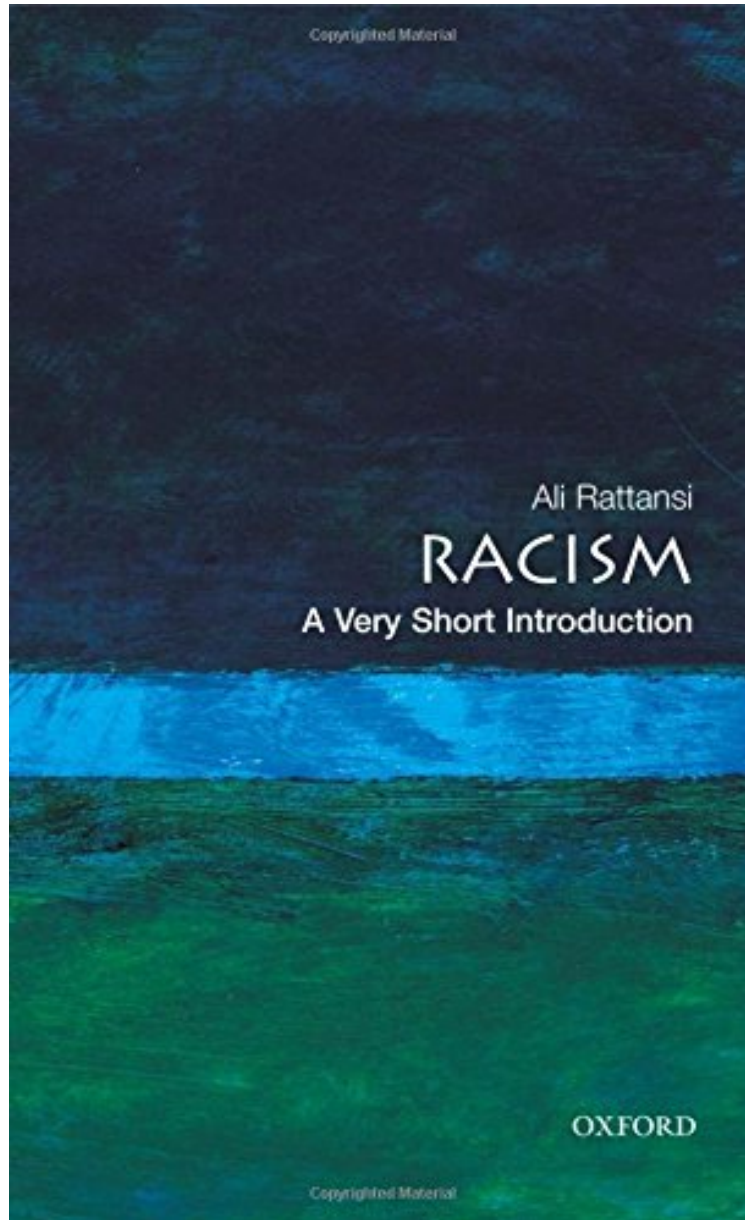


(Mobile library) Racism: A Very Short Introduction

Racism: A Very Short Introduction

Ali Rattansi

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Ali Rattansi : Racism: A Very Short Introduction before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Racism: A Very Short Introduction:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A racy fiddleBy HHRattansi takes a frank and objective look at how

