



Possessive Investment In Whiteness

George Lipsitz

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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*.

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