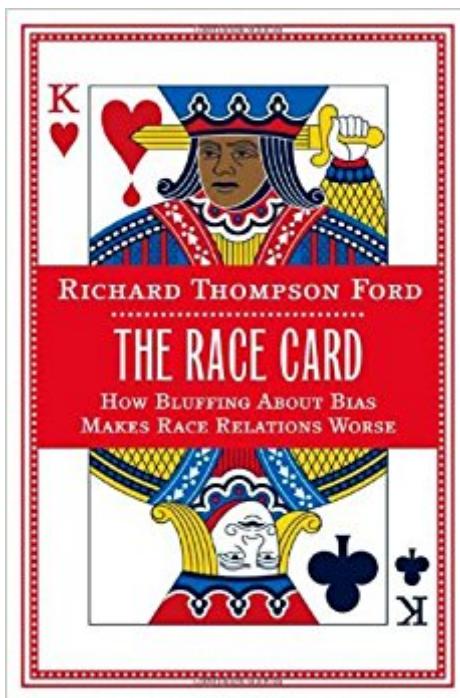


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# The Race Card: How Bluffing About Bias Makes Race Relations Worse



## Synopsis

What do Katrina victims waiting for federal disaster relief, millionaire rappers buying vintage champagne, Ivy League professors waiting for taxis, and ghetto hustlers trying to find steady work have in common? All have claimed to be victims of racism. These days almost no one openly expresses racist beliefs or defends bigoted motives. So lots of people are victims of bigotry, but no one's a bigot? What gives? Either a lot of people are lying about their true beliefs and motivations, or a lot of people are jumping to unwarranted conclusions--or just playing the race card. As the label of "prejudice" is applied to more and more situations, it loses a clear and agreed-upon meaning. This makes it easy for self-serving individuals and political hacks to use accusations of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other types of "bias" to advance their own ends. Richard Thompson Ford, a Stanford Law School professor, brings sophisticated legal analysis, lively and eye-popping anecdotes, and plain old common sense to this heated topic. He offers ways to separate valid claims from bellyaching. Daring, entertaining, and incisive, *The Race Card* is a call for us to treat racism as a social problem that must be objectively understood and honestly evaluated.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 400 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; First Edition edition (January 22, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374245754

ISBN-13: 978-0374245757

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 1.4 x 8.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,081,831 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Race Relations > General #4600 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Race Relations > Discrimination & Racism #6111 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > African-American Studies

## Customer Reviews

Today's race relations, law professor Ford demonstrates, are more complex and contradictory than those of the unambiguously white supremacist past. In this journey through a political minefield, he examines dubious charges of racism and other kinds of bias, while acknowledging that exaggerated

claims can piggyback on real examples of victimization. But the author's tenor is often more eye-catching than eye-opening. He revisits Tawana Brawley, Clarence Thomas, O.J. Simpson and Hurricane Katrina, along with Oprah's HermÃ"s problem, Jay-Z's with champagne and Danny Glover's with New York City cabdrivers. Yet at its core, this book raises probing questions about the extent to which the extraordinary social and legal condemnation of racism and other social prejudices encourages people to recast what are basically run-of-the-mill social conflicts as cases of bigotry. By analogy, he addresses issues concerning animal liberation, gay marriage, appearance discrimination, sex harassment law and multiculturalism. In delineating the differences between formal discrimination, discriminatory intent and discriminatory effects, Ford also reviews thorny legal cases involving, for example, McDonnell Douglas and Price Waterhouse. Readers all along the political spectrum will find much to please, annoy and provoke thought about the thin line between invidious discrimination and plain old unfairness. (Feb.) Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Ford, a professor of law at Stanford, argues that ubiquitous accusations of discrimination in the United States frequently distract from serious racial injustices, which, in the ambivalent aftermath of the civil-rights era, "stem from isolation, poverty, and lack of socialization as much as from intentional discrimination or racism." Drawing on examples from popular culture and the law, Ford guides the reader through the worst of these abuses, and articulates a bold strategy for dealing with systematic injustice in a world of "racism without racists." Ford's pragmatic approach will irk those for whom ideological concerns are uppermost, but few would object to his emphasis on the need for long-term solutions to persistent segregation and poverty or to his call for discussion of "the more ambiguous cases of bias in the cool tone of technical expertise rather than in the heated cadence of moral judgment. Copyright Â© 2008 Click here to subscribe to The New Yorker

If racial injustice exists, shouldn't the "Race Card" be played to level the playing field? For example, are we a better society because O.J. Simpson's lawyers so expertly played the "Race Card?" Mr. Ford answers emphatically "no" to both questions. He directs the reader with example and reasoning (sometimes too much so - hence my rating of 4 stars) to examine racial injustice that may exist without racism, and decries the use of racism by analogy by some groups to advance their non-race agenda. Mr. Ford speaks to the majority of people who comprise the political center of this country who are apalled by racism and galled by the use of the race card. Don't give in to liberal or conservative bigots! Though the middle way is hard, Mr. Ford notes, it will result in racial justice that

will eventually create what each of us want - a better society for all.

