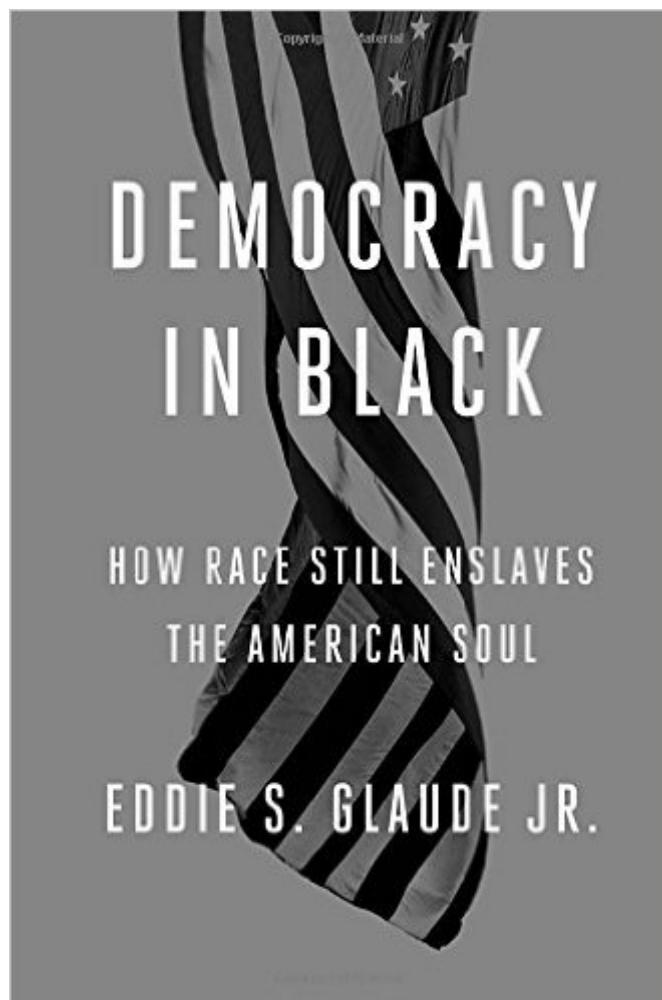


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# Democracy In Black: How Race Still Enslaves The American Soul



## Synopsis

A powerful polemic on the state of black America that savages the idea of a post-racial society. America's great promise of equality has always rung hollow in the ears of African Americans. But today the situation has grown even more dire. From the murders of black youth by the police, to the dismantling of the Voting Rights Act, to the disaster visited upon poor and middle-class black families by the Great Recession, it is clear that black America faces an emergency. "at the very moment the election of the first black president has prompted many to believe we've solved America's race problem." Democracy in Black is Eddie S. Glaude Jr.'s impassioned response. Part manifesto, part history, part memoir, it argues that we live in a country founded on a "value gap" with white lives valued more than others that still distorts our politics today. Whether discussing why all Americans have racial habits that reinforce inequality, why black politics based on the civil-rights era have reached a dead end, or why only remaking democracy from the ground up can bring real change, Glaude crystallizes the untenable position of black America--and offers thoughts on a better way forward. Forceful in ideas and unsettling in its candor, Democracy In Black is a landmark book on race in America, one that promises to spark wide discussion as we move toward the end of our first black presidency.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Like many people, I find discussions about race difficult. It is hard to build up the trust to speak honestly without judgment. It is awkward and difficult. So when I saw this book available for review I

thought I'd get a copy, as if Eddie Glaude Jr. and I were sitting across the table from one another in a beer-less summit of sorts. There are many good things about this book. He tells it like he honestly sees it (which means it can be painfully honest). Politically, he doesn't portray Democrats as perfect, or even President Obama, not Republicans as all evil (though he disagrees strongly with many policies). We will get to that later. The strength of the book, for me, was chapters 2-4. He attempts to get to the heart of the long-term, on-going race issues in this nation. This has to do with the value gap, racial habits and white fear. From the beginning this nation has valued blacks less than whites. The end of slavery hasn't ended it. The end of Jim Crow laws hasn't ended it. It is a matter of the heart that is worked out in society. I think some of his examples are flawed. For instance, on page 31 he addresses the diseases that kill blacks at a higher rate than whites. But heart disease, cancer and AIDS get plenty of press and research money. It isn't like these diseases are ignored because they kill blacks. But I agree with him that there is a value gap. Generally speaking, black lives don't seem to matter as much in our society. The rates of incarcerated blacks is not just about poverty and crime, but also a flawed criminal justice system. His discussion of disremembering is particularly helpful. This is the collective memory of a society which leaves out some of the ugly realities of our history or particular events.

Professor Eddie Glaude Jr., of Princeton comes out firing on all cylinders in this book. He really has his pulse on the race situation that continues to plague America and has come up with some thoughts that I'm sure will become part of the prescript of any discussions concerning race. One such idea is the "value gap", which Eddie describes as, "...(the belief that white people are valued more than others) and racial habits (the things we do, without thinking, that sustain the value gap) undergird racial inequality, and how white and black fears block the way to racial justice in this country." "We talk about the achievement gap in education or the wealth gap between white Americans and other groups, but the value gap reflects something more basic: that no matter our stated principles or how much progress we think we've made, white people are valued more than others in this country, and that fact continues to shape the life chances of millions of Americans. The value gap is in our national DNA." This is an interesting new angle in which to view the issue of racism, i.e., white supremacy. When you frame white supremacy in those terms, there certainly isn't much to argue with there. Clearly white people and white lives are valued more than others in America. In support of this "value gap" theory he quotes from Dr. King, "that in this country the idea of racial equality remains 'a loose expression for improvement.'" And by the way his understanding of Dr. King is superb, many try to lock King into a dream state, but if you listen to and

read King from 1967 to the time of his assassination, you would think of him as a totally different person than the I have a dream King.

This book resonated with me on so many levels. The first being I'm not crazy/out of touch - someone else share my thoughts (a scholar even). The author, Glaude, unfolds masterfully the true condition of Black Americans in America; he pulls no punches. This book is so informative. I found myself reading this book every chance I got. The author's verbiage/break down of the value gap - how some men and women are valued less than others because of the color of their skin - and how this gap is infused in our so called "democratic" system, as well as "racial habits" (things we do to sustain this gap) could be considered the theme of this book. This value gap informs all decisions -employment, education, housing, and policy etc. To quote the author, "black America has experienced and is experiencing a depression" more like the symptoms of a national congenital disease than the flu. The author illuminates how we like to think of our nation as the chosen moral nation ("shining city on the hill" Ronald Reagan) and how our collective active forgetting/dismembering determines the kind of story we tell ourselves. We tend to forget all the hypocrisy this country was built on as well as how much of Black history dealt with "waging a relentless war against white supremacy". The book reports on heart wrenching personal stories of the effect on the foreclosure crisis that hit African Americans (AA) more than anyone else "not only monetarily but also mentally" entire family breakdowns and more than likely will be broken down for generations not to mention how we're raising our children with the belief that their lives don't matter.

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