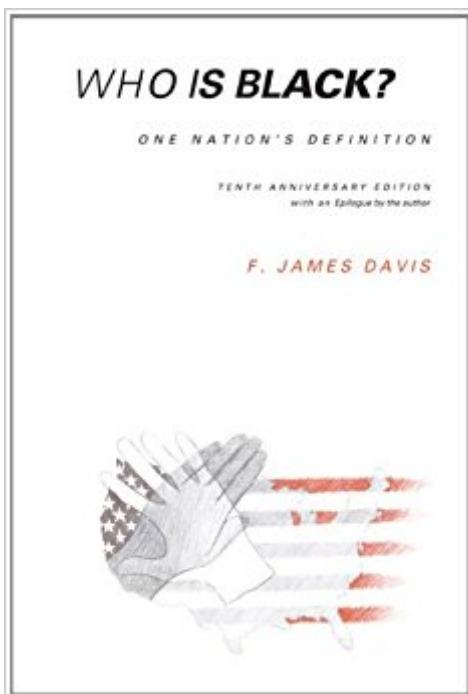


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Who Is Black?: One Nation's Definition



Synopsis

How does a person get defined as a black, both socially and legally, in the United States? This is the first comprehensive study of the so-called "one-drop rule" that defines as black any person having at least one black ancestor. Who is Black? provides both a history and an analysis of miscegenation in the United States, showing how a black person is defined, how this definition emerged from the slave South to become the nation's definition with the backing of state and federal courts, how the definition works in everyday life, and what the consequences of the definition are. According to the one-drop rule, anyone with at least one African black ancestor is black, even if the individual appears to be white. The rule originated during the era of slavery in the South and has come to be taken for granted, strongly supported by blacks and whites alike. No other nation defines a black person in this fashion. Davis provides a comparison of the one-drop rule with six other ways of defining the status of racially mixed persons in societies around the world, from Latin America to South Africa. No other racially (biologically) distinctive minority group in the United States is subject to a one-drop rule. The concept of "passing as white," which reflects the one-drop rule, applies only to persons with some African black ancestry. As a consequence, persons with even very small fractions of black ancestry cannot be assimilated in the United States as people with one-fourth or less American Indian or East Asian ancestry can be. Davis discusses the dilemmas of racial identity experienced by well-known public figures, including Lena Horne, Adam Clayton Powell, and Walter White of the NAACP. Conflicts over color in the black community are also discussed, along with such further problems as collective anxieties, the racial identity of transracially adopted children, different modes of adjustment to ambiguities about racial identity, and personal traumas. Finally, the question of potential changes in the one-drop rule is considered in order to demonstrate how entrenched the rule now is in the black community as well as the white, and why.

Book Information

Paperback: 204 pages

Publisher: Penn State University Press; 1St Edition edition (June 1, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0271007494

ISBN-13: 978-0271007496

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #483,072 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #110 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Cultural Policy #1212 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > African-American & Black #1337 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Asian

Customer Reviews

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. Copyright 1991 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

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. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.
--This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This is a very thorough, compelling examination in determining who is black. Based on what I read, not much has changed in how Ethnicity is viewed in the United States, especially because this book was authored prior to the election of the nation's first black (African American) president. Many of the themes shared in this text have been examined by other scholars. At best, the fact of the "one drop rule" remains firmly entrenched in the U.S. psyche. I recommend this to anyone interested in a scholarly read on "Colorism".

Good book

Ok txt book

Great book. fast shipping.

Condition of the book wasnt bad, even though i was expecting it to be better.

Black comes in all shades. Logically, the question of who is black means who, regardless of hair, features, skin tone and general appearance has black ancestors. Black has nothing to do with how a person speaks; how they behave or what their belief systems are. Being black is a matter of ancestry, not speech and behavior. However, the question of black is more of a socioeconomic and political one. In the United States, there exists the "one drop rule," which has been recognized by courts and legislation. A caste system existed in the United States and this caste system has been glaringly apparent among blacks and by others in re blacks. Sadly, insider racism does exist and historically, people who were darker in coloring and/or more ethnic in appearance tended to get the short end of the stick. People who were obviously "mixed race" as I believe everyone already is, sometimes had the best of both worlds, racially speaking. However, many people who are black have fewer black ancestors than white and other races. Such "racial groupings" occur in other parts of the world to this day. Racism, as asinine and illogical as it is has an economic base. By creating an underclass, another group stands to profit financially and in other ways. By 1986 the "separate but equal" law was in effect and this, too, posed problems. People who were classified as black could count on ersatz services and racist responses and being denied access to places people not classified as blacks were free to enjoy. The "separate but equal" law is just as stupid as the asinine reasons Archie Bunker, the fictional bigot of "All in the Family (1971-1983) gave to rationalize bigotry. The character of Archie pointed out the absurdity of bigotry. Sadly, bigotry which goes hand

in hand with segregation is not limited to people labeled black. During WWII, Japanese families and other Asians were imprisoned in work camps due to the anti-Japanese sentiment at the time. The ugly term "miscegenation," which means interracial unions suggests something wrong in different races conjoining. "Interracial unions" is a better replacement than "miscegenation" and "multi-racial" replacing "half-breed," which is PURE racism and "colored," which is yet another racist pejorative and "mixed race." This is an excellent book that looks at the history of what has historically and legally been used to determine who is black. Terms like quadroon (1/4 black); octoroon (1/8 black) Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples is another excellent book that looks at the unions among Afro-Native and Euro-Native people and the history of multi-racial people. An excellent book that explores the framework on which bigotry has been allowed to flourish and the residual effects that exist to this day.

Who Is Black? F. James Davis asks this question in the title to his book by the same name as though there were an answer. He documents how we, the people of United States, have adopted a "one drop rule." This rule has been adopted by both courts and legislation. Brown vs Board of Education, which desegregated our schools in 1954 which overruled the 1896 Plessy case which established the old "separate but equal" doctrine accepted the concept that public school students should be classified by race as was the mixed race Mr. Plessy who sat in the white section of the train when he in fact had more white ancestors than African. Davis points out how silly this rule is in the light of late twentieth century anthropology and genetics and yet he does not advocate for the end of unscientific race tables by all educated people. He frequently uses the term "miscegenation" which implies something wrong, when I could have better used the term "blending of gene pools." I would recommend this book to anyone who would like to see the laws take a lead in declaring that the 13th, 14th & 15th make the special treatment of people by race unconstitutional.

This sheds Light on that Question. It isn't as biological as it is so social. I've heard the Argument that lightskin Black aren't Black at all. Biologically that's true, however as I look around the city where I live and see many lightskinned and Darkskinned people who seemlessly cohabit I can be said that Black do come in many colors. There a few people who say is wrong for light or mixed people to be consider black. They say it's a "Stigma"! But if you were really to analyze the comments of the people who say this, you'd see there really Anti-Black Bigot's

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