

"This unique collection is a gem of great value. Every teacher, preacher, parent, public servant — indeed, every American — should have a copy."

REV. LUCIUS WALKER, JR., Executive Director  
The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO)

# "And don't call *me* a racist!"

A treasury of quotes  
on the past, present, and future  
of the color line in America

SELECTED AND ARRANGED by Ella Mazel

"What a rich anthology of affirmations, assertions, definitions, analyses, and assessments of race and racism! I have never encountered anything like it. We carry away from this book one cardinal lesson: For a better world we and our children must be not merely non-racist but anti-racist."

JOEL COLTON  
Professor Emeritus of History, Duke University



## **SOME COMMENTS ON *"And don't call me a racist!"***

**"Thank you for making this remarkable collection of quotes available to so many."**

HELLEN T. SALTERS

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), St. Davids PA

**"I have thoroughly enjoyed reading the book. Thank you for compiling all of these quotes and putting them together this way!"**

LILIANA BRONNER

University of Nebraska Medical Center, Rural Health Education Network, Omaha NE

**"When I first saw your book on the desk of a high school principal, I thought that everyone needs to read it. After reading it, I was convinced of that. There is so much we don't understand about the many subtleties and blatant acts of racism."**

ANDREW DUNCAN

Council Member, Holy Communion Lutheran Church, Racine WI

**"This is an amazing resource for individuals and groups. Thank you so much for your work and commitment. We will use the book well and pass it on to our students and community."**

MARGARET R. FRIMOTH

Coordinator, Lives in Transition Program, Clatsop Community College, Astoria OR

**"The message of this beautiful book mirrors our mission – that we not only honor the struggles and triumphs of those who have come before us, and the foundations they have laid, but must continue to add our own building blocks through education and our own actions."**

MARY JO LUJAN

Executive Board, New Mexico Equal Opportunity and Diversity Council, Albuquerque NM

**"We will again be happy to give copies of your amazing book to the participants in our annual campus-wide program called The Tunnel of Oppression."**

TERESA M. HASH

Residence Life Coordinator, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks ND

**"This is wonderful!! I've been looking for something to help people – young and older – understand the adversities of racism, being a minority, and other topics that your book addresses. Thank you so-o-o much."**

LISA A. HANKIESON

Missionary, Gates of Heaven Church of God in Christ, Suffolk VA

**"We are grateful for the use of your insightful book in helping students think outside their normal box."**

ZACHARY T. LEWIS

Assistant Director Campus Activities, University of Central Missouri, Warrensburg MO

**"Thank you for making a difference through your gift of these books and for helping to bring life to our motto, *All we see is possibility*."**

STEVEN M. ROTHSTEIN  
President, Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown MA

**"The book stands dog-eared on my shelf waiting for the next philosophical discussion on race with my graduate students, as well as for helping high school teachers and students tackle civil rights and related issues."**

SUSIE JANS-THOMAS  
Associate Professor of Education, Mount Mary College, Milwaukee WI

**"In creating this book, you have enabled us to learn from the words of those who have come before, and inspired us to continue their work."**

ELISE KLEIN  
President and Founder, Teachers Against Prejudice, New Canaan CT

**"A recent dance presentation revealed that we had a great deal more to learn about relations between races than we had ever imagined we needed. Thank you for producing a work that can help show our students a better way to be alive in the world – with spread wings, humble and alert minds, open hearts, and activated consciences."**

JUDITH M. SCALIN  
Co-Chair, Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA

**"I believe that this can be one of the most valuable aids in initiating and assisting discussion of race and cultural diversity, volatile subjects that must be handled delicately to accomplish success."**

LINDA QUINN  
Study Circles Program Director, United Way of Wyandotte County, Kansas City KS

**"Thank you for sharing this wonderful contribution toward dealing with the topic of cultural and ethnic diversity in the United States."**

GREGORY ROBERTS  
Executive Director, American College Personnel Association (ACPA), Washington DC

**"This is an important and inspiring book to share with group members and other friends who are not acquainted with the culture and history of the United States and the legacy of slavery in this country."**

MAGALI REGIS  
New York City Community Gardens Coalition, New York NY

**"I have no doubt that your wonderful book will inspire a lot of my students to think about race and ethnicity in a new light."**

