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Brown: The Last Discovery Of America



Synopsis

In his dazzling new memoir, Richard Rodriguez reflects on the color brown and the meaning of Hispanics to the life of America today. Rodriguez argues that America has been brown since its inception—since the moment the African and the European met within the Indian eye. But more than simply a book about race, *Brown* is about America in the broadest sense—a look at what our country is, full of surprising observations by a writer who is a marvelous stylist as well as a trenchant observer and thinker.

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Customer Reviews

"I write about race in hope of undermining the notion of race in America," notes Rodriguez (*Hunger for Memory*) in this provocative and challenging meditation on identity, racial and otherwise, in American culture. Relishing the contradictions of his own life as a "queer Catholic Indian Spaniard at home in a temperate Chinese city in a fading blond state in a post-Protestant nation," Rodriguez uses the color "brown" as a metaphor for in-between states of being ("brown bleeds through the straight line unstaunchable the line separating black from white") and as a symbol of the nonlinear and the unexpected: "all paradox is brown." Beautifully written in a literary style accessible and lyrical, this book draws upon a far-reaching range of cultural figures and artifacts e.g., Milton, James Baldwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ralph Lauren advertisements, Leontyne Price in the opera *Cleopatra*, Edith Sitwell, *Showboat*, Carlos Fuentes, Francis Parkman's *Oregon Trail* to make his case that our historical and contemporary conceptualization of race is rudimentary and

psychologically and culturally damaging. He isn't afraid to challenge recent left orthodoxy, finding, for example, that he "trusted white literature, because I was able to attribute universality to white literature, because it did not seem to be written for me." This book is written for anyone looking for a way out of limiting self-conceptions. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For Rodriguez, the "browning" of America reveals a mixing of the races; hence, the "erotic" of the title. This completes a trilogy on U.S. public life begun with *Hunger for Memory* and *Days of Obligation*. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

That inconvenient truth or understanding that America is more than what some would like to still believe. We are not black or white (or Hispanic - a nice made up word). We are brown. Black and white both imply voids that either absorb everything (like black) or contrast completely (like white). The truth is in America we are all mixed up. I know that's an ugly truth for many. The reason that it becomes a hang-up here and not so much as in Catholic countries (like Mexico) is that Protestant/Puritan values still live on strong. Be who you want, but don't try to blend lines or anything. Keep to your true pure self! Listen only to "your" type of music. Only eat "your" type of food (none of us is guilty of this one as obese as the country is). Only wear "your" type of clothes. Yes, you can have freedom in America, as long as you fit into your little niche. "You're African-American! You're supposed to listen to Hip-Hop. What are you doing liking Classical music?" Beethoven was the stuff! But anyway the only "race" that in America is tolerated to "cross the lines" in terms of cultural identity is whites (Is it because white pigment blends with other colors without the colors losing their essence?). And this whole "race" thing! Skin has only one color! "Shock".....I'm not speaking blasphemy. It's true. The color is called MELANIN. Actually it's a pigment. The difference in people is the amount you have. Young people today don't have the hang-ups about "race" like the older generations have. It takes a while to get rid of deeply entrenched ideas. This book had my mind spinning. Very insightful and complex. It's dense like others mentioned, but hey life is dense. Americans would like to think of life as uncomplicated with our little categories to put things. But as life (and history) shows us time and time again nothing is really black and white except divinity. And even that isn't as straightforward as some believe. Consider the fact that Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, the Prophet Moses, the Prophet Muhammad, Adam and Eve were brown. Think about it!The human world (Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and

etc.) is brown. Post-Note: According to the Rodriguez, Brown also means complexity not just the color itself.

Richard Rodriguez's ideas seem to contradict themselves. This is still a good novel to read!

Brilliant and thoughtful.

I would still definitely recommend this as a good read. The writing is exceptional. I want to be able to get closer to what he is feeling and I am not there yet.

Flimsy but good book.

This book was just OK!

Timely delivery, book is in as stated condition, very good, haven't read all of it yet, but lovely lyrical and important...

i liked this book. it's sort of a meditation on human imperfection, through the lense of one man's life. Best, about *The Last Discovery of America*, is its ability to metaphorically discuss taboo-ey topics without falling into the usual PC jargon-filled analyses of the problems. If more people had the quiet, contemplative, fatalistic view which the author does, maybe there would be less conflict in the world. Or maybe not. Well worth reading.

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