

Race and the Invisible Hand: How White Networks Exclude Black Men from Blue-Collar Jobs (George Gund Foundation Book in African American Studies)

Deirdre Royster



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From the time of Booker T. Washington to today, and William Julius Wilson, the advice dispensed to young black men has invariably been, "Get a trade." Deirdre Royster has put this folk wisdom to an empirical test—and, in Race and the Invisible Hand, exposes the subtleties and discrepancies of a workplace that favors the white job-seeker over the black. At the heart of this study is the question: Is there something about young black men that makes them less desirable as workers than their white peers? And if not, then why do black men trail white men in earnings and employment rates? Royster seeks an answer in the experiences of 25 black and 25 white men who graduated from the same vocational school and sought jobs in the same blue-collar labor market in the early 1990s. After seriously examining the educational performances, work ethics, and values of the black men for unique deficiencies, her study reveals the greatest difference between young black and white men—access to the kinds of contacts that really help in the job search and entry process.

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