



A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America

By David K. Shipler

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A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America By David K. Shipler

A Country of Strangers is a magnificent exploration of the psychological landscape where blacks and whites meet. To tell the story in human rather than abstract terms, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer David K. Shipler bypasses both extremists and celebrities and takes us among ordinary Americans as they encounter one another across racial lines.

We learn how blacks and whites see each other, how they interpret each other's behavior, and how certain damaging images and assumptions seep into the actions of even the most unbiased. We penetrate into dimensions of stereotyping and discrimination that are usually invisible, and discover the unseen prejudices and privileges of white Americans, and what black Americans make of them.

We explore the competing impulses of integration and separation: the reference points by which the races navigate as they venture out and then withdraw; the biculturalism that many blacks perfect as they move back and forth between the white and black worlds, and the homesickness some blacks feel for the comfort of all-black separateness. There are portrayals of interracial families and their multiracial children--expert guides through the clashes created by racial blending in America. We see how whites and blacks each carry the burden of our history.

Black-white stereotypes are dissected: the physical bodies that we see, the mental qualities we imagine, the moral character we attribute to others and to ourselves, the violence we fear, the power we seek or are loath to relinquish.

The book makes clear that we have the ability to shape our racial landscape--to reconstruct, even if not perfectly, the texture of our relationships. There is an assessment of the complexity confronting blacks and whites alike as they struggle to recognize and define the racial motivations that may or may not be present in a thought, a word, a deed. The book does not prescribe, but it documents the silences that prevail, the listening that doesn't happen, the conversations that don't take place. It looks at relations between minorities, including blacks and Jews, and blacks and Koreans. It explores the human dimensions of affirmative action, the intricate contacts and misunderstandings across racial lines among coworkers and neighbors. It is unstinting in its criticism

of our society's failure to come to grips with bigotry; but it is also, happily, crowded with black people and white people who struggle in their daily lives to do just that.

A remarkable book that will stimulate each of us to reexamine and better understand our own deepest attitudes in regard to race in America.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

David K. Shipler, a long-time reporter for the *New York Times* in the U.S. and overseas, calls *A Country of Strangers* "a journey along the color line," an attempt to trace "the landscape where blacks and whites find mutual encounters." As such, it's a journey (one that took five years) across America, listening and talking to black and white Americans about the conundrum of race. At once poignant and profound, *A Country of Strangers* begins with an examination of the tension between integration and segregation, continues through a look at the ways blacks and whites stereotype each other, and concludes with a section on choices--the ways in which we can reshape the racial landscape. Not everyone will agree with Shipler's optimistic conclusions, but we could do worse than to accompany him on this remarkable journey.

From Library Journal

Conversation about race remains one of the most taboo subjects in America. "Since we do not know each other very well," Shipler writes, "we do not know what the other thinks of us." In his new book, he investigates and analyses social, political, cultural, and psychological issues from the perspective of both blacks and whites with a view toward breaking this silence. The result is a lengthy but eminently readable book enriched with dialog from interviews that crisscross the spectrum of ethnic and economic populations. Shipler considers such complex topics as sociocultural meanings of race, biculturalism, Afrocentrism, affirmative action, consequences of stereotyping, discrimination, affirmative action, and diversity training. In spite of his book's breadth, topics are discussed in depth and with sensitivity. Shipler, a former New York Times journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner, is also the author of *Russia: Broken Idols, Solemn Dreams* (LJ 9/1/93). Highly recommended for all public and academic libraries.

-?Faye Powell, *Portland State Univ. Lib., Ore.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Former New York Times correspondent and Pulitzer Prize winner Shipler (*Arab and Jew*, 1986; *Russia*, 1983) reports from the front line where black and white America collide, divide, overlap, and, too rarely, coexist. Shipler's reportage includes much concrete information garnered from both sides of the racial divide, but his primary goal is didactic and his primary audience is white. If whites gain insight through this book into what it is like to be black in America, they will also learn "what it is like to be white," he writes; armed with that self-knowledge, they might then help right a society in which racial differences continue to frustrate the fulfillment of the American dream. Shipler quotes scholars and activists, but mostly he talks to ordinary Americans. He visits high schools and colleges, police stations and army barracks, boardrooms and secretarial pools, integrated neighborhoods and even integrated families. He finds that whites tend to be uncomfortable discussing race, but that it is an ever-present issue for most of the blacks he talks to. What this white man learns from black Americans makes this a stunning and major work. Shipler reveals starkly and with deep sympathy how blacks still feel they must be on constant guard, even in an era in which institutionalized racism has largely disappeared, and how programs designed to heal the racial divide, such as affirmative action, are under attack from Americans who claim the country no longer has a racial problem. And if Shipler finds that some blacks go to such extremes as becoming racists themselves in pressing their claims, the vast majority long simply for a safe world into which to bring their children. A powerful book that should fulfill Shipler's goal of strengthening the "tenuous strands of caring across the line that runs through the heart of America." (First printing of 60,000; Book-of-the-Month Club selection) -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jennifer Wadsworth:

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation or even go to the outside with them friends and family or their friend. Do you know? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity this is look different you can read the book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent the entire day to reading a e-book. The book A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America it is extremely good to read. There are a lot of individuals who recommended this book. We were holding enjoying reading this book. If you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy typically the e-book. You can m0ore simply to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book offers high quality.

Joshua Yoshida:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the free time or they will get large amount of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , whenever we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not just a robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity are there when the spare time coming to you of course your answer will unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative in spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is definitely A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America.

Shelly Sampson:

The book untitled A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains her idea with easy method. The language is very easy to understand all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was authored by famous author. The author will take you in the new period of literary works. It is easy to read this book because you can read on your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can available their official web-site and order it. Have a nice go through.

Jack Bell:

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