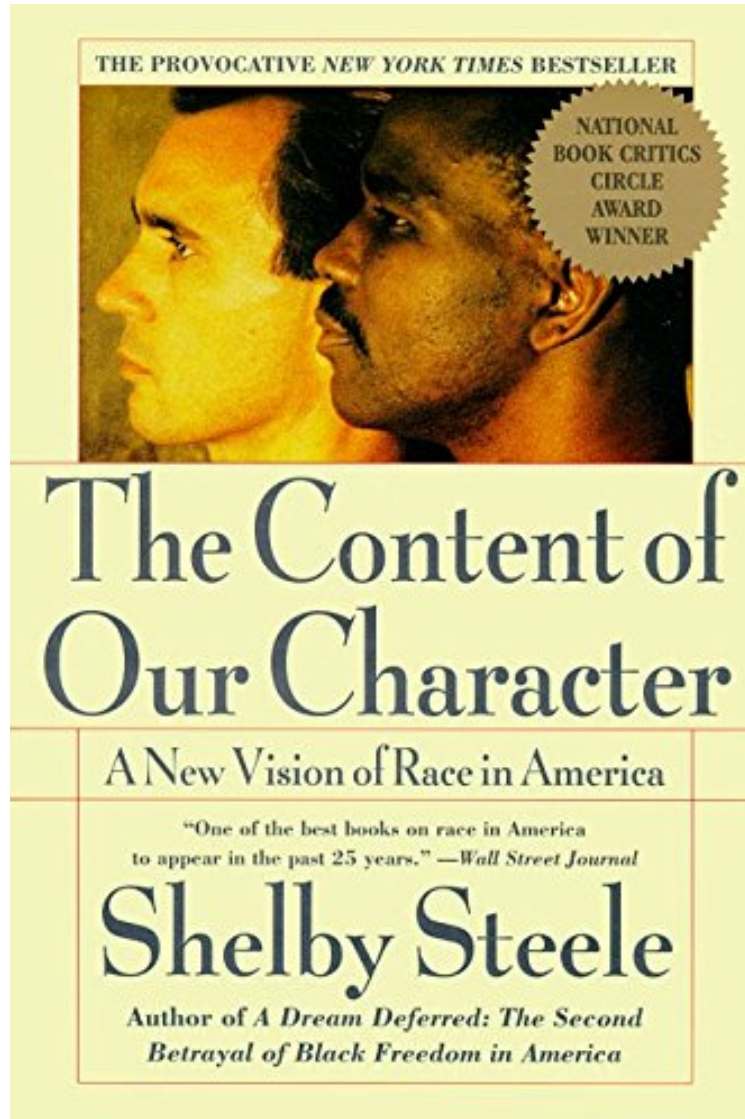


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The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race In America

Shelby Steele

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In this controversial essay collection, award-winning writer Shelby Steele illuminates the origins of the current conflict in race relations--the increase in anger, mistrust, and even violence between black and whites. With candor and persuasive argument, he shows us how both black and white Americans have become trapped into seeing color before character, and how social policies designed to lessen racial inequities have instead increased them. The Content of Our Character is neither "liberal" nor "conservative," but an honest, courageous look at America's most enduring and wrenching social dilemma.

.com From the sight-lines of the university setting, Shelby Steele gives an account of race that is nothing if not controversial. Steele's nine essays derive their messages from personal experience dosed with broader social psychology. The value of this book, which won a 1990 National Book Critics Circle Award, lies in its introspection, rather than its distant calculation. Steele weeds the individual out of the group and argues for personal responsibility. He offers a unique look at the African-American experience and points a questioning finger at the children of affirmative action. The knee-jerk identification he observes "presupposes a deep racist reflex in American life that will forever try to limit black possibility."From Publishers WeeklySteele, seeking to improve strained race relations, demonstrates how social policies intensify rather than lessen racial differences, how blacks and whites tend to see color before character, and how blacks are often oppressed more by doubt in their abilities than by racism. This won a National Book Critics Circle award. (Sept.)no PWCopyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalThis volume is a collection of nine of Steele's essays, some of which have been recently published in Harper's , which he frames with an introduction and an epilog. He presents his own perspective on the current state of race relations in the United States, noting problems but purveying a generally optimistic message. He offers introspection, a dash of autobiography, and a hint of social psychology. The danger with such a mixture is, of course, that social diagnoses and prescriptions drawn from necessarily idiosyncratic experiences, while thought-provoking, can be often only serendipitously correct and sometimes just plain wrong. Still, the value of this work is that it should spark similar introspection on the part of literate lay readers.- Joseph Stewart Jr., Univ. of Texas at Dallas, RichardsonCopyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.