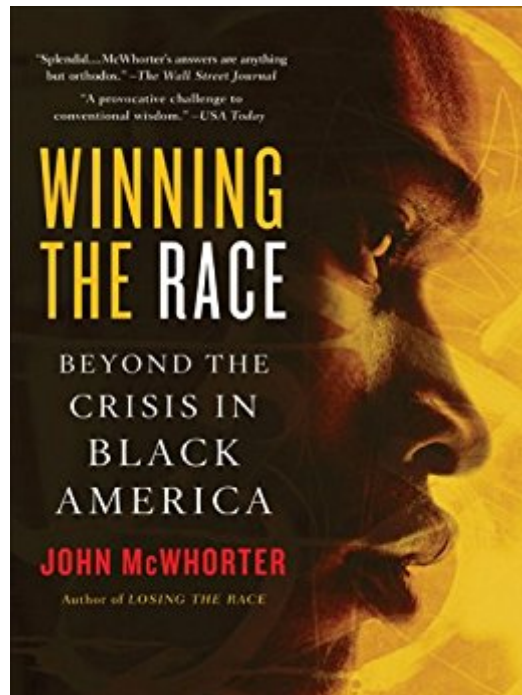


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Winning The Race: Beyond The Crisis In Black America



Synopsis

In his first major book on the state of black America since the New York Times bestseller *Losing the Race*, John McWhorter argues that a renewed commitment to achievement and integration is the only cure for the crisis in the African-American community. *Winning the Race* examines the roots of the serious problems facing black Americans today—poverty, drugs, and high incarceration rates—and contends that none of the commonly accepted reasons can explain the decline of black communities since the end of segregation in the 1960s. Instead, McWhorter posits that a sense of victimhood and alienation that came to the fore during the civil rights era has persisted to the present day in black culture, even though most blacks today have never experienced the racism of the segregation era. McWhorter traces the effects of this disempowering conception of black identity, from the validation of living permanently on welfare to gansta rap's glorification of irresponsibility and violence as a means of protest. He discusses particularly specious claims of racism, attacks the destructive posturing of black leaders and the hip-hop academics, and laments that a successful black person must be faced with charges of acting white. While acknowledging that racism still exists in America today, McWhorter argues that both blacks and whites must move past blaming racism for every challenge blacks face, and outlines the steps necessary for improving the future of black America.

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Customer Reviews

There was almost too much in this book for me to soak up. Part of me wonders whether I should have read the author's "Losing the Race" first. Regardless, this was a very informative and well thought out book. The author argues his main thesis very well--that a cultural shift (or the meme) in the black community is more significant in explaining the black community's ills rather than factors such as racism, segregation, tall public housing, flight of the black middle class, etc. This cultural shift occurred in the 1960s where it became possible and socially acceptable to live perpetually on welfare and at the same time to raise your fist against the system and "the Man." This is in contrast to previous black generations that worked to better themselves with the system and were relatively successful despite actual racism, segregation, etc. The only warning is to be prepared to reach for your Webster's Dictionary. There are plenty of big words--but you can expect that from a linguist professor and an academic.

McWhorter did a fantastic job. He is a scholar and intellectual black man who says the things many people dare not. He is brilliant and his work is great. It shows the incredible amount of self sabotage that is rampant in the black community.

I saw John McWhorter on a PBS news show and was taken back by the way he explained the issues of Black Culture based on his book and that prompted me to buy the book. I think it helped that the host of the show (who is white) seemed befuddled by John's explanation of the impact of Black Culture. I would have responded the same ways as a white person who has had minimal exposure to Black Culture. White folks do not always get straight talk about the Black community and because of that can not understand the root causes of problems faced by Black folks in today's society. Seems that Black Leaders are always trying to find blame for Black Folks problems based on racism and changes in the economy, etc. That approach seems to cause more problems then it fixes and will never allow real integration of the minds and hearts. The book goes into great detail about Black culture but one thing I liked was John's honesty and sincerity that made me feel like John was talking to me to explain the real issues that affect Black folks in today's society. I read

both of John's books, "Losing the Race" and "Winning the Race" and I felt like John was really trying to cut away the BS and show why there are problems in the Black community and they have nothing to with racism or the big bad white man wanting to keep the Black person down. Using facts like the percentage of Blacks in prison compared with the Black population or that how Blacks endured prior to 60s and migrated to the north but could not go 5-10 miles out side Indianapolis were the factories moved from the inner city. Many of the issues that John points out I always felt were the case but never heard anyone openly bring them to light. I really could understand John's explanation on how the open ended Welfare that started in the 60s caused the Black community to decline in many areas. I saw the same thing growing up around Cortland, NY (30 miles south of Syracuse). These were white people but they had many of the same issues that welfare caused Black folks and I wanted no part of it. My Mother was working to bring up three children making under \$2.00 an hour around 1970 with a 150.00 per month for all three children. She never thought of using welfare as way to get out of having to work all day and take care of her kids at night. She was able to buy us a new home and move use to a good neighborhood. My Mother's motivation and dedication has always inspired me to work hard and try and do the right things in life. On the other hand I had a father who basically abandoned us, and if it was not for the US Air Force forcing him to send child support we would have received very little from him. By the way, my Mother grew up poor on a farm and her father did the minimal to help the family stay a float but some how she never let that stop her from doing the right thing. I used my experiences to relate to what John was explaining in the book and it all made really good sense. I think we all have negative forces pulling on us and a person has to work really hard regardless of their race to rise above these forces and do the right thing to put them in position to have a good life. John makes many good points that many Black folks are underachievers because of cultural influences (peer pressure) and I felt the same issues when I found myself hanging around the wrong people who only wanted to party and have a good time at the expense of their friends. I had to leave those people behind if I was to accomplish anything positive in my life. It was not easy for me to break away from the party/drug culture I lived around. Based on John's book I felt that for a Black youngster to be successful they need to break away and make the decision to leave the grips of a negative culture to go out into the world to be successful. To be their own man or women, but how can they when they relied so much on that culture as their identity. The key for me was going into the Air Force and taking advantage of the educational programs and continuing in the Air Force Reserves. It all helped bring myself above what an average person was thought to be able to achieve in Cortland, NY. I had many Black friends in the Air Force that had the same opportunities to gain the same advantages the military

had to offer and many took advantages of those opportunities. Just like me, many Black folks who entered into the Air Force just needed to get away from the negative influences that existed at home and find out what they could accomplish. This is a really good book, written by someone with a great deal of insight and experience. I would recommend the book to anyone who has never experienced the Black culture of the last 30 years to help them get a better idea what many Black folks face in today's society and to provide a better understanding of the issues. The book helped see things much differently for Black folks and helped me create more empathy towards their issues in today's society. Jim

Publisher's Weekly got it right when it said this book is long-winded. I enjoyed reading a different viewpoint of Black empowerment despite the past, but McWhorter thoughts are indeed repetitive. Over and over again, he talks about the how some Black folks are stuck in old ways of thinking based on the racism of the 60's and earlier, and how times have changed. He says things are not perfect, but one can overcome the legacy of racism and too much emphasis is put on it today. Even as a White person, I think he probably minimizes the racism in society today, but he in essence says so what? McWhorter does however have the advantage of being extremely intelligent and from an upper middle class background. Many people both Black and White have not had the advantages of intelligence and environment that he has enjoyed. Just read some of the comments of AOL bloggers whenever a topic of Black interest is in the news, and you'll see that there is still a very significant amount of racism in society, much more than McWhorter believes exists. Still I admire him for saying in essence "go for it." According to McWhorter, one can overcome limited obstacles.

Great book thank you John.

great

A MUST read by all citizens.

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