



Speaking Treason Fluently: Anti-Racist Reflections from an Angry White Male

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In this highly anticipated follow-up to *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, activist Tim Wise examines the way in which institutional racism continues to shape the contours of daily life in the United States, and the ways in which white Americans reap enormous privileges from it. The essays included in this collection span the last ten years of Wise's writing and cover all the hottest racial topics of the past decade: affirmative action, Hurricane Katrina, racial tension in the wake of the Duke lacrosse scandal, white school shootings, racial profiling, phony racial unity in the wake of 9/11, and the political rise of Barack Obama. Wise's commentaries make forceful yet accessible arguments that serve to counter both white denial and complacency—two of the main obstacles to creating a more racially equitable and just society. *Speaking Treason Fluently* is a superbly crafted collection of Wise's best work, which reveals the ongoing salience of race in America today and demonstrates that racial privilege is not only a real and persistent problem, but one that ultimately threatens the health and well-being of the entire society.

Speaking Treason Fluently: Anti-Racist Reflections from an Angry White Male Details

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From Reader Review Speaking Treason Fluently: Anti-Racist Reflections from an Angry White Male for online ebook

Robin Diangelo says

Well, by now anyone reading these will have figured out I read books on racism. Not just because this is my area of study, but also because they keep me on my toes and help challenge my white complacency that I "already know" what I need to know. They also reinforce me and help "prop me up" against the daily resistance I get from other whites. These books are a kind of "I am not crazy" remedy. Plus, they make me smarter and then I am more effective.

So, Tim Wise. I love his anger. And he has an essay in this collection that was such a pleasure to read: "What kind of card is race? The absurdity (and consistency) of white denial." I went in to class the day after I read it and laid out the 4 types of white denial of racism for my students: Minimizing; Invalidating; Rationalizing; Reverse Victimization." I also reminded them we had seen all 4 of these forms in this class. My students love me! ha! Oh how I want to be able to show my anger like Tim.

Sarah says

while reading:

i'm not super into the way that he ridicules people who hold (admittedly) ignorant points of view. it's not constructive. there's no call to be rude. i mean, of course, rudeness is totally provoked, but it's not ultimately constructive. what would be more constructive would be some discussion of anti-racist education so that such ignorance cannot continue.

later:

oh my god i get it already. racism is a problem. i get it. it's illogical. true words. but you're not going to convince anyone not to be a racist by using logic. there's a serious amount of power-analysis and intersectionality that is completely MISSING from this book. yeah yeah, it's easy to rag on poor whites for being racist when they bring down black people, for example. i mean it's TRUE. it IS racist. however the conversation cannot stop there, Tim Wise. Classism is all mixed up in racism and instead of endlessly raging against the moral corruption of whites who don't stand up for black people, how about some interesting conversation about uniting people who are oppressed by the same system, albeit in different ways? Not to excuse poor whites from personal responsibility, but to try to actually think of a solution, instead of alienating potential allies by condemning them for wanting to get ahead in a system that has taught them they must oppress others in order to be any kind of successful. We need some Dorothy Allison up in here: "The horror of class stratification, racism, and prejudice is that some people begin to believe that the security of their families and communities depends on the oppression of others, that for some to have good lives there must be others whose lives are truncated and brutal."

Ultimately, Tim Wise, racists are people too, and you're not going to make any progress in anti-racist work when you constantly denigrate the intelligence of racists. Yeah, you're right, they ARE racist, it's totally condemnable. But let's address the difference between ignorance and stupidity. Most racists are not by definition unintelligent as you repeatedly imply, but are uninformed and perhaps have not thought deeply

about systematic oppression. Perhaps they have been deceived into believing in meritocracy. Perhaps they are themselves struggling with the horror of working hard and not being able to succeed in a society that tells them that anyone who works hard can make it. Perhaps they are unhappy people who have been poorly treated and deceived by their society/government and are clawing to get ahead by tearing down those who are perceived as being socially less worthy than them.

