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The Invention Of The White Race



Synopsis

The complete two-volume set of the groundbreaking analysis of the birth of racism in America. When the first Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619, there were no “white” people there. Nor, according to colonial records, would there be for another sixty years. In this seminal two-volume work, *The Invention of the White Race*, Theodore W. Allen tells the story of how America’s ruling classes created the category of the “white race” as a means of social control. Since that early invention, white privileges have enforced the myth of racial superiority, and that fact has been central to maintaining ruling-class domination over ordinary working people of all colors throughout American history. Since publication in the mid-nineties, *The Invention of the White Race* has become indispensable in debates on the origins of racial oppression in America. Volume One utilizes Irish history to show the relativity of race and racial oppression as a form of social control. Volume Two details the development of racial oppression and racial slavery in colonial Virginia and, more broadly, Anglo-America. In this updated edition, scholar Jeffrey B. Perry provides a new introduction, a short biography of the author, a select bibliography and a study guide.

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Customer Reviews

“A monumental study of the birth of racism in the American South which makes truly new and convincing points about one of the most critical problems in US history ... a highly original and seminal work.”
—David Roediger
“A powerful and polemical study.”
—Times Literary Supplement
“In a masterful two-volume work,

Theodore Allen transforms the reader's understanding of race and racial oppression from what mainstream history often portrays as an unfortunate sideshow in U.S. history to a central feature in the construction of U.S. (and indeed global) capitalism | more than a look at history; it is a foundation for a path toward social justice.

•Bill Fletcher Jr., coauthor of *Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and a New Path Toward Social Justice* "A must read for all social justice activists, teachers, and scholars."

•Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, author of *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie* "Decades before people made careers undoing racism, Ted Allen was working on this trailblazing study, which has become required reading."

•Noel Ignatiev, coeditor of *Race Traitor*, author of *How the Irish Became White* "A real tour de force, a welcome return to empiricism in the subfield of race studies, and a timely reintroduction of class into the discourse on American exceptionalism."

•Times Higher Education Supplement "As magisterial and comprehensive as the day it was first published, Theodore Allen's *The Invention of the White Race* continues to set the intellectual, analytical and rhetorical standard when it comes to understanding the real roots of white supremacy, its intrinsic connection to the class system, and the way in which persons committed to justice and equity might move society to a different reality."

•Tim Wise, author of *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* "One of the most important books of U.S. history ever written. It illuminates the origins of the largest single obstacle to progressive change and working-class power in the U.S.: racism and white supremacy."

•Joe Berry, author of *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower* "As organizers of workers, we cannot effectively counter the depth of white racism in the U.S. if we don't understand its origin and mechanisms. Ted has figured something out that can guide our work—it's groundbreaking and it's eye-opening."

•Gene Bruskin, *US Labor Against the War* "An intriguing book that will be cited in all future discussions about the origins of racism and slavery in America."

•Labor Studies Journal "A must read for educators, scholars and social change activists—now more than ever! Ted Allen's writings illuminate the centrality of how white supremacy continues to work in maintaining a powerless American working class."

•Tami Gold, director of *RFK in the Land of Apartheid and My Country Occupied in Slave Plantation Societies* "Few books are capable of carrying the profound weight of being deemed to be a classic—this is surely one. Indeed, if one has to read one book to provide a foundation for understanding the contemporary US—read this one."

•Gerald Horne, author of *Negro Comrades of the Crown* "A richly

researched and highly suggestive analysis ... Indispensable for readers interested in the disposition of power in Ireland, in the genesis of racial oppression in the U.S., or in the fluidity of race and the historic vicissitudes of whiteness.

Choice "The Invention of the White Race" is a contribution to the debates on notions of a white race and its relevance not simply for scholars of American history but for those interested in notions of race and class in any historical and geographical setting is beyond doubt.

Labour History Review "Theodore W. Allen has enlisted me as a devoted reader."

Metro Times Literary Quarterly "The most important book on the origin of racism in what was to become the United States and more important now perhaps than when it was first released in the mid nineties."

Gregory Meyerson, coeditor of Cultural Logic "This modern classic presents an essential reconstruction of concepts necessary to any understanding of the Western heritage in the context of World history."

