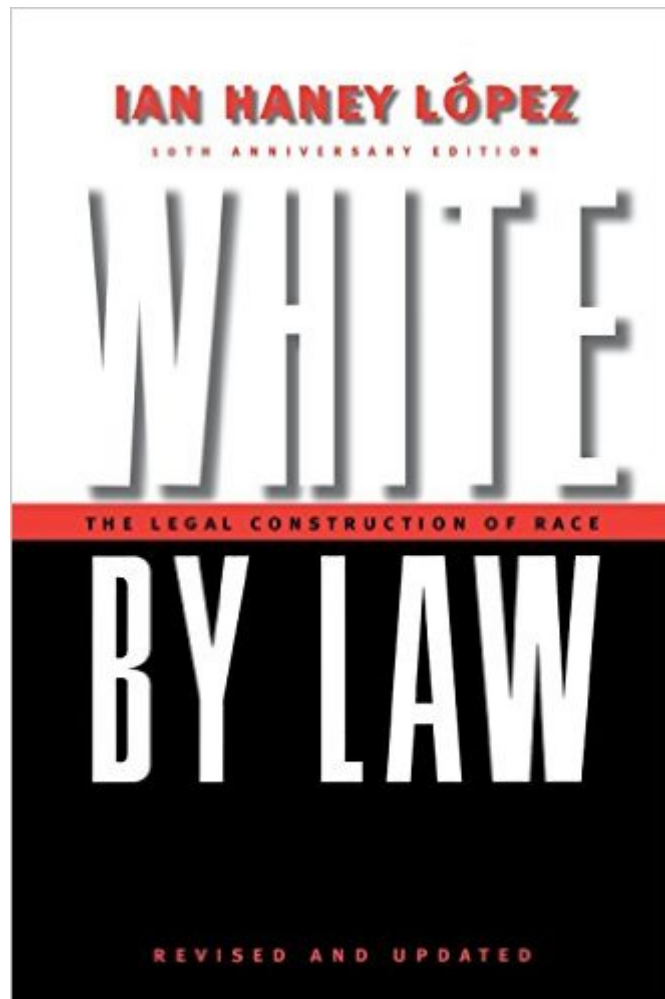


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# White By Law 10th Anniversary Edition: The Legal Construction Of Race (Critical America)



## Synopsis

*White by Law* was published in 1996 to immense critical acclaim, and established Ian Haney López as one of the most exciting and talented young minds in the legal academy. The first book to fully explore the social and specifically legal construction of race, *White by Law* inspired a generation of critical race theorists and others interested in the intersection of race and law in American society. Today, it is used and cited widely by not only legal scholars but many others interested in race, ethnicity, culture, politics, gender, and similar socially fabricated facets of American society. In the first edition of *White by Law*, Haney López traced the reasoning employed by the courts in their efforts to justify the whiteness of some and the non-whiteness of others, and revealed the criteria that were used, often arbitrarily, to determine whiteness, and thus citizenship: skin color, facial features, national origin, language, culture, ancestry, scientific opinion, and, most importantly, popular opinion. Ten years later, Haney López revisits the legal construction of race, and argues that current race law has spawned a troubling racial ideology that perpetuates inequality under a new guise: colorblind white dominance. In a new, original essay written specifically for the 10th anniversary edition, he explores this racial paradigm and explains how it contributes to a system of white racial privilege socially and legally defended by restrictive definitions of what counts as race and as racism, and what doesn't, in the eyes of the law. The book also includes a new preface, in which Haney López considers how his own personal experiences with white racial privilege helped engender *White by Law*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I doubt if another reviewer even read the book. Yes, much has changed since the plaintiffs discussed here filed their cases, but that is not to say this book doesn't talk about important issues surrounding race, citizenship, and dichotomies that have crucially informed American history. Here's the gist of it: back in the day, American law said a person had to be white in order to become a citizen. Much of this had to do with keeping Blacks and Native Americans reduced to second-class members of the society. However, other people: South Asians, Middle Easterners, multiracial people, learned of these rules and tried to get courts to deem them white so that they could have full rights. This book asks important questions about to whom does America give access and to whom does the country deny it. Identity is not just about what you call yourself; it's about what others, especially those in power, allow you to call yourself. Nowadays, many Americans may see this as a multiracial society. But in the past, America saw itself as white and black. or at least white and non-white. So this book details how other groups who don't necessarily fit into either category tried to be placed in the powerful group. This book touches on how the law and the court system can be slow to deal with societal change but can also be aggressive in reinforcing inequality in the nation. Since the 1960s, numerous activists and progressives have been writing book about people of color. Since the early 1990s or so, thinkers now have been asking and answering, "But what about whiteness?" This book is, or at least was, an important contribution to the burgeoning field called "Whiteness Studies."

One of the many attacks Lopez receives regarding *White By Law* is his alleged "white pessimism" that keeps him from genuinely wanting to deconstruct whiteness, because he would lose his White benefits. This is backed up by his many contradictions throughout the book. Though I agree he does contradict himself quite often, he does not cave into the idea of White superiority as some critics on this page say. Critics of Lopez who are well versed in Race Theory and who want to deconstruct whiteness, fault him for simultaneously stating that whiteness is a "fantasy" and yet still "exists." To put it in common-man's English, this makes sense. Whiteness DOES exist, but only as a socially constructed idea. To blindly say that Race does not exist in any form is like saying that Liberalism doesn't exist. I mean, you can't touch liberalism. There is no genetic way of identifying liberals. Same with religion. Catholicism doesn't really exist, only in social construct. Critics of Lopez would have him write his entire book with out mention of racial existence because acknowledging race would go against Critical Race Theory. However, this book was not written to be read solely by the most enlightened intellectuals. It was written for any lay-person with a vocabulary large enough to

understand it (which should be everyone, but sadly isn't.) One point I would agree with critics on is that *White By Law* has large moments of useless contradictory ranting. This is especially obnoxious to the average American who is trying to educate themselves.

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