I am not excusing their actions and words; it is ignorant and racist. But also I think probably even you, Tim Wise, were once racist yourself, given that we grow up in a culture that practically insures that white people are inculcated with a belief in their own moral superiority. So perhaps instead of insulting people who are racist, giving up on them, and talking to them as if they're idiots with no chance of ever growing, perhaps you should consider that they ARE YOU. You as you were in your past before you became Oh-So-Enlightened. No, perhaps you never became as extreme and consciously racist as some of these people, but surely you, who have so well explained the structural basis of racism in our society, can understand how they got to that point? Why not try to talk them through a calm, non-insulting, non-alienating transformation of thought instead of giving up on them? After all we are all harmed by oppression and ideas of superiority (of course not to the same degree, but it is harmful to all of society), so everyone stands to gain from it's destruction. No one is beyond hope, Tim Wise. Ideas can change, minds can open, thought patterns can become enlightened. Don't give up the fight, Tim Wise. Don't let the man get you down.

Faith Reidenbach says

This is a collection of Wise's speeches/essays from 2000 to May 2008. I was able to read only a few in the 14 days the library allowed me, but I've read enough to know I'm going to buy the book and read more. And keep it on the shelf as a reference. It helped me articulate what bothers me about the surge of support of the youngish senator from Illinois: "Obama's rise has owed almost everything to his ability to 'transcend' race, which is really a way of saying his ability to carve out an exception for himself in the minds of whites....His success, far from disproving white power and privilege, confirms it with a vengeance." Also, I wish I'd had this book when there was an uproar at Oregon State (and Smith, and so many other colleges) about students wearing blackface. What's so wrong with it? students wanted to know. This book would have given me better words to explain.

I shouldn't criticize a book I haven't finished, but there seems to be only one chapter that considers "race" and class together. If that's true it's a serious lack, and a sad loss to the reader considering Wise's keen analytical abilities.

Jennifer says

Only just beginning this powerful look at a book that covers both white denial and complacency.

Particularly relevant at this time in our country's history when so many view the election of a black/bi-racial man as "transcending race" by which we really mean transcending his blackness, as if blackness is something negative, something from which one ought to seek escape, and quickly.

Elyssa says

This book of essays about racism and the role of white privilege in perpetuating unjust political and power structures is potent. My only criticism is that the essays become repetitive after awhile. This book might have worked better if the editing was stronger or if Wise opted to blend the essays into one narrative.

Lauren says

So it took me a few weeks to get through Tim Wise's latest book. While I generally hang on every word he types, I found that 359 pages of anti-racist essays can become heavy on one's heart. He maintains a tone of righteous indignation for all 359 pages, which is both a credit to his passion for the subject and a little grating on the nerves. I closed the book very glad that I had read it, however - he writes on topics as diverse as the presidential race, steroid use in baseball and the unwise adoration for the movie Crash - always bringing a new, much-needed perspective to conversations which most would assume are all played out. This is a must-read (if, perhaps, not all in one sitting) for white folks everywhere. The sooner we all recognize our white privilege and the devastating ways it injures us and folks of color, the sooner we can get around to the business of healing racial divides and creating a more just society for the future.

Chris says

great book of essays on racism. style was debunking common white arguments against racism - thnks like "why dont we have a national association for advancement of white people?" Answer: we do- it is called ocngress- then he backs up the response- as a white man who has benefited from white privilege it was nice to have a primer where I could find out what that really means. he did have one or two knee jerk pieces that were unsupported and or not well thought out- his brief diatribe against christians- I mean thre is a lot there to talk about, but that is a differnt book and really did the author disservice to try to cover it in one or two pages. The other was a piece on wage disparity, which was a great piece, but his solution of have a worldwide set labor wage was not only impossible, it stood out as the one crazy suggestion in a otherwise excellent book. I found myself thinking "yes, and every 9 year old girl should get a pony and a princess dress too."

Tim says

I will keep my first review below for posterity, but I feel compelled to re-write my review in the light of recent circumstances.

Sometimes you never know how much a book wil impact you upon first reading. Sometimes you don't even know how much it has changed you until you've given it's message time to worm its way into your heart and mind. Sometimes even then you don't know it's impact until you find yourself defending the book's priniciples, using the book's arguments and earnestly beleiving that they are right because they align with what you've come to see at play in reality. This is the case for me.

