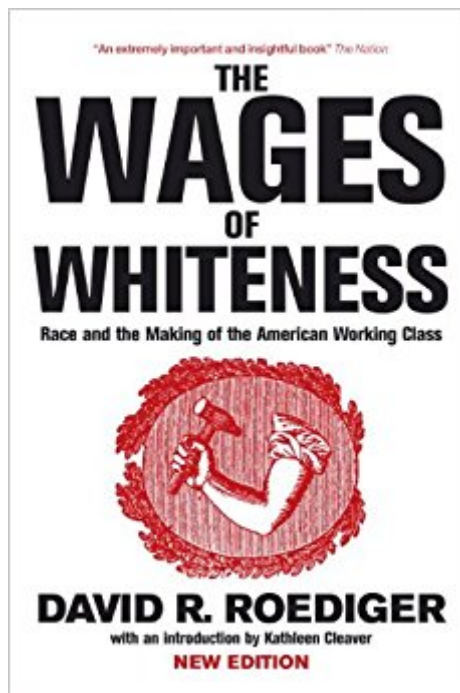




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The Wages Of Whiteness: Race And The Making Of The American Working Class



Synopsis

Combining classical Marxism, psychoanalysis, and the new labor history pioneered by E. P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman, David Roediger's widely acclaimed book provides an original study of the formative years of working-class racism in the United States. This, he argues, cannot be explained simply with reference to economic advantage; rather, white working-class racism is underpinned by a complex series of psychological and ideological mechanisms that reinforce racial stereotypes, and thus help to forge the identities of white workers in opposition to Blacks. In a new preface, Roediger reflects on the reception, influence, and critical response to *The Wages of Whiteness*, while Kathleen Cleaver's insightful introduction hails the importance of a work that has become a classic.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

• At last an American labor historian realizes that white workers have a racial identity that matters as race matters to workers who are not white. • Nell Irwin Painter, Princeton University • A timely and important intervention in the current debates over race and ethnicity. • Catherine Hall, New Left Review • Roediger's exciting new book makes us understand what it means to see oneself as white in a new way. An extremely important and insightful book. • Lawrence Glickman, The Nation • The Celestine Prophecy of whiteness studies. • SPLN

David Roediger is Kendrick Babcock Chair of History at the University of Illinois. Among his books are *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (with Philip S. Foner), *How Race Survived US History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon*, and *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. He is the editor of *Fellow Worker: The Life of Fred Thompson*, *The North and Slavery* and *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White* as well as a new edition of Covington Hall's *Labor Struggles in the Deep South*. His articles have appeared in *New Left Review*, *Against the Current*, *Radical History Review*, *History Workshop Journal*, *The Progressive* and *Tennis*. Mike Davis is the author of several books including *Planet of Slums*, *City of Quartz*, *Ecology of Fear*, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, and *Magical Urbanism*. He was recently awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. He lives in Papa'aloa, Hawaii. Michael Sprinker was Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. His *Imaginary Relations: Aesthetics and Ideology in the History of Historical Materialism* and *History and Ideology in Proust* are also published by Verso. Together with Mike Davis, he founded Verso's Haymarket Series and guided it until his death in 1999.

This is a classic work on white racism and its genesis. Roediger takes the reader in thorough examination of the effects of whiteness...it is a great resource book for papers....

This book looks at the very interesting question of why the American labor movement did not embrace the cause of Black emancipation and civil right. On the surface it would seem that the two would have enough in common to share a common cause. Not so argues Roediger. In fact he argues that the emerging industrial worker of the mid to late 19th century who was low skilled and often times a recent immigrant from Ireland or Germany had an even more powerful interest in distancing themselves from the degradation that was associated with Blacks and the jobs that they performed. While this would seem counter intuitive, Roediger argues that many unskilled white workers gained a type of social legitimacy from separating themselves from non-white labor and gaining for themselves the status of being seen as White American workers. While the beginning of the book is a little dense as the author tries to tease out the changing meaning of different terms for labor and racial categories in the pre and post Civil War period, this only sets the stage for more concrete example in the second half when he examines the experiences of Irish immigrant laborers in the later chapters. This is an interesting book in that it examines race from the perspective of what it means to be White and the social implications of that. It reminds the reader that the social

categorization of race is dependent on opposition and that this opposition is in no way a natural or concrete boundary but rather a dynamic social construct that all Americans should be aware of.

Essential work for whiteness studies.

excellent

Excellent

Let it be said from the outset that Roediger is an American Labor Historian, and although this is a book about race, it is also a book about the way class and race are so intertwined. I think it is somewhat amusing that so many people find Roediger racist against whites, I don't think he is: he is more interested in the way race and class became nearly unified concepts in the formation of the American Working Class during the nineteenth century. As Roediger points out, Working class became in many ways, white working class: which is no surprise considering that most works of labor history before the 1960s (and even most afterwards) concerned themselves only with white men. This of course leads to a minor fault in his work: gender is not fully considered (but at 180 pages, this is understandable). Dana Frank's "Purchasing Power" would be a good work to get a small glimpse of that piece of the puzzle. Overall, a great work of historical scholarship that should be read by every serious historian.

Author writes from a Marxist theoretical framework. "Whiteness" is presented like a disease.

This book provides a perspective of the racial element of labor and class construction that everyone should read.

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