

## Discrimination and **Disparities**

by Dr. Thomas Sowell.

Review by Brent Ramsey

Background: Dr. Thomas Sowell is the Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution. Author of more than 45 books.

He writes on economics, history, social policy, ethnicity, and the history of ideas. His most recent book, *Discrimination and Disparities* (2018), gathers a wide array of empirical evidence to challenge the idea that different economic outcomes can be explained by any one factor, be it discrimination, exploitation or genetics.

Reviews by Amazon: 4.9 out of 5 stars based on 3046 ratings

Sample comments:

"Sowell's calm and calculated look at racial disparity in America is a stunning work of brevity and reason."—**Federalist**

"A sane, balanced and highly informed discussion of many of the central issues of the day."—**Washington Times**

"Everything Dr. Sowell writes is worth reading, but this book couldn't be more timely. If there is any topic that needs a strong dose of empirical data and common sense, it is this one."—**Power Line**

"[Sowell] writes on economics in a manner that is not only accessible, but also relevant and even riveting."—**The Conservative Woman**

"Few works on politically explosive topics maintain such a consistent focus on empirical evidence while avoiding rhetorical jabs at opponents...those who cling to this dogma with religious fervor will likely avoid Sowell's fact-filled book like kryptonite. Folks with less dogmatic proclivities, however, would do well to peruse this concise work."—**American Thinker**

Reviews by Goodreads: 4.49 out of 5 based on 3406 ratings

Discrimination and Disparities is a short but sophisticated book but meticulously researched and footnoted to support his findings. Dr. Sowell has long held the

view that a simplistic view of racism being the main cause of disparities affecting a portion of the black population is in error and he proves this proposition with simple examples and solid science. Easy to read, straightforward and at the same time convincing and compelling. The success of individuals in our society is a complex subject. Yet, popular culture, the left, most of media and the opportunists alike attribute the lack of success for a small subset of our black population to one factor, racism. Dr. Sowell easily and completely destroys this simpleminded and erroneous narrative by demonstrating that like most things, success in any endeavor especially economic ones is always based on many prerequisites not just one. Economic success depends on a combination of factors and the lack of any of a number of factors explains the lack of success and in today's society of post-oppression since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, race is the least likely explanation for any lack of success by anyone including blacks. An example is labor participation rates for black and white teenagers from the 1950's to the present. With the implementation of minimum wage laws, these labor participation rates varied widely with blacks having higher labor participation rates than whites in some years and lower than whites in others. Racism cannot be the explanation for such a pattern. Factors like experience, age, job demand drove the patterns not the easy scapegoat racism. The term discrimination has a bad reputation. But, there are two types of discrimination and only one is bad, unfair and in fact illegal, the one where it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of race. Discrimination that is acceptable even necessary is the ability to discern different in the qualities of people. Discrimination based solely on the color of skin is wrong. Dr. Sowell goes on to explain how self-sorting of individuals has a lot to do with where people end up. He also goes into the use and miss use of statistics in economic research has often led to erroneous conclusions regarding the causes of some races lagging behind. Lastly, he critiques common public policy solutions that fail to use the right data to support the establishment of government programs designed to help minorities but which more often than not do not fit the bill and in many cases actually make conditions worse. This book is highly recommended as an antidote to today's unending cries of racism being the cause of the plight of some of our citizens. It would be so simple if curing racism or preventing it by the few who still practice it, was the solution to the black community's problems but the truth is that the factors responsible for lack of achievement of some of our minority communities have little to do with race.