

Andre Smith

The American Untouchables: America & the Racial Contract

A historical perspective on race-based politics

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SCIENCE

About the author

The author earned a Ph.D. in Political Science at the University of Missouri St. Louis in 2011. His dissertation was entitled "The Influence of Context on African American Political Participation." The dissertation investigated the geographical context of African American political participation and partisan affiliation. The author is a member of the Political Science Department at Harris Stowe State University located in St. Louis Missouri, and has scholarly interests in political economy, social context theory, and African American studies.

Summary

The issue of race is often a scab Americans choose to ignore. However social science has a responsibility and an obligation to examine not simply the amenable subjects but also the controversial. This work, in a word, is controversial. Thomas Franks (2004) argued that cultural differences led white Kansans to abandon the Democratic Party for the Republican Party during the 1980s. He specifically argued that abortion was the unifying issue in this ideological migration. Simultaneously, future President Ronald Reagan opened his campaign for the presidency in Philadelphia, Mississippi, the sight of the massacre of four young civil rights activists over a decade earlier. Race has and is a factor in the American experience; Franks' premise is simply that the absence of the concentration of African Americans in the Kansas area negated the influence of the "black threat hypothesis" on the observed ideological switch of white Kansans. This work argues that Franks' premise fails to incorporate the over arching ideological switch of white voter migration to the Republican party that was occurring during the same period, and that Reagan's speech in Philadelphia, Mississippi was an overt cue that he was rejecting the civil rights consensus for an historically established "race-based social contract" that positioned people of color outside the traditional bounds of the social contract.

The study is a sociopolitical analysis of the African American experience utilizing the "racial contract" framework developed by Charles Mills. The "racial contract" holds that the social contract explicitly dictates interactions and transaction costs between citizens and government. Mills supposition is that historically non-Western Europeans were excluded from the penalties for violations of the social contract, and a tacit race based contract dictated transaction costs and interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans. The work utilizes the framework to trace the sociopolitical environment from the first appearance of Africans in America to the present. It has the supposition that the initial sociopolitical status of Africans in America was as a result of the reformation of the Western feudal agrarian culture, with African captives attached to the land as the neo-serfs; but that the reformation of feudalism was only possible within the context that Africans were implicitly viewed as outside the bounds of the codified social contract. It traces American sociopolitical conflict over the expansion of the "racial contract," which was the basis of the American Civil War; and the establishment of an implicit sociopolitical order within the bounds of the racial contract at the end of the Civil War, with codified sanctions for violations of commensality and endogamy.

The American Untouchables

America & the Racial Contract

by Andre Smith

May 2017 | Hardback 236x160mm | 196 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-62273-147-3
Also in Paperback (\$50/€47/£41) | ISBN: 978-1-62273-299-9

SUBJECTS Political Science, Political History, Race & Identity

VIEW/ORDER ONLINE AT vernonpress.com/book/234

 VERNON PRESS
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SCIENCE

\$ 60

€ 58

£ 52

12% DISCOUNT ONLINE
USE CODE AT CHECKOUT

FLYPR12



VERNON PRESS
www.vernonpress.com