Wilson J. Moses, author of The Golden Age of Black Nationalism "Truly original, and worthy of renewed engagement."

Bruce Nelson, author of Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race "The Invention of the White Race is an important work for its meticulously researched materials and its insights into colonial history. Its themes and perspectives should be made available to all scholars ... A classic without which no future American history will be written."

Audrey Smedley, author of Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview "The most comprehensive and meticulously documented presentation of the historical, or as he calls it, sociogenic theory of racial oppression."

Freedom Road Magazine "In Volume One of The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control, Theodore W. Allen painstakingly sets out the historical precedents, the comparative case studies, the means to dissect threadbare explanations of contemporary racism, and then provides us with nimble heuristic devices to disentangle the snarled derivatives of the white supremacy ideology we face today."

Edward H. Peebles, Ph.D., Associate Professor Emeritus at Virginia Commonwealth University, civil rights activist, and author of *Twentieth Century Scalawag: A White Southerner's Journey through Segregation to Human Rights Activism* "[The Invention of the White Race] will change your life and outlook forever. You simply can't understand America and who we are without this book."

Carl Davidson, author of *New Paths to Socialism* "If one wants to understand the current, often contradictory, system of racial oppression in the United States and its historical

origins. There is only one place to start: Theodore Allen's brilliant, illuminating, *The Invention of the White Race*. Michael Goldfield, author of *The Color of Politics: Race and the Mainsprings of American Politics* "Immigration historians should be particularly interested in Allen's analysis of how the Irish, victims of racial oppression at home, learned that they were 'white' once they crossed the Atlantic and became supporters of a system of racial oppression in the United States. *Journal of American Ethnic History* "Allen has produced a two-volume tour de force that situates the development of racism, white supremacy, and racial identities in context of the sixteenth and seventeenth century British conquest of Ireland, the Atlantic slave trade, the rise of chattel bond-servitude in the Caribbean and English-speaking North America, and the destruction of Native American societies. Charles L. Lumpkins, author of *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics* "Anyone who wants to understand the peculiar state of working class organizing in the USA ... needs to study and learn from the insights provided by the work of Allen. George N. Schmidt, editor of *Substance News* "Allen's work adds a level of detail often overlooked. He incorporates 'white' people into the discussion, and not just as proponents and perpetrators of slavery. He shows how most 'whites' perpetuated their own subordination by rejecting alliances with people of color. Kim Scipes, *Logos* "This outstanding, insightful original work with profound implications for the fractured working class protest tradition of the United States could not be more timely as working people throughout the world are shamelessly robbed and dispossessed by the financial manipulations of our Wall Street titans still wielding their poison bait of white skin privilege. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, author of *Social Control in Slave Plantation Societies* "Essential reading for all students of race and power in America. This path-breaking research reframes and cuts across the disciplines of history, sociology and politics, shedding a dynamic new light on the important and often hidden phenomenon of race in America's cultural evolution. Joseph Wilson, co-author *Race and Labor Matters in the New US Economy* "One of the great contributions of Allen's study is a complete debunking of the myth that race and skin color are the same thing. Jonathan Scott, author of *Socialist Joy in the Writings of Langston Hughes* "The transition from being poor, dispossessed, Catholic and oppressed when in Ireland, to fully ordained members of the 'white race' when in America, with all the privileges, rights and immunities appertaining thereto, illustrates the sociological relativity of notions of race ... [and] confirms Allen's preference for a 'sociogenic' "

