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Inside American Education



Synopsis

An indictment of the American educational system criticizes the fact that the system has discarded the traditional goals of transmitting knowledge and fostering cognitive skills in favor of building self-esteem and promoting social harmony.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Sowell discusses American Education from pre-K's to graduate schools; the students, faculties, and administrations; and the financing, politics, and self-serving policies thereof. In 51 pages of notes, he supplies 1050 individual citations supporting his views and conclusions. His 11-page Index reveals some major themes by the number of pages on which each is discussed -- Brainwashing and Psychological Conditioning (50 pp.), Harvard (52 pp.), and Political Correctness (55 pp.). Dr. Sowell grew up in Harlem during the 1930's and 1940's. He graduated from Harvard College (A.B. magna cum laude 1958), Columbia University (A.M. 1959), and University of Chicago (Ph.D. 1968) - all degrees being in Economics. With the quality of his education and particularly with his race, given the politics of the past half century, one might expect him to end up as a prominent

bauble on some elitist university's faculty tree. Such was not the case. He displayed much too much independence of mind to be safely tucked into anybody's pocket. We learn on page 141 that as early as 1970, "a black professor named Thomas Sowell" warned against programs become too great to disguise, or to hide under euphemisms and apologetics, the conclusion that will be drawn in many quarters will not be that these were half-baked schemes, but that black people just don't have it." Dr. Sowell moved through organizations (U.S. Dept. of Labor, AT&T, The Urban Institute) and universities (Howard, Cornell, Brandeis, UCLA, Amherst). Since 1980, he has been a Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California. The reason for looking at Dr. Sowell and his background so carefully is that he makes many bold statements in his book, *Inside American Education*.

Wow, what a book. This is an amazing attack on the public education system. Almost everything is explored, how teachers teach, what teachers teach, the kind of people attracted to education, all the politics of education, how much money is spent on education, and on, and on, and on. The first hundred pages focus on the first thirteen years of schooling, from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The rest of the book explores just how many problems there are in colleges and universities. The first chapter, "Decline, Deception, and Dogmas," opens the book with Thomas Sowell reviewing just how bad the public education system has gotten. Students are not being taught the basics, and are being brain washed. Much of the particular details Sowell explores fall into one or both of these categories. There has been a marked decline in learning, with a parallel dramatic increase in A's and B's. Thomas Sowell says part of the reason for the grade inflation is so parents feel good about their children and don't realize the children are not learning anything. Students are being taught to feel good about themselves, even when they are learning very little. American students are failing in both rote learning and in problem solving. One of my favorite lines went something like: "Johnny can't read. Johnny can't think. And Johnny doesn't even know what thinking is." Students often confuse thinking with feelings. Thomas Sowell covers how the public education system has five basic responses to criticism: secrecy, camouflage, denial, shift the blame, and then ask for more money.

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