



## Tragic Investment: How Race Sabotages Communities and Jeopardizes America's Future—and What We Can Do about It

**R. James Addington**

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*Tragic Investment is a concise guide to the history of racism and white supremacy in America that forwards suggestions for improvement.*

R. James Addington's history of American race and racism, *Tragic Investment*, forwards suggestions for white America to repair the damage done by centuries of systemic white supremacy.

The book makes a solid argument that those who aren't categorized as "white" have been oppressed and abused throughout American history, often by the government itself, in an effort to maintain the structures of white supremacy. Beginning with American investment in the subjugation of Africans and of people of African descent through slavery and beyond, the book also addresses policies like Indian removal and broken treaties with Indigenous tribes. It argues that such choices continue to pay dividends to white Americans in the form of white privilege and systemic racism. Addington asserts that the social hierarchy is problematic for white people, too; their identity of superiority is built on conscious harm and trauma caused to others on their behalf.

This weighty work is built on a foundation of extensive research. It also draws upon Addington's experiences as an antiracism trainer and organizer of nearly three decades. He stresses that he, too, has benefited from the structures of white supremacy. When speaking from personal experience, Addington expresses discomfort over knowing that he is sometimes treated as more worthy than others; this work represents the research and emotional labor he's done to support communities of color.

Clear, brief, and straightforward examples of how the American government has subjugated non-white people frame Addington's arguments, while personal stories highlight the ways that racism affects both white and non-white people's daily lives, causing harm to everyone in the process.

Though its explorations of the the historical roots of racism in America, and its suggestions for where the nation should go from here, are compelling, the book's excessive use of exclamation points and its occasional seeming sarcasm take away from the power of its illustrations and arguments. Its decision to link ideas about healing communities to notions of healing and protecting the natural environment is among the most surprising and thought-provoking qualities of the book.

Combining research, anecdotes, and suggestions for moving forward, *Tragic Investment* is a concise guide to the history of racism and white supremacy in America, as well as a handbook for those who seek to improve race relations and strengthen communities at the local level.

SARAH WHITE (September 9, 2019)

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