

Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America

By 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 policythat 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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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
For the past two decades, an academic cottage industry has developed to analyze--and some would say overemphasize--the social and educational problems of African Americans. Such writers as Dinesh D'Souza, Shelby Steele, Armstrong Williams, and Ken Hamblin have all contributed in this area; now add to that list John McWhorter, a Berkeley linguistics professor and the author of *Word on the Street*, an examination of Ebonics and Black English. The basic idea he presents in this occasionally insightful if flawed book is that African Americans are not advancing socially as a result of victimology, separatism, and anti-intellectualism.

According to the author, victimology "has become a keystone of cultural blackness to treat victimhood not as a problem to be solved but as an identity to be nurtured," while "separatism encourages black Americans to conceive of black people as an unofficial sovereign entity, within which the rules other Americans are expected to follow are suspended out of a belief that our victimhood renders us morally exempt from them." Anti-intellectualism is a belief that "school is a 'white' endeavor." McWhorter suggests that only blacks embrace such opinions, placing most of the blame on them while underemphasizing the institutional racism that facilitates such views. Needless to say, McWhorter has no love for the likes of Al Sharpton, Hazel Carby, June Jordan, or Patricia Williams and their ilk. His chapter on Ebonics, his specialty, is the most nuanced, though certainly not the final word on the matter. And though some readers will be turned off by his use of tired anti-affirmative-action, right-wing clichés, anyone interested in the education of African Americans in the post civil rights era will find *Losing the Race* a worthy read. --*Eugene Holley Jr.*

From Publishers Weekly
Are African-Americans using past racial injustices as an excuse for not working to take advantage of contemporary opportunities? McWhorter, a linguistics professor at the University of California, Berkeley, thinks he has the answers to this question and othersAand he points the finger directly at the black community. Starting with the premise that white racism is no longer the threat it once was, McWhorter singles out "the cult of victimology" and the glorification of white racism as a major cause for several social crises afflicting African-Americans. Offering little that has not been said previously by conservatives like Pat Buchanan and Shelby Steele, McWhorter uses a cookie-cutter approach to explain away recent race pressure points such as the arson directed against black churches, the high proportion of black inmates in America's prisons, the practice of racial profiling and police brutality. In each case, he finds fault with the African-American community's interpretation of these situations, accusing African-Americans of hypersensitivity to racial bias and a reluctance to relinquish the past. Victimology, as well as separatism, in his words, "gives failure, lack of effort and criminality a tacit stamp of approval." Most disturbing, his suggestion that a cultural trait drives the low scholastic performance of black youth borders on the views of those who consider heredity the cause of blacks' poor performance on standardized tests. Like many of the new black conservatives, McWhorter spends much time going after liberal columnists and social critics, attacking both their intent and message. Even his closing segmentA"How Can We Save the African-American Race?"Asounds more like a well-worn campaign speech than a call to initiate a dialogue on race in the African-American community and the nation. (Aug.)
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From Booklist
McWhorter makes compelling arguments for the failure of African Americans to achieve academic success. He posits three causes of this failure, which he characterizes as victimology, separatism, and anti-

intellectualism. McWhorter's "cult of victimology" is the "transformation of victimhood from a problem to be solved into an identity in itself." Such action keeps the victims and others from acknowledging that progress has been made. The "cult of separatism" is the attempt to self-protect by only engaging in activities that are for blacks. The "cult of anti-intellectualism" is the attitude that any authentic black person would not desire intellectual pursuits but rather consider such efforts alien and suspicious. McWhorter stresses that his position about the challenges faced by African American students is based on cultural issues within the black community and not on economic factors. This book will surely enrage and shock many. A cogently written academic look at a very emotional and debatable topic. *Lillian Lewis*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Johanna Garrett:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important act, like looking for your favorite book and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your short lived problem; you can add your knowledge by the reserve entitled Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America. Try to face the book Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America as your pal. It means that it can to become your friend when you truly feel alone and beside those of course make you smarter than ever. Yeah, it is very fortuned to suit your needs. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , we need to make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

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Phyllis Granger:

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Self-Sabotage in Black America has many kinds or category. Start from kids until teens. For example Naruto or Private eye Conan you can read and think you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book tend to be make you bored, any it offers you feel happy, fun and chill out. Try to choose the best book for you personally and try to like reading this.

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