



The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life

By Elijah Anderson

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An acclaimed sociologist illuminates the public life of an American city, offering a major reinterpretation of the racial dynamics in America.

Elijah Anderson, called "one of our best urban ethnographers" by the *New York Times Book Review*, introduces the concept of the "cosmopolitan canopy": the urban islands of civility amid segregated ghettos, suburbs, and ethnic enclaves.

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The Cosmopolitan Canopy: Race and Civility in Everyday Life By Elijah Anderson Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Yale sociology professor Anderson (*Code of the Street*) takes the reader on an ethnographic walking tour of Philadelphia to observe how city dwellers interact across racial lines. He attends particularly to the "cosmopolitan canopy"—public settings like parks, malls, town squares that maintain civil and comfortable interactions between diverse populations. Anderson moves then to those areas where the canopy breaks down (the workplace, public transportation). Anderson's nuanced treatment of "the social dynamics of racial inequality" and his precise observations (the politics of eye contact, for example), while rooted in scholarship, are uncommonly readable: snippets from his journals and sketches of neighborhood habitués offer immediate pleasure, and the book is a people watcher's delight. And while Anderson doesn't gloss over how prevalent and pernicious racism remains in America—"There comes a time in the life of every African American, regardless of how high he or she has risen in society, when he or she is reminded of his or her place as a black man or woman"—his study allows a cautious optimism that "the canopy offers a taste of how inclusive and civil social relationships could become." (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Cosmopolitan canopies are those spaces in urban environments that offer a break from the tensions of chafing racial and economic differences, a place for diverse peoples to assemble and rub elbows. Sociologist and folk ethnographer Anderson offers a rich narrative of such spaces in Philadelphia, including Reading Terminal Market and Rittenhouse Square. Anderson details the give-and-take of public interaction in urban settings, much of it dictated by race and class. He observes how close and far away people sit, whether they greet each other, how deep or long their interactions are, and whether they break or reinforce barriers. He also chronicles the daily shifting of space used by the homeless, workers, residents, and commuters as they encounter, interact, and evade. Anderson's observations are keen but not distant as he offers journal pages and interviews, showing his own full engagement in interactions with a cross section of Philadelphians. Anderson also offers singular insight into the social machinations of blacks in professional versus social settings. Fascinating sociology and people-watching at its profound best. --Vanessa Bush

Review

"Fascinating sociology and people-watching at its profound best." (Booklist)

"Anderson's nuanced treatment of 'the social dynamics of racial inequality' and his precise observations . . . offer immediate pleasure." (Publishers Weekly)

"Vintage Elijah Anderson?original, creative, engaging, and thought-provoking . . . This book is a must-read." (William Julius Wilson, Harvard University)

"The most important book on race relations in many years." (Randall Collins, president, American Sociological Association)

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