



Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life

By Karen E. Fields, Barbara J. Fields



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Most people assume that racism grows from a perception of human difference: the fact of race gives rise to the practice of racism. Sociologist Karen E. Fields and historian Barbara J. Fields argue otherwise: the practice of racism produces the illusion of race, through what they call "racecraft." And this phenomenon is intimately entwined with other forms of inequality in American life. So pervasive are the devices of racecraft in American history, economic doctrine, politics, and everyday thinking that the presence of racecraft itself goes unnoticed.

That the promised post-racial age has not dawned, the authors argue, reflects the failure of Americans to develop a legitimate language for thinking about and discussing inequality. That failure should worry everyone who cares about democratic institutions.

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Editorial Review

Review

“It’s not just a challenge to racists, it’s a challenge to people like me, it’s a challenge to African-Americans who have accepted the fact of race and define themselves by the concept of race.”

—**Ta-Nehisi Coates**

“Demanding and intelligent.”

—**Jennifer Vega, *PopMatters***

“These essays are extraordinary. I love the forceful elegance with which they hammer home that race is a monstrous fiction, racism is a monstrous crime.”

—**Junot Díaz**

Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields have undertaken a great untangling of how the chimerical concepts of race are pervasively and continuously reinvented and reemployed in this country.”

—**Maria Bustillos, *Los Angeles Review of Books***

“The neologism ‘racecraft’ is modelled on ‘witchcraft’ ... It isn’t that the Fieldses regard the commitment to race as a category as an irrational superstition. On the contrary, they are interested precisely in exploring its rationality—the role that beliefs about race play in structuring American society—while at the same time reminding us that those beliefs may be rational but they’re not true.”

—**Walter Benn Michaels, *London Review of Books***

“A most impressive work, tackling a demanding and important topic—the myth that we now live in a postracial society—in a novel, urgent, and compelling way. The authors dispel this myth by squarely addressing the paradox that racism is scientifically discredited but, like witchcraft before it, retains a social rationale in societies that remain highly unequal and averse to sufficiently critical engagement with their own history and traditions.”

—**Robin Blackburn**

“[*Racecraft*] should be more widely read than it is—no matter its current reach. In it, the authors achieve an intelligence and agility that is rare in discussions of identity, racism, and inequality.”

—**Matthew McKnight, *Nation***

“Liberal mores against overt racism are crumbling in the face of Trump. We must build them better ... The Fields sisters dive through sociology, history, and science to reach the material truth: races is a product of racism, not the other way around.”

—**Charlie Heller, *Paste***

“With examples ranging from the profound to the absurd—including, for instance, an imaginary interview with W E B Dubois and Emile Durkheim, as well as personal porch chats with the authors’ grandmother—the Fields delve into “racecraft’s” profound effect on American political, social and economic life.”

—*Global Journal*

“This is a very thoughtful book, a very urgent book.”

—*The Academic & The Artist Cloudcast*

About the Author

Barbara J. Fields is Professor of History at Columbia University, author of *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century* and coauthor of *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War*.

Karen E. Fields, an independent scholar, holds degrees from Harvard University, Brandeis University, and the Sorbonne. She is the author of many articles and three published books: *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa*, about millennialism; *Lemon Swamp and Other Places: A Carolina Memoir* (with Mamie Garvin Fields), about life in the twentieth-century South; and a retranslation of Emile Durkheim's masterpiece, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. She has two works in progress: *Bordeaux's Africa*, about the view of slavery from a European port city, and *Race Matters in the American Academy*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Alvarez:

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As we know that book is very important normally. The book Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life had been making you to know about other expertise and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The reserve Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life is not only giving you more new information but also to be your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship while using book Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life. You never really feel lose out for everything if you read some books.

Rocio Linville:

Now a day those who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by talk with the internet and the resources in it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each details they get. How individuals to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the answer then is reading a book. Reading through a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information mainly this Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life book as this book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the info in this book hundred pct guarantees there is no doubt in it everybody knows.

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Mary Curtis:

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