



# Black Power: The Color Curtain / Black Power / White Man, Listen!

*Richard Wright*

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## **Black Power: The Color Curtain / Black Power / White Man, Listen!** Richard Wright

Three extraordinary nonfiction works by Richard Wright, one of America's premier literary giants of the twentieth century, together in one volume for the first time, with an introduction by Cornel West.

Originally published in 1954, Richard Wright's *Black Power* is an impassioned chronicle of the author's trip to Africa's Gold Coast before it became the free nation of Ghana. It speaks eloquently of empowerment and possibility, and resonates loudly to this day.

Also included in this omnibus edition are *White Man, Listen!*, a stirring collection of Wright's essays on race, politics, and other essential social concerns ("Deserves to be read with utmost seriousness"-*New York Times*), and *The Color Curtain*, an indispensable work urging the removal of the color barrier. It remains one of the key commentaries on the question of race in the modern era. ("Truth-telling will perhaps always be unpopular and suspect, but in *The Color Curtain*, as in all his later nonfiction, Wright did not hesitate to tell the truth as he saw it."-Amritjit Singh, Ohio University)

## **Black Power: The Color Curtain / Black Power / White Man, Listen! Details**

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## **From Reader Review Black Power: The Color Curtain / Black Power / White Man, Listen! for online ebook**

### **Noel says**

I learned much about the Gold Coast and its people. Not only did I learned much about this particular history, I also learned much about the person of Richard Wright. I am a fan of his novels: Native Son, Black Boy, and The Outsider. Each one describes in fiction the worldview, the fear and the humanity of being Black in America. Each character deals with his social condition and relationship to the issues of race, class and sex. Wright in this non-fiction book describes his journey through the Goldcoast before Ghana became an Independent country. He visits and documents different African peoples like the Ashanti peoples, the Akra people and experiences their worldview. I am myself of Aboriginal ancestry, and much of his descriptions of the Africans' worldview in terms of religion is similar to my own indigenous ancestors belief systems, here in North America.

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### **Amanda Birdwell says**

Rereading this one now, and taking notes. On the one hand, it was written between 1954 and 1957, so there's some distance to reach across since the book is mostly covering the Gold Coast Revolution and the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. On the other, Wright's just smarter and writes better than most writers today. Totally worth the investment.

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### **Elaine Thompson says**

The expression Black Power was hijacked by Stokely Carmichael in the 1960's, and may put some people off - but Wright is wrestling with some seminal questions about his relationship with Pan Africanism and his responses to being in Ghana , or rather the Gold Coast.

He is honest to a fault almost. Several of the realities that he wrestled with were experienced by American and Caribbean idealists who imagined Africa as an extension of their homelands.

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### **Craig Werner says**

Part travel narrative, part reflection on the role of Africa in the "modern" world, "Black Power" recounts Richard Wright's visit to the Gold Coast as it was preparing for independence (reclaiming the quasi-traditional name of Ghana). Wright brought a great deal of political, intellectual and philosophical baggage with him; he had rejected both Christianity and Marxist materialism and had left the United States for a home base in Paris, where he had forged a set of tense connections with existentialists (including Sartre and deBeauvoir) and expatriates. He was unsure of the relationship between American Negroes and Africans, rapidly concluding that he was very much a man of the modern West, baffled by much of what he encountered in what was clearly not a homeland. The strength of Black Power is Wright's honesty; he refuses

to fall back on clichés, nostalgia, or ideology, immersing himself in the contradictory emotions stirred by what he perceives as a primitive, superstitious African culture. Much of what he writes is likely to make a 21st century reader cringe; he comes back again and again to images of African nakedness and irrationality. He's certainly not an apologist for the British (or any other colonial force), but he's not sanguine about the potential for true African independence. The more you know about African culture and philosophy--you can start with Robert Farris Thompson's *Flash of the Spirit* for a quick clear primer--the more trouble you're likely to have with Wright's engagement. Important as a document of a particularly moment, but unless you're ready to cut a lot of slack and work to place Wright in context, probably not one to put on your list.

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### **patrice says**

Wright's 1954 account of his travels through what is now Ghana when it was on the brink of independence. Well-worth reading for Wright's precise descriptions of scenes and conversations, all of which are rendered with the skill of the powerful novelist that he was. The book is strongest where Wright stayed with observation and weakest where he strayed from setting down the facts, veering into long-winded expositions of his dated (psychoanalysis, anyone?) and pedantic opinions about every topic under the African sun. Wright was dead-on in his depictions of white attitudes towards Africans but almost comically unaware of the degree to which his own attitude of superiority leaked onto the page. The patronizing tone of his closing letter of advice to Kwame Nkrumah is almost beyond endurance. Yet and still, as a documentary of a time and place (and a record of Wright's own character), this book is well worth reading. If you're tempted to set the book down when Wright starts opining, don't; instead just flip forward to where he picks the narrative back up. You won't be sorry you took the trip.

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### **Jack says**

Richard Wright's journey from Paris to Liverpool to Accra and Bandung chronicles the challenges and promises of a post-colonial world at a critical time in recent history. Wright's intimate exposure to figures like Nkrumah and the many diplomats in attendance at Bandung offer a fascinating firsthand look at the political ideas being circulated and leveraged at the time. Beyond this reporting, Wright is also a supremely honest observer and conversationalist, making for entertaining digressions (if you have the patience). I was most interested, however, by how Wright himself navigated these discussions and spaces. As a black US citizen and expatriate, Wright's travels provoke questions about what it means to be African, to be American, and to be African American. Wright, who also disassociated himself from the CPUSA, doesn't seem like the type to anchor himself in one boat or another; instead as he floats from shore to shore, the reader is left to gaze at the ripples in his wake, fishing for answers.

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### **Emilie Frechie says**

For Wright lovers, this is a must.

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### **Abdi says**

Loved it!

## **Judy says**

Collects the books of Richard Wright from his travels and journalistic life in the 1950s. All are important powerful statements of the way it is in our world today. His style is so readable that he makes these topics as exciting as any novel set in Africa or Asia.

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## **Kyrea says**

Very interesting outlook at african nationalism as it swept the continent in the 1950s...

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## **Rachel Peterson says**

The San Francisco Chronicle's entreaty to the reader of Black Power aptly epitomizes the tone of the three of Wright's pieces included in this compilation: "Before it is too late, we would do well to read carefully and critically what Richard Wright has written." For better or for worse, this appeal is just as valid for the global citizens of the 1950s as it is for those of us reading it 60 years later in the 21st century. Wright's interrogation of the psychology of recently liberated colonial subjects serves as a warning to the western world in its dogged resistance to an acceptance of a just global world. While Wright himself is guilty of the common pitfalls of those who wrote about Africa, including his judgments of their "backwards" and "childish" religious and "tribalized" ways of life, his moral courage in writing what he did when he did transcends these mistakes. Reminiscent of his idol, H. L. Mencken, Wright's words in these three "books from exile" serve as sharp weapons of outrage, warning, and interrogation that leave no one, NO ONE, immune from global responsibility for their fellow humans.

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## **mimosa maoist says**

The political lens is past shelf date but it's so beautifully observed, and he has a lot of personal blind spots but at least he puts it all there for you to see.

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