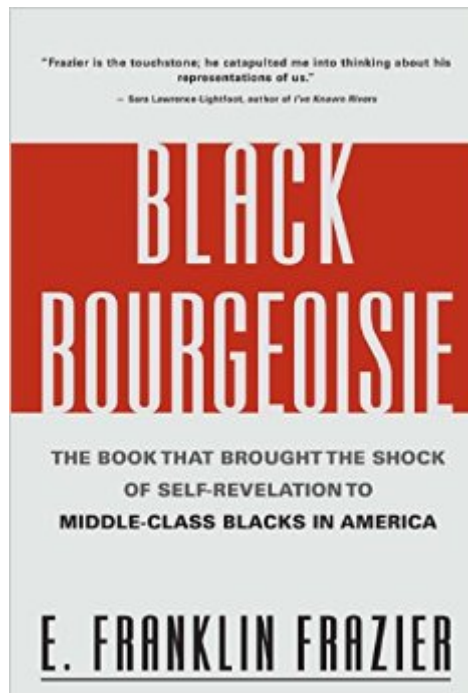


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Black Bourgeoisie: The Book That Brought The Shock Of Self-Revelation To Middle-Class Blacks In America



Synopsis

A classic analysis of the Black middle class studies its origin and development, accentuating its behavior, attitudes, and values during the 1940s and 1950s. When it was first published in 1957, E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* was simultaneously reviled and revered—revered for its skillful dissection of one of America's most complex communities, reviled for daring to cast a critical eye on a section of black society that had achieved the trappings of the white, bourgeois ideal. The author traces the evolution of this enigmatic class from the segregated South to the post-war boom in the integrated North, showing how, along the road to what seemed like prosperity and progress, middle-class blacks actually lost their roots to the traditional black world while never achieving acknowledgment from the white sector. The result, concluded Frazier, is an anomalous bourgeois class with no identity, built on self-sustaining myths of black business and society, silently undermined by a collective, debilitating inferiority complex.

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Customer Reviews

If you, as an African American, have ever wondered why some "brothers" seem to ignore your existence, even if you have the same education, this book will fill in a lot of holes for you. As I read it, I continually said to myself "So THAT'S why so and so treated me like I was the invisible woman!" I feel more sad than angry for the blacks described in the book. They are caught in a no man's land partly of their own making. They believe they are above other blacks without the family bloodlines, wealth, and education they have. Yet the Caucasians who should be their peers reject them as

social inferiors because of their skin color--even if it is lighter than most other African Americans. It's a tragedy; their skills and talents are needed by us all, yet they are lost because of their own snobbery and the racism of others. Read this book, then live your life differently from these black "elite."

This analysis of the condition of the descendants of the African Slave Trade are right on the money. The most obvious points being that money (having, not having, getting, or losing it) has become the dominating factor in the consciousness of the "Black Middle Class", and more recently, the majority of the entire race! Edward Franklin Frazier proves that the so-called "Negro's" pursuit of a College Degree is not to increase one's academic proficiency, or contribute excellence to a particular field of endeavor, or even to pass the knowledge on to our offspring, but simply to make more money. This book has made me ponder why so many of my acquaintances that have Master's Degrees, never pass along anything they learned, or even discuss the knowledge they have gained, for any reason other than vocational? I have no doubt that had he lived, he would have continued to accurately predict the social conditions that spawned the terms: "Money makes the world go round", "You can't live on love", "Cash Rules Everything Around Me (CREAM)", and "I love the dough, more than you know". I am saddened that his gifted insight did not allow him to suggest a viable, detailed solution to these problems.

"When it was first published in 1957, *Black Bourgeoisie* was simultaneously revered and reviled because it cast a critical eye on one of the cornerstones of the black American community--its middle class. In the 1950s, before the recent burgeoning of the black middle class, Frazier identified the problems that occur in the aftermath of 'black-flight' from the inner cities and black communities of the rural South. The book's relevance has only increased as over the years the divide between increasingly prosperous middle-class blacks and their increasingly desperate 'underclass' brethren has grown into an almost uncrossable chasm. ¶ By tracing the evolution of the black bourgeoisie, from the segregated South to the integrated North, Frazier shows how the blacks who comprised the middle class have lost their cohesion by moving out of black communities and attempting to integrate white communities. The result of this integration 'is an anomalous bourgeois class with no identity, built on self-sustaining myths of black business and society, silently undermined by a collective, debilitating inferiority complex.' Frazier hoped to dispel the image of blacks as having thrown off the psychological and economical ravages of slavery to become economically powerful, because according to Frazier, it was a lie that was damaging the community.

Ã Â¶ Frazier, chairman of the Department of Sociology at Howard University and president of the International Society for the Scientific Study of Race Relations, hoped that Black Bourgeoisie would impel blacks to make changes that would empower their community. For the most part, those hoped-for changes have not occurred. Nevertheless, today, as many black people are calling into question the very existence and relevance of an autonomous 'black community,' his book offers a fascinating perspective on the costs of that community's dissolution."--Sacred Fire

Many of the points made in the book have good merit. It provides extensive historical information about the key segments of the black society prior to 1957-the church, business, higher education, the press, etc. However, especially in the last few chapters, the author writes irrationally, or as if he is obsessed with only one point of view. Franklin paints the entire black middle class with the same broad strokes. Also, he is intent about only laying out the negatives. He writes as if he's in a debate or a street fight, rather than providing the results of objective research. This author must have used words like DELUSIONAL, PLAYING POKER, INFERIORITY, MAKE BELIEVE WORLD, hundreds of times to describe the black middle class. He seemed to be of the opinion that none of the black institutions were doing anything right. According to him, they were all basically self-serving and constantly engaging in conspicuous consumption. I do not agree with the extent to which he portrayed the negatives of black middle class, although admittedly a lot of it is still relevant. Overall, I learned a heck of a lot from the book, because I can read such a book and then make up my own mind. I would definitely recommend it.

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