

Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition


By F. James Davis

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This volume is the Tenth Anniversary Edition of a book that was honored in 1992 as an "Outstanding Book" by the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in the United States. Reprinted many times since its first publication in 1991, *Who Is Black?* has become a staple in college classrooms throughout the United States, helping students understand this nation's history of miscegenation and the role that the "one-drop rule" has played in it. In this special anniversary edition, the author brings the story up to date in an epilogue. There he highlights some revealing responses to *Who Is Black?* and examines recent challenges to the one-drop rule, including the multiracial identity movement and a significant change in the census classification of racial and ethnic groups.

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Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition By F. James Davis Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The "one-drop rule" (referring to "one drop" of black blood) defines as black "any person with any known African ancestry." Both blacks and whites embrace this overly broad definition, which is peculiar to the U.S. Davis (*Society and the Law*) argues that this "Big Lie . . . causes traumatic personal experiences, dilemmas of personal identity, misperceptions of the racial classification of well over a billion of the earth's people, conflicts in families and in the black community, and more." During slave days and the era of Jim Crow laws, whites used the rule to minimize the potential disruptions of miscegenation--usually illicit or coercive sex between white males and black females--by classifying the offspring as black. Blacks currently accept the one-drop rule, often disapproving of those with lighter skin who "pass" for white or marry across perceived color lines. Early chapters are thick with statistics, and chapter summaries mark the work as a textbook wannabe. However, later sections, such as the gripping narrative of Lena Horne's troubled experiences as a light-skinned black, are enlightening. This is an eye-opening appraisal of an issue often taken for granted in America.

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From Library Journal

African Americans and white Americans have been inbreeding since the beginnings of slavery. Offspring of these matches were often defined by the "one-drop rule" (one drop of black blood made one black). Davis, a sociology professor, offers a well-researched history of this rule and its social and legal effects on the people of mixed race in America. Many were harassed by blacks because they were too light, while others tried to "pass" as white, ignoring the one-drop rule and, as a result, part of their heritage. Davis also compares the United States with other countries to see how they handled this issue. Though scholarly in tone, this fascinating book answers many questions but will leave readers with other questions that need to be answered. A definite addition to the available work on miscegenation and African American studies. For all academic libraries.

- *Danna C. Bell-Russel, Marymount Univ. Lib., Arlington, Va.*

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Review

"This is a very well-written book that communicates complex ideas with clarity and interest. It is rare, in my experience, for an academic book written by a social scientist to be as interesting and exciting as a piece of fiction. This book is hard to put down because Davis's story of how the United States as a nation came to define who is black reads like a mystery novel in which every historical event provides one more clue to the final murder of a people."

—Aida Hurtado, *American Journal of Sociology*

"Davis has given us a brilliant and informative history of the fateful policy commonly called the rule of hypodescent (the 'one-drop' rule) and the impact it has had psychologically, socially, economically, and politically on African-American history. Davis's book is the most recent in the series of works written on this topic, but is by far the most thorough and insightful."

—G. Reginald Daniel, *Contemporary Sociology*

“This is an eye-opening appraisal of an issue often taken for granted in America.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eric Frances:

Reading a book tends to be new life style on this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Using book everyone in this world can easily share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. Plenty of author can inspire their very own reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the publications. But also they write about the data about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors on earth always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some study before they write to the book. One of them is this Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition.

Lillian Albrecht:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or their particular friends. Usually they performing activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Would you like to something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book could be option to fill your totally free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of e-book that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the reserve untitled Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition can be very good book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

Edward Lott:

People live in this new moment of lifestyle always try and and must have the free time or they will get great deal of stress from both way of life and work. So , if we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely sure. People is human not only a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to you of course your answer can unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the particular book you have read will be Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition.

Patricia Howland:

As a pupil exactly feel bored for you to reading. If their teacher requested them to go to the library or even make summary for some publication, they are complained. Just small students that has reading's internal or real their passion. They just do what the instructor want, like asked to go to the library. They go to there but nothing reading critically. Any students feel that reading through is not important, boring as well as can't see colorful photos on there. Yeah, it is for being complicated. Book is very important for you. As we know that on this period of time, many ways to get whatever we want. Likewise word says, ways to reach Chinese's country. So , this Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition can make you feel more interested to read.

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