risks the kinds of catastrophes that blind rulers have brought down upon themselves and their countries, from the days of the Roman Empire to the cataclysm into which Hitler led Germany. The key factor in these calamities has often been a blocking of feedback from reality, epitomized by the figurative or literal killing of messengers bringing bad news.

Where beliefs are not checked against facts, but instead facts must meet the test of consonance with the prevailing vision, we are in the process of sealing ourselves off from feedback from reality. Heedless of the past, we are flying blind into the future.

Sowell, Thomas (2009). Black Rednecks & White Liberals (pp. 291-292). Encounter Books. Kindle Edition.