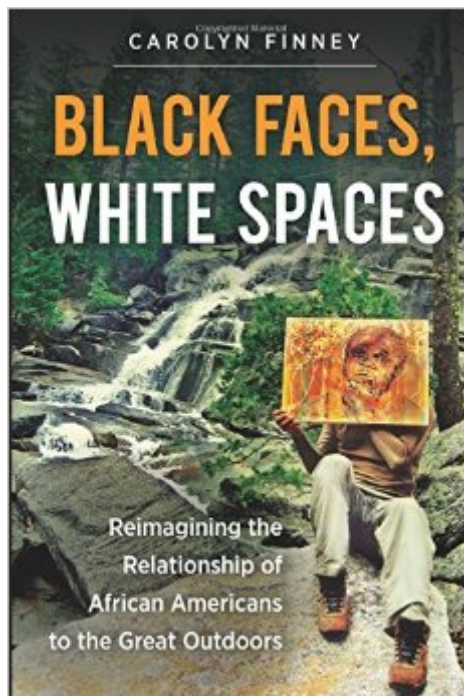


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Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining The Relationship Of African Americans To The Great Outdoors



Synopsis

Why are African Americans so underrepresented when it comes to interest in nature, outdoor recreation, and environmentalism? In this thought-provoking study, Carolyn Finney looks beyond the discourse of the environmental justice movement to examine how the natural environment has been understood, commodified, and represented by both white and black Americans. Bridging the fields of environmental history, cultural studies, critical race studies, and geography, Finney argues that the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and racial violence have shaped cultural understandings of the "great outdoors" and determined who should and can have access to natural spaces. Drawing on a variety of sources from film, literature, and popular culture, and analyzing different historical moments, including the establishment of the Wilderness Act in 1964 and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Finney reveals the perceived and real ways in which nature and the environment are racialized in America. Looking toward the future, she also highlights the work of African Americans who are opening doors to greater participation in environmental and conservation concerns.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Carolyn Finney's work functions at the axis of critical race theory and environment studies, examining the relationship between black Americans and the natural environment, and how this relationship has been shaped and codified by racism, violence, class difference, and white privilege. This book raises some very important questions on how our culture views that relationship and also addresses the fears black Americans associate with the environment and the advances that black

Americans have contributed to environmental causes. The book focuses on a number of different topics to demonstrate the problematic and tenuous bond between race and environment: slave labor, the association between wilderness and lynching, lack of diversity in visitors to and employees of national parks, racist depictions of black people related to tropes of "wildness," and the racial underpinnings of government and media reactions to Hurricane Katrina. All the arguments this text makes are valid and, even more, crucial. However, the book seems slightly unfocused and spread too thin. In an effort to paint a comprehensive picture and tackle all possible avenues related to this mostly unexplored intersection the book lacks an argumentative and theoretical depth. Hopefully, this is only the beginning and Finney continues to contribute more scholarship regarding these issues, as it is badly needed.

Dr. Finney is an excellent scholar, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading her book. If you are familiar with her and her work there are not many surprises here, but it's an enjoyable read. She writes very clearly making difficult and complex ideas very digestible.

Really interesting take on this issue, taught me a lot.

I love the connection Dr. Finney makes between nature and communities of color. All too often people of color are removed from the conversation, as if their connections aren't relevant,

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