



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on December 12, 2012

Christmas Books

During the holidays, a shopping mall can be more like a shopping maul. One way to avoid that scene is to give books as Christmas gifts, since books can be bought on-line, painlessly.

A book that fits in with the holiday spirit is *No, They Can't!* by TV show host John Stossel. It is written with a light touch, but gets across some pretty heavy stuff about economics. The title is a take-off on Obama's old slogan, "Yes, we can!"



It is the first book I have read that asks a question about electric cars that should have been asked long ago: How much pollution do they cause?

Electric car enthusiasts may say, "None." But the electricity that runs these cars has to be generated somewhere, and much of that electricity is generated by burning coal. The fact that no pollution comes out of the car itself is irrelevant, when the pollution comes out of a smokestack somewhere else.

Similar common sense analysis punctures many other puffed-up ideas, on subjects ranging from health care to education to government bailouts of failing businesses. *No, They Can't!* is a book that makes what used to be called "the dismal science" of economics more lively, and even humorous, as it reveals what nonsense so much of the lofty rhetoric of our time is.

Anyone who wants an honest look at the hard facts about racial preferences in admissions to colleges and universities will find it — perhaps for the first time — in a book titled *Mismatch* by Richard Sanders and Stuart Taylor, Jr.

The central concern of *Mismatch* is how racial preferences harm blacks and other minorities. Black students with all the qualifications for success can be turned into failures by being admitted to institutions geared to students with even higher qualifications than theirs.

I saw this happen at Cornell, years ago, when black students with test scores substantially above the national average were nevertheless in deep academic trouble, at an institution where the other students were in the top one percent. Those same black students would have made the dean's list in most other colleges. But they were mismatched at Cornell, and many failed bitterly.

Mismatch thoroughly analyses the effects of racial preferences in numerous contexts, showing how what is called "affirmative action" has very negative consequence for its supposed beneficiaries. For example, the data strongly suggest that there are fewer black lawyers when there are racial preferences in admissions to law schools. Racial preferences put more minority students on campus, but in ways that reduce the number who graduate.

Conversely, when racial preferences were banned in the University of California system, the number of black students who graduated actually increased substantially, as did their grade point averages. Instead of failing at Berkeley or UCLA, these students graduated from other good quality universities in the system. The careful analysis of documented facts makes *Mismatch* a rare and valuable book for people who want to think.



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The time is long overdue to discuss racial issues in general in plain, honest words. A new book that does that is titled *Mugged: Racial Demagoguery from the Seventies to Obama* by Ann Coulter.

In this book, readers will learn many truths for the first time, unfiltered by the mainstream media. For example, they will belatedly learn the truth about how an ex-con and hoodlum was turned into a sympathetic victim by the clever editing of the Rodney King videotape.

My own new book this year is an expanded and much revised edition of *Intellectuals and Society*. Among its new features is a debunking of murky catch phrases like “social justice” and “tax cuts for the rich” that have spread so much confusion and mischief. Four new chapters have also been added on intellectuals and race. Among the things they reveal is how the political left promoted racism on both sides of the Atlantic during the early decades of the 20th century, even though today the left has swung to the other end of the spectrum and now claim to find racism everywhere in other people.

Merry Christmas — if we are still allowed to say that.

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