

Thought provoking, shocking, demoralizing. This were but three of the words used by the book group readers to describe how they felt about the November selection, White Rage; the Unspoken Truth about our Racial Divide.

White Rage originated as an op ed piece in the Washington Post following the uprising in Ferguson, Missouri. Reader response was so great that Bloomberg Publishing asked the author, Carol Anderson, to expand the essay into a book. Anderson is a professor of African American studies at Emory University.

In this brief book, only 5 chapters, writes that *“white rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wrecks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibility. Too imperceptibly certainly, for a nation consistently drawn to the spectacular—to what it can see. It’s not the Klan. White rage doesn’t have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working the halls of power it can achieve its ends far more effectively, far more destructively.”*

Anderson believes that white rage results with any African American achievement or success. The book enumerates the many efforts to thwart African American advancement by legislation at both the state and federal level as well as court decisions that rolled back protections.

The five chapters identify practices and legislation that have been used to restrict black advancement. Periods covered are Reconstruction, The Great Migration, Burning Brown to the Ground (education) Rolling Back Civil Rights, and finally How to Unelect a Black President.

Many southern school districts closed rather than integrate. Anderson predicts three generations were denied quality education by these efforts. The group speculated that SC’s schools’ low ranking today might be because of the loss of quality education for so many of the southern children....black and white.

The group questioned if we saw democracy differently after reading this book. Our discussion explored discrimination that some personally experienced and others witnessed. As always, how do we combat this? What do we do?

The book was well reviewed and the only professional, critical review found by the facilitator indicated the author was a “passionate activist and not a dispassionate historian.” The reviewer thought Anderson undermined her own credibility when connecting Reagan to the drug trade to secure financing for the contras to the detriment of the black community. Regardless, the readers accepted these observations but believe the author developed her arguments and had sufficient documented examples to suport her theory.

Those present agreed it was a successful book as we learned from it and were able to add to our thinking and understanding of today’s racial issues.