GLENN T. TSUNOKAI  
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Western Washington University, Bellingham WA

**"The book is awesome. We will use it to help our community address social issues that exist beneath the surface of its public image."**

CAROL D. PETERS  
Secretary, Board of Trustees, Black Heritage Library & Multicultural Center, Findlay OH

**"By distributing copies of your book to attendees of the 28th National Indian and Native American Employment and Training Conference, we will be providing them with literature that will set a tone of openness to possibilities."**

CAMILLE VELLA-WILKINSON

Director, Workforce Investment Programs, Rhode Island Indian Council, Providence RI

**"Thank you for your incredible and enduring work, You made me feel hope today, and for that I'm very grateful."**

HELEN HELFER

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Sante Fe NM

**WARNING:  
READING THIS BOOK  
MAY BE HAZARDOUS TO YOUR COMPLACENCY**

Do you believe prejudice and racism are no longer "problems" in this country? [SEE PAGES 7-9]

Are you curious about why someone felt compelled to put together a book like this? [SEE DEDICATION AND PAGE XI]

How do you feel about the arguments over "affirmative action" vs. "reverse discrimination"? [SEE PAGES 117-124]

Do you think slavery is such ancient history that it has left no aftereffects? [SEE PAGES 38-42]

Do you understand the differing attitudes toward "integration" as opposed to "assimilation"? [SEE PAGES 104-107]

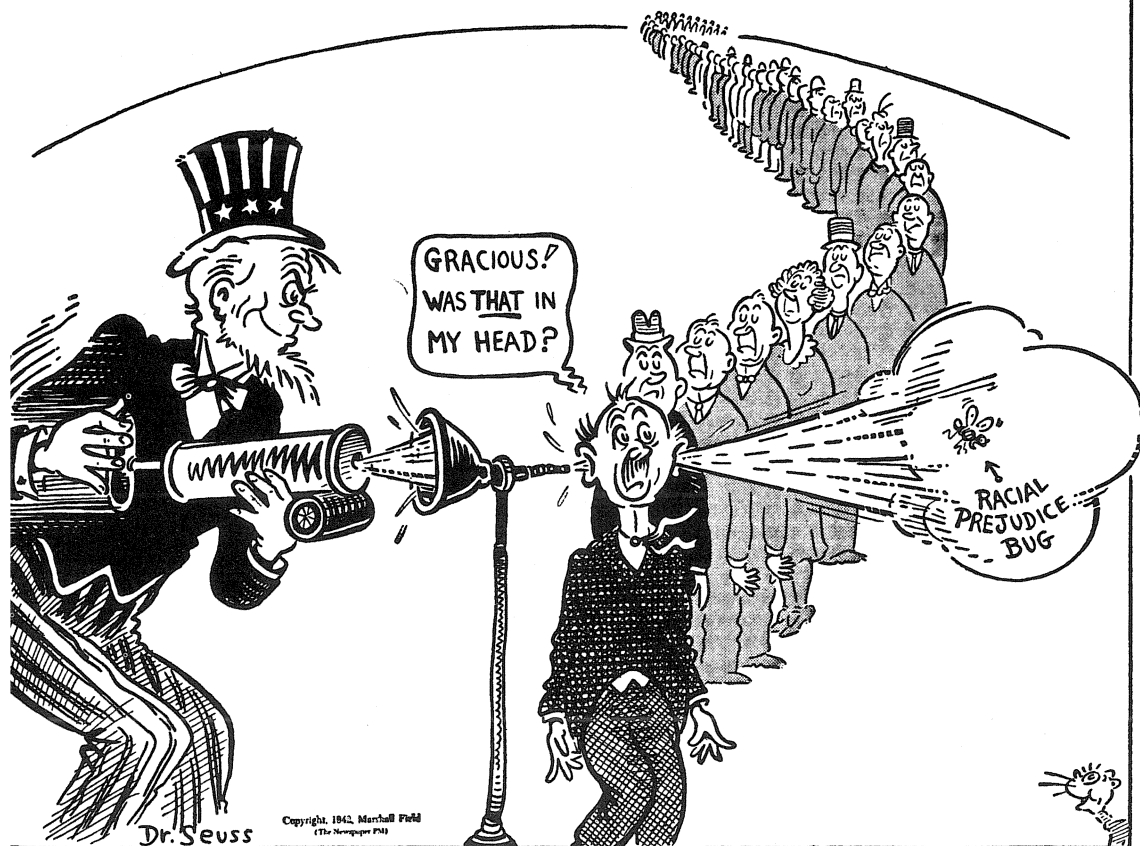
Would it surprise you to know that people like Arthur Ashe and Sammy Davis, Jr., who "had it made," expressed great bitterness about their lives? [SEE PAGES 148 and 150]