Originally skeptical because I didn't like the way the author was addressing me as a reader, assuming

ignorance (of which he was correct), writing with anger (justifiably), and of being unrelenting (which anti-racism needs to be). Reading this book and having the discussions we had about it changed my views on racism. Further reading, contemplation, debate, observation and otherwise has opened my eyes and I am beginning to understand not only the scope of the problem of racism, but the ways that it penetrates just about every aspect of our lives. Either we never see it because we are white and not looking for it or we are minorities who have difficulty seeing past it or around it because of how often it rears its ugly head.

In discussions I have found myself defending unjust immigration laws, affirmative action and other "balancing forces", defending public education and its current efforts to close the achievement gap, etc. I realize how these things play into the larger system of the world and how they affect others, not just myself. I find myself standing in solidarity with those whom I've never met, who are wholly like me and yet I'm told are unlike me. I see that true equality does not mean just equal protection under the law, but equal opportunity, equal circumstance, and when the institution of society is fundamentally geared to deny a person these things there is no possibility of equality in anything other than name.

This book contains many hard truths. It sinks its tendrils in and doesn't let go. In discussion my main criticism was that the author does not direct the emotion that he stirs in you to any applicable action. Looking back on it, that was exactly why it's effective. He lets these things stew in your brain without release. You start to see examples of what he's talking about in real life, you hear people say things that betray their ignorance of the problem of racism and then there is release. As a white person what can I do to help? In the end, I can raise my children right and combat racism (or any -ism) wherever I see it with dialogue, story, fact and logic.

It will piss you off, but if you're white you should read this book.

Old Review:

So far I am wholly unimpressed. Tim Wise as been heralded as a paragon of modern antiracist thought...eh...he's okay. Not great, very redundant, draws frequently on a seemingly small pool of evidence. In truth he could have shortened the book by half by simply replacing whole pages of text with "Racism is bad. Blacks aren't equal yet. If you're white it's your fault. I don't have any solutions or suggestions for improvement but I hope you feel really bad about yourself."

His arguments are indefensible and leave little room for discussion. His main point is simple...join me in believing that every white person is part of the problem or you are a racist. Period. He provides descriptions of problems and frustrations without providing solutions. He betrays his own ignorance of certain systems, protocol and situations (particularly in regards to police action and Hurricane Katrina relief efforts) He presents "data" to support his views without citing their source, or even providing an in-depth description as to sample-groups, sample-size, standard deviation, methodology, or even stating whether by the use of the word "average" he is referring to median or mean (a very large difference in population studies).

Note: We contacted the author regarding this lack of documentation and he asserted that his sources are fully documented in his other works and that this, merely being a collection of essays, did not warrant that level of detail.

As one who spends much of his time studying and analyzing socio-economic principles in demographics and statistics I see a distinct lack in scholarship and see instead the emotional arguments of the zealot. He has an opinion, he may have heard some real data to back it up at some point(although anyone who works with data can tell you that it can be misconstrued to defend any position you like unless the analyst respects the

integrity of the craft), but rather than use the data to form opinions and open up discussion he uses opinions to select the data and shuts down discourse with implied ultimatums within the first few essays. His tenor and logic become far more easy to swallow in his later essays. His letter "A God With Whom I Am Not Familiar" and his views on immigration I found to be poignant, aptly directed and clearly reasoned.

I am not saying that racism is no longer a problem. I am not defending racists in thought or action. I just think that Tim Wise is a very impassioned author who could stand to do a better job documenting his sources and portray his views in a less accusatory manner that does not invite an immediate defensive response. I think that he should also be careful of putting all "whites" in to a category (as he reminds us again and again not to do with people of color).

I finished the book with an open mind. I even found myself noticing how certain events and media could be seen as having a racial bias. I ended up using a few of his talking points in a discussion around immigration reform. I look forward to the book club discussion we will have on these topics as they are certain to be as polarizing and hot-tempered as the author himself.

Ben says

I thought this book was amazing, which both thrills and troubles me.

My initial AND ultimate reactions to Wise's passionate assessments of racism in American culture is ultimately pride and inspiration. As a man married to a black woman with two mixed children, I find a comfort knowing that these sentiments are being viciously and vigorously sounded.

