

Cose, E. (1993, November 15). [Rage of the Privileged](#). Newsweek, pp. 56-57.

OVERVIEW

Cose explores why the black middle class, many of whom are more educated and more wealthy than the majority of white Americans, are so full of rage. Even though they have "succeeded" by outward standards, they are frustrated by the lack of respect they get from their white co-workers and clients and their somewhat limited opportunities due to their skin color. One frustrated businessman explains:

'Here I am, a black man who has done all the things I was supposed to do.' He proceeded to tick off precisely what he had done: gone to Harvard, labored for years to make his mark in an elite law firm, married a highly motivated woman who herself had an advanced degree and a lucrative career. He and his wife were in the process of raising three exemplary children. Yet he was far from fulfilled. 'Had I been given a fair shot, who knows where I would be?' (p. 56)

'I have done everything I was supposed to do. I have stayed out of trouble with the law, gone to the right schools, and worked myself nearly to death. What more do they want? Why in God's name won't they accept me as a full human being? Why am I pigeonholed in a 'black job'? Why am I constantly treated as if I were a drug addict, a thief, or a thug? Why am I still not allowed to aspire to the same things every white person in America takes as a birthright? Why, when I most want to be seen, am I suddenly rendered invisible?' (p. 57)

This man's testimony is painfully powerful; it gives white America a glimpse of what racism really is and how it hurts its victims. Cose, after recounting several other incidents shared by several black professionals, ends with this statement: "For many black professionals, these are not so much isolated incidents as insistent and galling reminders that whatever they may accomplish in life, race still remains their most salient feature as far as much of America is concerned." (p. 57)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- What is your reaction to the businessperson's testimony? How common do you think it is? How would your reaction differ if you were black? White?
- As we can learn from this article, racism does not have to be overt to be racism. How are you racist? How do you contribute to the racial division of our society, whether black, white, Asian, Latino, etc? Do you understand that while the majority race is most responsible, we all (generally speaking) contribute to the problem?
- Do you think we as a nation can overcome racism? How? What needs to happen?

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