Are you aware that the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr., went beyond the famous "dream" of brotherhood to the hard realities of the economic divide? [SEE PAGE 114]

Have you ever heard about Paul Robeson, the great black scholar (valedictorian), athlete (football legend), singer (*Ol' Man River*), actor (*Othello*), and tireless activist? [SEE PAGES 90-94]

Would you like to learn about how you as an individual can "make a difference"? [see pages 139-142]

## What This Country Needs Is a Good Mental Insecticide



**“And don’t call *me* a racist!”**

**A treasury of quotes  
on the past, present, and future  
of the color line in America**

**SELECTED AND ARRANGED BY Ella Mazel**

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Designed and produced by Ella Mazel

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## Dedication

To **Booker T. Washington**,  
from whose autobiography, *UP FROM SLAVERY*, which I read as a child in the 1920s,  
I learned the meaning of *empathy*.

To **Paul Robeson**,  
from whose lifelong struggle on behalf of his people  
and of working people around the world  
I learned the meaning of the word *hero*.

To **Dean Dixon**,  
from whose frustration over being denied permanent conductorship  
of a major orchestra in the United States because of his color  
I learned the meaning of *black rage*.

To the **Joint Veterans' Council of Peekskill, New York**,  
from whose instigation of mob violence  
to prevent a concert by Paul Robeson (the first of the two 1949 "riots")  
I learned firsthand the meaning of the *fear* for one's life  
that accompanies ugly hatred, racial insults, and physical attack.

To **Zola G.**,  
the hard-working young black single mother  
from whose sharing of her history and her dreams  
I learned the importance of the *dignity*  
without which she "would slowly and surely die."

To **Eddie Vanderlip**,  
from whose completion of high school (and later, junior college)  
after I had tutored him in algebra and self-esteem  
I learned that it was possible to *make a difference* in one person's life.

To **Dick M.**,  
from whose angry recital of clichés about blacks today  
and the disclaimer that followed (which inspired, and became the title of, this book)  
I learned that "*nice*" *white people can be racist* even when they think they're not.



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# From me to you

Most of us white folk go through life comfortably without being conscious of the innumerable ways in which we are automatically privileged by the luck of our racial draw. This may not make us “racists” — but it makes us, unwittingly, beneficiaries of racism.

Bernice Albertine King writes of her father’s magnificent “I Have a Dream” speech that its “effect was to comfort the disturbed, but not without disturbing the comfortable.”

It’s primarily to “disturb the comfortable” that I’ve assembled in this book a progression of quotes that convey — in the voices of both blacks and whites — the history, the perceptions, the psychic scars, and the despair, that underlie the racial breach in the United States today. Out of the pain, finally, comes the hope for healing, which seems the only option if the country is to progress, let alone survive.

## Why the focus on white/black racism?

Most manifestations of prejudice and racism affect not only African-Americans but Native Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, and other “people of color.” These minorities, too, experience discrimination in housing, education, and employment. They, too, are subjected daily to humiliation or worse.

Still, by the time you’ve finished this book, I hope you will understand why:

- Christopher Edley, Jr., says that: “The black-white tension is the heart, the principal generator of the minority-rights controversy in national policy argument and in most areas of the country.”

- Patricia Williams wonders: “How can it be that so many well-meaning white people have never thought about race when so few blacks pass a single day without being reminded of it?”

- Andrew Young needs to point out that: “Most White Americans don’t even know the history of slavery and the long continuing struggle of blacks to overcome it.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr., tells how: “Instinctively we struck out for dignity first because personal degradation as an inferior human being was even more keenly felt than material privation.”