What most impressed me was Wise's ability to use statistical analysis of sociological surveys and polls to lay the indestructible foundation of his anti-racist arguments. I kept waiting for him to fall into the trap of generalization that racists do, but his arguments always wrapped back to provable data. At a base level, his skill in presenting the FACTS and exposing the hypocrisy of "whiteness" makes racist sentiments appear illogical; as if people forgot, or most likely never knew, that two plus two equals four.

Many of us, of all races, have heard the cliché defenses of "whiteness", namely small-sample personal experience, lack of White Entertainment Television or White History Month, Obama's presidency and Oprah's success proving the dissolving of American racism, etc. Wise's essays found herein provide an arsenal of sorts to combat these ill-conceived arguments.

However, I am also troubled. Why did it take a book like this to enlighten me to the illogical nature of racist sentiments in America? After all, I don't consider myself a racist. But why does Wise's thinking seem so fresh? Why didn't I think, or realize these things on my own?

What makes this book so important is that it does, as the title suggests, help us break out of the mainstream language and thought trains which dominate racist concepts in America. Unfortunately, I think, like many of us, I am forced to combat American racism on the Racist's terms. This collection of essays shows us how to speak out (treasonously) against institutional systemic and personal racism on logical, rational and reasonable terms. It frees us from playing in the Racist's stadium and brings the game home.

Sufficed to say, I STRONGLY recommend this book for ALL Americans. "Whiteness" effects us all and leads all races to a destructive and violent end. In a way, "whiteness" victimizes not only minorities but

Caucasian people as well. We're better than the confinement of the mental schema of "whiteness" and it's social manifestations. Yet "whiteness" causes those who adopt her ideology to seek displacement of her abominations rather than just say, "Oops, my bad" and move on. Those who adopt "whiteness" are so concerned with avoiding responsibility that they overlook how they can contribute to eradicating "whiteness", even within their own power.

People are capable of more dignity and integrity to let this continue.

Pam says

I really like his writing style and ideas.

This book can be a little repetative, since it's from essays written over a period of time, and certain themes reemerge frequently. He might have written them five years apart, but they're only 5 pages apart in the book, but other than that, it's a great book, lots to think about.

rachel misfiticus says

I would like to preface this by saying: I like Time Wise, but one should space it out a bit with these essays. Also this deserves a half star.

I would also like to say that I have no idea how to articulate how I felt about this book! Basically, Wise's book is a collection of essays and blogs from the past 10 years or so. As a result, the book can get a bit redundant in terms of statistics etc.. It seems as though every two pages Wise is telling me "Racism exists!" And I am thinking "No shit!" Am I not the target reader? Is he trying to convey his writing to people who are in denial of racism? I don't know. I do, however, know that a lot of people think of racism as more of a person to person issue, as opposed to the institutionalized mega-monster it is. *Sigh* I guess that will have to do it.

Pamela Denise says

With incisive wit, a wealth of research, and clear purpose, Tim Wise provides another timeless educational opportunity for allies in anti-racism. His essays name and repute the many "intuitions" and objections related to naming and dismantling structural racism and the identity constructs that support its maintenance. Speaking Treason Fluently is a call to move beyond paralytic guilt and humane philosophy into action-oriented anti-racism.

maddi1134 says

It took me a year and a half to read this book because if you read it straight through, it becomes dreadfully

repetitive. Great arguments and perspectives, though I was disappointed to see no sources at the end since so many of his articles' strengths were in there stats.

Overall good dissection of white people's rationalisations, minimizations, and competing victimisation when it comes to racism.

Elise says

This book is incredible. For a long time I have struggled with how to respond to others who would say things like, "I'm so tired of the race card." This book is an essential for anyone who desires to be an antiracist ally. I was blown away by the statistics and how privileged I am. This is a must read.

Beth says

More great stuff from Wise. Essays written from 2000 to 2008, all relevant right now and into the future. His humor makes the hard, bitter facts easier to face up to somehow. He wants white people to face racism and then do something about it, and he won't take any excuses. He lives his values, so it's hard to dismiss anything he says (not that I would want to) as hyperbole or idealistic or too demanding. Lots of food for thought here, as well as motivation for action.
