



Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America

John H. Mcwhorter

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Is school a "white" thing? If not, then why do African-American students from comfortable middle-class backgrounds perform so badly in the classroom? What is it that prevents so many black college students in the humanities and social sciences from studying anything other than black subjects? Why do young black people, born decades after the heyday of the Civil Rights movement, see victimhood as the defining element of their existence? In this explosive book, Berkeley linguistics professor John McWhorter reports from the trenches of today's college classroom to offer a daring assessment of what's plaguing the children of yesterday's affirmative-action babies. The Civil Rights revolution was the pinnacle of American history, freeing African Americans from centuries of disenfranchisement. Yet, as McWhorter shows, it has had a tragic side effect. As racism recedes as a serious obstacle to black advancement, most black American leaders and thinkers have been misled into a self-destructive ideological detour. Victimhood is exaggerated and enshrined more than constructively addressed. Following from this, young black people are shepherded into a separatist conception of "blackness" defined largely as that which is not "white." This in turn conditions a sense, embedded in black American culture as a whole, that academic achievement is a "white" realm that the "authentic" black person dwells in only for financial gain or to chronicle black victimhood and victories. McWhorter addresses these problems head-on, drawing on history, statistics, and his own life experiences. He shows that affirmative action in university admissions, indispensable 30 years ago, is today an obsolete policy that encourages the counterproductive ideologies of what he calls Separatism, Victimology, and Anti-intellectualism. Most perniciously, it prevents black students from demonstrating the abilities our Civil Rights leaders gave them the opportunity to nurture, and it deprives them of the incentive to strive for the very top. Racism is not dead -- but as McWhorter so persuasively argues, dealing it a death blow will require a reinvestment in the strength that allowed black Americans to triumph and survive this far. His pathbreaking book is certain to shock, inspire, and ignite debate among all those who care about race and education today.

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