and why racial prejudices and stereotypes are deeply embedded in Western culture. He guides the reader through the confusion that surrounds the meaning of the word racism, and how it differs from ethnocentrism, nationalism, and xenophobia. He does this by following racism from its origins, arguably 1492, to its scientific and philosophical foundations during the Enlightenment, and then finally to its modern incarnation defined by social inequalities and discrimination. Throughout this historical progression, Rattansi argues that current discourse on racism needs to move beyond the simplistic binary of non-racist versus racist. Instead, he maintains that the use of the term racialization is more appropriate as it interprets racism as a fractured and multi-layered topic. Rattansi also examines how the scientific validity of 'race' has been comprehensively undermined by modern genetic science, and uses important historical examples as well as up-to-date cases (as of 2007 anyway), from the British Empire to the American civil rights movement and the Macpherson Report on 'institutional racism' in the London Metropolitan Police. Although commendable, Rattansi's attempt to historicize racism falls short in its brevity and lack of scope. He places a premium on racism in America and the UK that unfortunately leaves the reader questioning the role of racism in other cultures and societies. Despite these limitations, Rattansi has produced an exceptional work that not only defines and examines the historic construction of race, it highlights how race and racism still shape issues today, all the while illustrating their importance in the construction of identity. It'd be interesting to see a 2nd edition of this book which incorporates the recent events in Ferguson, MO and the "Black Lives Matter" movement.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Superb
By simon matthew
Ali Rattansi's Racism is an absolutely outstanding introduction to a very complex topic. In a series of extremely concise and well written chapters, he covers the development of modern racism and its intensification in imperialism and colonialism, the Holocaust and the many complexities of "anti-semitism", eugenics and IQ science, and the resurgence of xenophobia and the rise of the far right in response to immigration from the global south. Unlike many other books on this topic, Rattansi is always careful to point out that the terms involved in this discourse are very difficult to define, and that just as one ought not to essentialize the characteristics of certain ethnic or religious groups, the attitudes of those displaying apparently racist sentiment ought to be treated as similarly nuanced. Rattansi, like most of the OUP authors, clearly writes from a universalistic, left wing perspective, but he is alert to the fact that the shutting down of contrary opinions by name calling is highly destructive to the functioning of any true democracy. In a particularly trenchant quote, he notes that "the labelling of an action...as racist should be the beginning of a dialogue and enquiry, not the prelude to a round of polarized shouting matches from entrenched positions." If, like me, you believe that the free movement of peoples is a human right, and are concerned about the problems it may engender in the future, I can't think of a better place to start.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. fairly subtle and comprehensive
By C. D. Varn
Rattansi's very short introduction to racism does a very good job at unsettling both racialist and activist simplifications of race. Rattansi focuses first in the UK, then the US, but also comments on racialized dynamics outside of the "white" world. Rattansi points out that many activist notions actually oversimplify the contradictory views of most individuals towards race in a way that may have unintended consequences. Rattansi's use of a radicalization spectrum does better accommodate complicated views and even contradictory definitions of race itself than binary "racist" and "non-racist" declarations. The one area Rattansi seems a little dated in is not talking about privilege paradigms of racism and standpoint epistemology as applied to racism. Perhaps Rattansi focus on the UK where this theory of racism is newer than in the US, where it developed in academic circles in late 1980s and early 1990s, but only really caught on in activist circles the mid-2000s as cultural theory. Although some of Rattansi's discussion and criticism of the contradictory implications of "institutional racism" maybe applicable to standpoint theory. Anyway, for those new to the study of racism as a concept I would highly recommend it with the caveats I have listed above.

From subtle discrimination in everyday life, to horrors like lynching in the Old South, cultural imperialism, and "ethnic cleansing", racism exists in many different forms, in almost every facet of society. Despite civil rights movements and other attempts at progress, racial prejudices and stereotypes remain deeply embedded in Western culture. Racism takes a frank and objective look at why these notions exist. It explores how racism has come to be so firmly established, and looks at how race, ethnicity, and xenophobia are related. This book incorporates the latest research to demystify the subject of racism and explore its history, science, and culture. It sheds light not only on how racism has evolved since its earliest beginnings, but also explores the numerous embodiments of racism, highlighting the paradox of its survival, despite the scientific discrediting of the notion of 'race' with the latest advances in genetics. As encompassing as it is concise, Racism is a valuable guide to one of the world's most destructive problems.

About the Author
Ali Rattansi is currently Visiting Professor of Sociology at City University, London. His publications include Racism, Modernity, and Identity: On the Western Front, 'Race', Culture, and Difference, and Racism and Anti-racism: Inequalities, Opportunities, and Policies.