Ford is a liberal, but writes with a clarity and generosity that makes him persuasive to this moderate conservative. One of his is something that I wish more people would believe: that gross racial injury can persist in society even though most of the powerful racists are dead. Liberals overestimate the percentage of the population that harbor overt racial animus, and the wounding power of the word "racist" is deployed self-righteously but counterproductively in the fight against real injustice. On the other hand, conservatives underestimate the extent to which implicit racial animus exists, and the extent to which the real racism of past generations is embedded in our social structures and begets injustice.

I picked this book up merely for the title, it struck me as quite interesting, and I thought why not? I expected it to be more so of a conservative analysis with some left wing bashing, and there's some of that, but there is also some right wing bashing too. It comes off as mostly objective, looking at the issues where the Race Card is used and offering different scenarios analyzing whether or not racism was a factor. I found this to be quite intriguing because think about it, whenever you hear of something on the news where race might be a factor, most people think it is and don't bother to think of any alternative reasons. This is a definite for anyone interested in race issues today, if anything, but to offer a different viewpoint on the whole issue.

This is a refreshing account of how people--especially African Americans--play the racism charge in order to get what they want. In American society today all a minority person needs to do in a court of law in order to obtain some personal gain is claim that racism is behind whatever opposition they face. Mr. Ford--an African American man--is one of the few honest people in America today who has the courage to look at this situation and examine the often falsified and exaggerated claims of racism in American society. I wonder how long the protection of racist charges from African Americans will last since whatever is meant by "white people" as a racial category is quickly dying out in America. When white people become a minority, can they, too, then claim racism whenever they can't get what they want? LOL

Read this as you read "New Boy," a YA literature offering by Judge Julian Houston. The two together explore the issues of race and culture change. Very well done. Richard Thompson Ford is fun to read. Even for people who don't agree with him, there is pleasure in reading arguments well

made. He makes a profound case \*in favor of\* integration several times in the book. Today's racial injustices are often not instances of intentional discrimination by racists as much as a cultural gulf, made worse by poverty and isolation. There are three major case studies within the book: Hurricane Katrina, the OJ verdict, and Reverse Racism. Hurricane Katrina comes at the beginning of this book. Post-Katrina "racism" reads differently in 2012, after Hurricane Sandy. Now, a lot of the "racism" seems more like predictable government incompetence and blame-shifting. Ford also raises the question of how much racism can properly be considered a class or cultural bias. That's an interesting question that Star Parker has also recently explored. *Â Uncle Sam's Plantation: How Big Government Enslaves America's Poor and What We Can Do About It, Revised and Updated Edition* *Â* In my opinion, this is the section I would most like to see updated in a future edition of this book. Ford points out the problems with government inclusiveness mandates. The government is unable (or unwilling) to weigh the trade-offs of their policy proposals -- the government denies economic and productivity trade-offs even exist -- and the policies often end up hurting those they are intended to help. The saddest part of the book is the spotlight Ford shines on how DIFFICULT it will be to help the permanent poor to assimilate to mainstream middle-class American values. He insists it MUST be done, and that the efforts toward "multiculturalism" have been a disaster that have contradicted the Civil Rights Movement's goals. The book does not take on phony hate crimes or black against white racism, both of which are on the ascent and considerably complicate the Race Card. Extremely interesting to read this book and Tony Dungy's autobiography together. *Â Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, and Priorities of a Winning Life* *Â* For a lot more on affirmative action in college admissions, read "Mismatch" by Sander and Taylor. *Â Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It's Intended to Help, and Why Universities Won't Admit It*

This is a very thoughtful, fair book. Ford, a black law professor, clearly thinks racism is still alive, but skewers demagogues like Al Sharpton for "playing the race card." I especially liked the part where he blasted the animal rights and fat movement for comparing themselves to the civil rights movement, "fat is the new black." This book can be read by someone on either end of the political spectrum (or in the political middle for that matter). As the author pointed out, this a rare book that enjoyed a good review in both the leftist Nation magazine and the conservative National Review. I highly recommend the Race Card to anyone concerned about racial relations in America today.

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