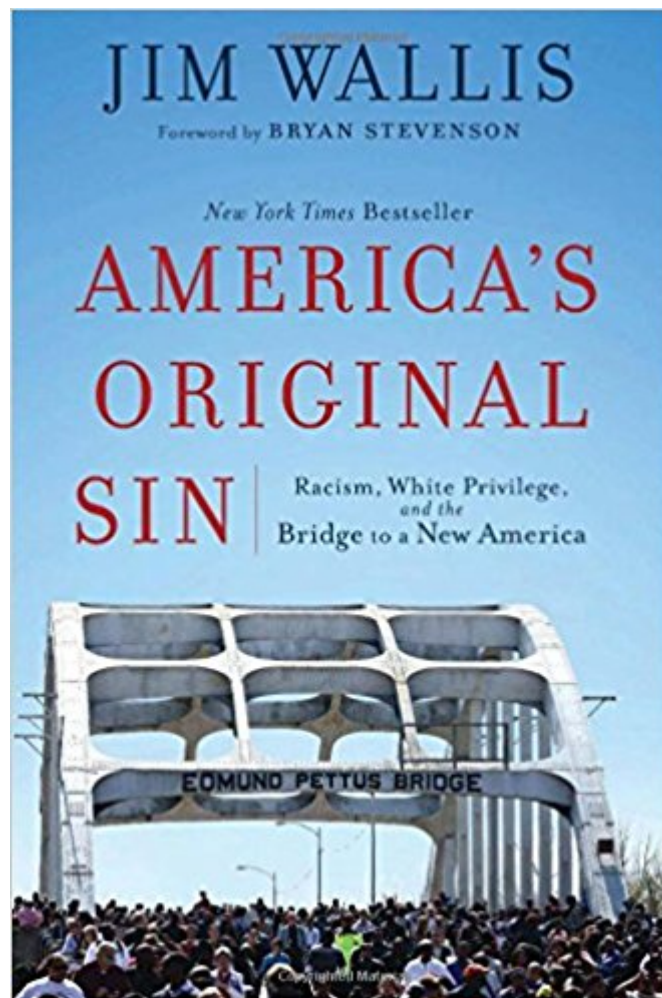




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America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, And The Bridge To A New America



Synopsis

America's problem with race has deep roots, with the country's foundation tied to the near extermination of one race of people and the enslavement of another. Racism is truly our nation's original sin. "It's time we right this unacceptable wrong," says bestselling author and leading Christian activist Jim Wallis. Fifty years ago, Wallis was driven away from his faith by a white church that considered dealing with racism to be taboo. His participation in the civil rights movement brought him back when he discovered a faith that commands racial justice. Yet as recent tragedies confirm, we continue to suffer from the legacy of racism. The old patterns of white privilege are colliding with the changing demographics of a diverse nation. The church has been slow to respond, and Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week. In *America's Original Sin*, Wallis offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. He speaks candidly to Christians--particularly white Christians--urging them to cross a new bridge toward racial justice and healing. Whenever divided cultures and gridlocked power structures fail to end systemic sin, faith communities can help lead the way to grassroots change. Probing yet positive, biblically rooted yet highly practical, this book shows people of faith how they can work together to overcome the embedded racism in America, galvanizing a movement to cross the bridge to a multiracial church and a new America.

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Customer Reviews

"A thought-provoking plea to white evangelicals and white Christians in general." ---Library Journal

--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

"Jim Wallis has grasped with amazing clarity and insight the persistent pain and sin of racism in America. In America's Original Sin we have not only a recounting of the pain of racism and xenophobia but also a hope-filled cartography for a new, reconciled reality. As a Latino evangelical, I have found in Jim Wallis a key ally and fellow visionary for a racially reconciled America."--Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero, president, National Latino Evangelical Coalition; pastor, Lamb's Church

"Jim Wallis is a clarion voice our nation desperately needs right now, especially the parents and grandparents raising our next generation of children. Only the truth will set us free."--Marian Wright Edelman, president, Children's Defense Fund

"Jim Wallis is a visionary veteran in the struggle against white supremacy. In this powerful book, he calls for a new conversation and action on the ground--in our homes, churches, sports arenas, and schools--in order to be true to the best of who we are!"--Cornel West, Union Theological Seminary; author of Race Matters

