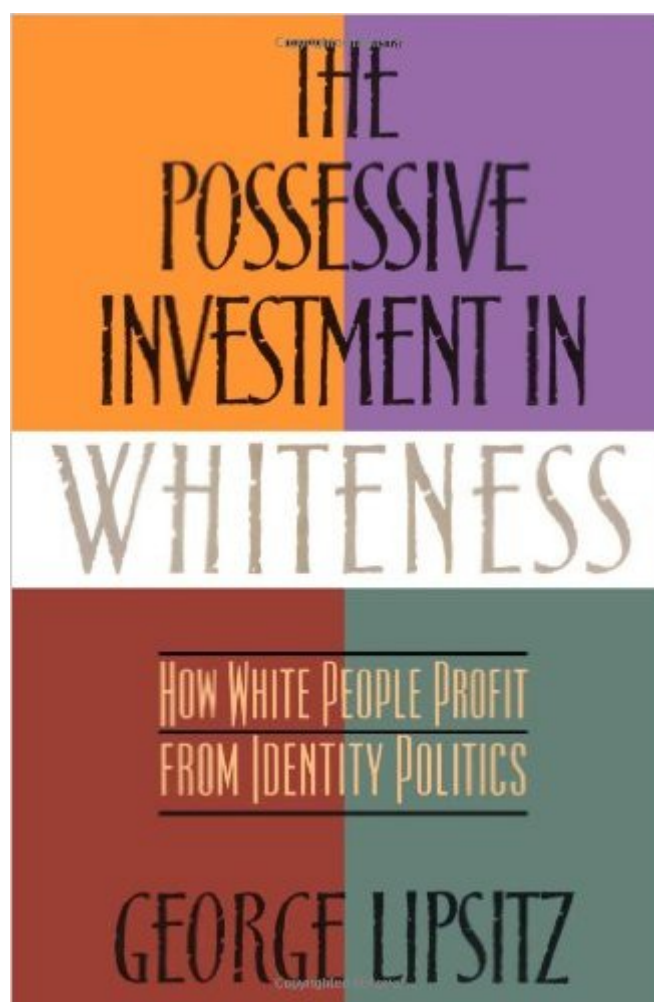


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Possessive Investment In Whiteness



Synopsis

Attacking the common view that whiteness is a meaningless category of identity, Lipsitz shows that public policy and private prejudice insure that whites wind up on top of the social hierarchy. Passionately and clearly written, this wide-ranging book probes into the social and material rewards that accrue to "the possessive investment in whiteness." Lipsitz sums up the ways that public policy has virtually excluded communities of color from everything that American society defines as desirable: first-rate education, decent housing, asset accumulation, political power, social status, satisfying work, and even the power to shape and narrate their own history. White supremacy is no thing of the past, no fringe movement. It is a pervasive and pernicious system that restricts the political and cultural agency of African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Latinos every day. Unearned and unacknowledged, race-based advantages, not greater merit or a superior work ethic, account for white privilege. Lipsitz's ultimate point is not to condemn all white people as racists but to challenge everyone to begin a principled examination of personal actions and political commitments. Exposing the system of unfairness is not enough. People of all groups-but especially white people because they benefit from that system-have to work toward eradicating the rewards of whiteness. Author note: George Lipsitz is Professor of Ethnic Studies at UC, San Diego, and the author of *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Temple), *Rainbow At Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s*, *Dangerous Crossroads*, and *Time Passages*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a white male, I have witnessed the mechanics of white privilege all my life. I have become increasingly aware of the unfair advantages open to me for no reason other than race, thus I have been hoping to find an academic assessment of this phenomenon. This book covers the topic well, though sometimes the author's polemic detracts from his compelling data. Those who want to pretend the problem doesn't exist will undoubtedly use the author's passion as an excuse to dismiss the book. But there are compelling examples that deserve our attention. For example, Jennifer Gratz successfully sued the University of Michigan for "reverse discrimination" because a few dozen non-white students were admitted ahead of her despite having lower SATs and grades. What went unreported at the time is the fact that more than 1,400 white students -- students whose parents were alumni or who happened to live in areas favored by the school's board -- also were admitted ahead of her despite having lower scores and grades. The implicit assumption is that it's OK to accord special privileges to white students whose parents are alumni, or who live in politically advantageous areas; but it's an abomination to extend similar privileges to a handful of non-white students. Incidents like this point to a systematic oppression that has little to do with violence and much to do with subtle manipulation. It may not even be conscious. The author correctly observes that it is a kind of investment that began centuries ago when white people took possession of our country's land through programs such as the Homestead Act and who made fortunes at the expense of slaves and indentured servants.

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