understanding of racial oppression rooted in sociological processes, rather than
phylogenetic or genetic interpretations. • Ethnic & Racial
Studies | Allen | an independent scholar | has pursued an idea across the
frontier of conventional specializations, supported in his labours by a belief that to determine the
origin of white racism will contribute to its eradication. It is difficult to envisage such a work being
produced in the wasteland of contemporary academic
life. • Ecumene | Allen |s use of the Irish example lends support to
the argument that race is a social construction. A strength of Allen |s book is his effort to
view race apart from biology, to see racial categories as ever-changing social conventions and not
as immutable classifications fixed in nature or the human psyche. • Virginia
Magazine of History and Biography | Allen is concerned here with | a comparative
analysis of racial oppression in Ireland and in the United States | and the shift in identity
among Irish immigrant Catholics, who moved from a group oppressed on racial grounds in Ireland to
one defined as |white| in the United States |What pulls the entire
discussion together is the notion of |Social Control. | Allen argues that racial
oppression (racial social control) is one of various mechanisms a ruling elite can utilize to protect its
position in society. • Contemporary Sociology | Allen champions the
superiority of socioeconomic over psychocultural approaches to the study of race and slavery
| [and] notes, |“only by | understanding what was peculiar about the
Peculiar Institution can one know what is exceptionable about |American
Exceptionalism. | • Journal of American History | Allen sees race as an
invention |and he knows who invented it. Racial slavery was the creation of colonial power
(or a ruling class, or the bourgeoisie), and what was done in North America was analogous to what
was done in Ireland. So the struggle against capitalism and the struggle against race are part of the
same campaign. | • Tribune (London) | Allen |s two volume
masterpiece | • The Invention of the White Race | is vital ammunition for those of us
engaged in Revolutionary Change because his work helps to expose the current myth of a
post-racial US society/world and reveal the underbelly of a dying capitalism |s hyper-racial
world of violence, terror and human and natural exploitation. | • S.E. Anderson, author
of The Black Holocaust for Beginners |“If you hope to understand the tangled history of race
and class, The Invention of the White Race has to be on your reading list. | • Will
Shetterly, author of Dogland |“The notion of |privilege | is ubiquitous
amongst radicals today. But few of them understand its origins in Ted Allen |s conception of

white privilege, and fewer still have read and wrestled with his masterwork *The Invention of the White Race*. Allen's provocative thesis is that the white race was a category constructed to suppress class conflict asks deep and troubling questions about the foundation of the United States and the intersection of race and class, while openly challenging the Left's fundamental assumptions about social change in this country. Spencer Sunshine, assistant editor of *Monthly Review*

Theodore W. Allen was an independent scholar, coalminer, mailhandler, engineering draftsman, teacher and librarian.

If you're interested in this era and this history, this 2 volume set is for you. its worth the money. Very small print and pretty heavy to hold are the downsides.

Good specific read

Great scholarly piece of work. When people discuss the issue of oppression in America they always start with slavery. People fail to realize that there is a history of Europe and Caucasian people. This book bridges the gap and gives a global perspective on the origins of White supremacy.

Seminal work for anyone deeply invested in an investigation of race, racism and class in America. A bit too male oriented. but solid scholarship!

Good book collection

This two-volume set presents a lot of history of England and its multi-century conquest of Ireland, and shows how methods of subjugation of the Irish by the English upper classes laid the groundwork for the eventual use of racial oppression against various people in the Americas, along with the irony that the racially-oppressed Irish generally became strong supporters of racial oppression once in the United States. The early history of slavery in colonial Virginia and Maryland occupies much of the second volume, and most of this history records methods used by the upper class plantation owners and their investors back in England to obtain limited-term slave labor from the multitudes of poor people from England, Ireland, Scotland, other European countries, Africa, and American Indians. The author presents evidence that those who survived their term of bondage

became free (with all rights to property, etc.), regardless of ethnic origin, up until Bacon's Rebellion in the 1670s. He portrays part of this rebellion as the working-class rising up against the plantation owners, and makes the case that this threat against the social order prompted the upper classes to "divide and conquer" the lower classes by limiting slavery to Africans and "inventing the white race" in order to supply a social buffer group that would work to oppress the slave group as long as they had special privileges (even though they were still poor and struggling themselves). This also allowed the imposition of lifetime, hereditary bondage on the African-Americans, which had been another goal of the upper class, regardless of ethnicity of the slaves. The author also shows how things developed differently in the Caribbean, partly due to the differences of a sugar economy there as opposed to a tobacco economy on the mainland; the greater ability for slaves to run away on the mainland; and the excess of poor Europeans in Virginia and Maryland compared to the Caribbean. Overall, these two volumes present a very different view of our history than what we have learned in school, and give us a good starting point for understanding when trying to heal our common wounds.

it was a historical work that gave a correct view of western civilizations demonization of non white races of the human family.

Right from the state it made my blood boil which gives me thinking points to write many a paper upon.

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