"Every so often a leader addresses the pressing crisis of his or her day with the clarity, passion, and conviction that offers not only critique but hope that can only be forged in the trenches of faithful struggle and engagement. Jim Wallis has done just that by confronting the injustice of racism in our nation."--Noel Castellanos, CEO & president, Christian Community Development Association (CCDA)

"We will not get better as a country until we face the sin we've inherited, the sin that continues to wound our brothers and sisters. This book can help us build a better nation by facing the terrible truth of our self-centeredness and the wonderful truth of God's ongoing, redeeming love."--Joel C. Hunter, senior pastor, Northland--A Church Distributed

One Sunday I stood in the church vestibule greeting congregants as they exited. One man complimented me on the sermon and then asked this somewhat unusual question:

"How long do you think it took to prepare that?"

I told him. That was my age at the time. The best messages have to steep for a while, and clearly the message of America's Original Sin has been steeping for quite some time. In fact, a few months ago, Jim Wallis told me that this was the book he's always wanted to write. I believe he's been writing it all his life. It's only now, in the fullness of time, that we're getting to read it. This book lays bare the facts about white America's moral responsibility for this country's racial dysfunction. These facts are not really in dispute but are nevertheless largely ignored by white Christians. Not any more. Jim Wallis doesn't

just present the facts; he confronts us with them. America's Original Sin is not just a reminder of our jaded history or our hypocritical present. It is more than the sum of its sobering statistics. It calls into question the very benignity of whiteness. It reminds us of our biblical commitments. It calls us to repentance. The repentance to which Jim Wallis points, however, is not simply a cathartic spiritual experience. He's not just talking about committing to change but about making changes •changes in our relationships, changes in our churches, changes in our politics. And the book is chock full of practical prescriptions as to what that change should look like. Perhaps the best thing about this book, however, is just how very personal it is. Reading this book feels a lot like having a conversation with Jim Wallis, right down to the de rigueur references to Little League. After a lifetime of listening to and living with minority concerns, Jim offers us the benefit of an experience that few of us will ever have. If we take it to heart, we can change the racial landscape of America.

Jim Wallis is good at pulling together detail and insight to help people understand the theological roots and wings of public issues. He's done that in several books now and this book is extremely timely given the recent unveiling of the depths of both personal and structural racism in the United States. There are a lot of books out there more informative about the politics of race and there are a lot of theological constructions around racial justice that have been written by superb theologians; Wallace draws on both kinds of books to fulfill a relatively rare role as a white man speaking primarily to white people about a spiritual approach to dismantling our racist social structure. Theologically, I have a couple of minor bones to pick. (For example, I wonder if the role played by shame in sustaining racism needs a fuller theological response.) But this book is an informative and useful blend of public theology and spiritual discipline and worth reading and using as a guide.

It's hard to call it a good book when it makes you feel so uncomfortable--but that was the point. I admit I had a chip on my shoulder as I started the book. I wondered if it were going to be a long list of what is wrong with America regarding race with no suggestions for solutions. So I committed to writing down every solution he suggested if I found any. I was pleased to have a lengthy list. Not everything on that list is something I feel empowered or skilled at helping with, but I have ideas for what I can do. I am already putting into action some practical steps that I can do to make a difference no matter how small. It was a painful read but useful and gave me vocabulary and confidence in addressing race with others.

Excellent. Insightful. Jim Wallis understands the current pulse of America as well as the heart of the American church. Great, practical advice for change which is what we all need to work towards. Read it, my fellow white Christian friends!

I did not realize there would be such a religious bent to the book and I do not think the folks who need to read this book will read it. The book is timely considering the racist ideology that is being put forth by folks in our country. I hope Christians read the book.

This is a well-written, thought provoking book about racism and white privilege in America and their antithesis to the teachings of Christ. As a progressive Evangelical, Rev. Wallis outlines the role of the church in overcoming these two evils and fighting for a truly just society.

Writing on a much needed subject. What was profound for me calling a sin what it was. I think more of need to think about that and repent. Cut me to the quick.

Made me take note of how deep racism is in America. Challenges you to make a difference in racial divides. We have so much work to do in America to make all equal. Our justice system, education system and housing needs to change to make our society equal.

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