



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on July 8, 2014

“Please Stop Helping Us”: A Primer on Race

Back in the heyday of the British Empire, a man from one of the colonies addressed a London audience.

“Please do not do any more good in my country,” he said. “We have suffered too much already from all the good that you have done.”

That is essentially the message of an outstanding new book by Jason Riley about blacks in America. Its title is *Please Stop Helping Us*. Its theme is that many policies designed to help blacks are in fact harmful, sometimes devastatingly so. These counterproductive policies range from minimum wage laws to “affirmative action” quotas.

This book untangles the controversies, the confusions, and the irresponsible rhetoric in which issues involving minimum wage laws are usually discussed. As someone who has followed minimum wage controversies for decades, I must say that I have never seen the subject explained more clearly or more convincingly.

Black teenage unemployment rates ranging from 20 to 50 percent have been so common over the past 60 years that many people are unaware that this was not true before there were minimum wage laws, or even during years when inflation rendered minimum wage laws ineffective, as in the late 1940s.

Pricing young people out of work deprives them not only of income but also of work experience, which can be even more valuable. Pricing young people out of legal work, when illegal work is always available, is just asking for trouble. So is having large numbers of idle young males hanging out together on the streets.

When it comes to affirmative action, Jason Riley asks the key question: “Do racial preferences work? What is the track record?” Like many other well-meaning and nice-sounding policies, affirmative action cannot survive factual scrutiny.

Some individuals may get jobs they would not get otherwise but many black students who are quite capable of getting a good college education are admitted, under racial quotas, to institutions whose pace alone is enough to make it unlikely that they will graduate.

Studies that show how many artificial failures are created by affirmative action admissions policies are summarized in *Please Stop Helping Us*, in language much easier to understand than in the original studies.

There are many ponderous academic studies of blacks, if you have a few months in which to read them, but there is nothing to match Jason Riley’s book as a primer that will quickly bring you up to speed on the complicated subject of race in a week, or perhaps over a weekend.





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As an experienced journalist, rather than an academic, Riley knows how to use plain English to get to the point. He also has the integrity to give it to you straight, instead of in the jargon and euphemisms too often found in discussions of race. The result is a book that provides more knowledge and insight in a couple of hundred pages than are usually found in books twice that length.

Unlike academics who just tell facts, Riley knows which facts are telling.

For example, in response to claims that blacks don't do well academically because the schools use an approach geared to white students, he points out that blacks from foreign, non-English-speaking countries do better in American schools than black, English-speaking American students.

Asian students do better than whites in schools supposedly geared to whites. In New York City's three academically elite public high schools — Stuyvesant, Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech — there are more than twice as many Asian students as white students in all three institutions.

So much for the theory that non-whites can't do well in schools supposedly geared to whites.

On issue after issue, *Please Stop Helping Us* cites facts to destroy propaganda and puncture inflated rhetoric. It is impossible to do justice to the wide range of racial issues — from crime to family disintegration — explored in this book. Pick up a copy and open pages at random to see how the author annihilates nonsense.

His brief comments pack a lot of punch. For example, "having a black man in the Oval Office is less important than having one in the home."

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