- Shirley Chisholm cries out in frustration: “My God, what do we want? What does any human being want?”

## Whose voices do we hear?

You will find here the words of writers and speakers ranging from apologists for slavery in the mid-1800s to former slaves like Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington at the end of the century; from W.E.B. Du Bois in the early 1900s to President Clinton and Oprah Winfrey as we near the millennium.

Listen to firebrands like Stokeley Carmichael and Malcolm X alongside the bitter but ultimately hopeful Arthur Ashe and the soft-spoken Muhammad Ali.

Discover, as I did, the brilliance of the *written* words of Martin Luther King, Jr.; the explosive eloquence of Lerone Bennett, Jr., and Randall Robinson; the humor of Langston Hughes and the Delany sisters; the up-front denunciations of racism by Colin Powell; the frankness of Harlon L. Dalton and Clarence Page; the revelations by Lillian Smith and Sarah Patton Boyle of what it meant to grow up white in the South.

Familiar names like Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison, Harry Belafonte and Sammy Davis, Jr., mingle with those of the man and woman in the street whose wise insights are captured in interviews by Studs Terkel — plus

those of a lot of other “ordinary” people and lesser-known writers.

The prose of such current intellectual activists as Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Orlando Patterson appears side by side with that of Gordon Allport in the seminal *The Nature of Prejudice* and Gunnar Myrdal in his classic, *The American Dilemma*.

You will find the views of pessimists and optimists, with their expressions of despair and of hope; of radicals and conservatives, with their conflicting approaches on integration versus separation or affirmative action versus so-called “preferences” — with both blacks and whites on opposite sides of each issue.

There are some topics I have avoided almost entirely because they are so historically divisive that they would sidetrack the central ideas in this book, as they have in life — the matter of intermarriage, for example, on which there are as strong differences of opinion in the black as in the white “community” — ranging from those who see “assimilation” as a utopian ideal to those who perceive it as genocide.

### Where do the quotes come from?

As Andrew Hacker points out, “No one could possibly tally all the books and articles that have been written about race in America,” and the sheer volume of available material is indeed overwhelming. So I drew the line when I had worked my way through a more-or-less random, but representative, number of books that include biographies and autobiographies,

collections of essays by individual writers, anthologies, sociological studies, and histories.

In addition, many of the quotes come from the newspaper I read every morning — there’s hardly a day without at least one article relating to race. Others are from magazines, like *Newsweek* and *Ebony*. Then there’s the Internet, from which I have downloaded all of the press releases from the White House on the President’s Race Initiative. On the Web I also found some fascinating material ranging from a book published by a former slave to a southern separatist movement of today.

All in all, I hope my research into the many facets of racism will provide food for thought for you as an individual, and encourage you to explore in more detail the writings of some of the authors I have quoted. Moreover, the book can serve both as a starting point for group discussions and as an educational resource for schools, libraries, and outreach programs.

### Can anything be done?

We may not be able to solve the deeply entrenched social and economic problems that beset so many Americans, but each of us can “be more than passively good-hearted,” as Langston Hughes suggests, “try equality on for size,” as Harlon Dalton proposes, and become “antiracist,” as Clarence Page urges.

At the very least — by enlarging what Dr. King called our “capacity to empathize,” and practicing “the good old Golden Rule,” as Orlando Patterson recommends — perhaps each of us *can* make a difference.

### PLEASE NOTE THE LISTINGS STARTING ON PAGE 148

For the book, article, or speech from which a quote is excerpted, and for other quotes by the same person, see INDEX/SOURCES. For information about the person quoted, see THE VOICES. For information about a person mentioned in a quote, see ABOUT PEOPLE.

“And don’t call *me* a racist!”

I suppose it was naive of me to think  
... that if one only searched one’s heart  
one would know  
that none of us is responsible  
for the complexion of his skin,  
and that we could not change it if we wished to,  
and many of us don’t wish to,  
and that this fact of nature  
offers no clue to the character or quality  
of the person underneath.

MARIAN ANDERSON, 1956

"Listen, maestro . . . if you want to  
get real harmony, use the black  
keys as well as the white!"

