

## Blind Spots

Hopefully, with age comes wisdom and judgement. One thing I've learned in 70 years is that **EVERYONE** has a **BLIND SPOT**. I've known individuals whose integrity was exemplary, but who would nonetheless turn a blind eye to their own child's criminality, or even attempt to "*alibi*" their child's misdeeds.

Even Ronald Reagan had a blind spot, despite being arguably, the greatest man of the 20th Century. He loved his wife Nancy, but her sincere efforts to protect him more often embarrassed him, such as when her reliance on astrology was exposed to ridicule. She was also extremely snobbish and judgmental, but *The Gipper* loved her anyway.

I was reminded of blind spots when some time ago I read an issue of *Imprimis*, a publication of *Hillsdale College*. Its author was paying tribute to economist Thomas Sowell, one of the great intellectuals of the 20th Century, black or white. Sowell is a man I've admired for 40 years, and I've read many of his books. However, even Sowell has a blind spot despite his genius and degrees from *Harvard, Columbia* and a Ph.D. in Economics from the *University of Chicago*.



**Dr. Thomas Sowell**

Perhaps 20 years before, I read a syndicated column by Sowell in which he denied any IQ disparity between blacks and whites. That took *some* nerve, because Herrnstein and Murray had already published *The Bell Curve*, a compilation of the 650 IQ studies that reached the opposite conclusion. He claimed in his column that there have been IQ tests in which the scores of blacks were comparable to whites or even higher.

I was astonished by this claim, so I e-mailed him and asked for the citation for any such studies. One he referenced was a now-infamous test given to Ashkenazi Jews who had immigrated to the U.S. after World War II. That study found the average IQ score of Ashkenazi Jews placed them in the mildly retarded range, even though Ashkenazi Jews traditionally average 10 to 12 points above the mean of 100.

Sowell neglected to mention in his reply to me that most -- or at least many of the subjects in that study -- ***DID NOT EVEN SPEAK ENGLISH***. Even Isaac Newton or Leonardo da Vinci would appear retarded if given an IQ test in a language they didn't speak fluently. No serious social scientist would conduct such a test, nor would any unfailingly honest scientist rely on such a test as evidence.

The author of the article in *Imprimis* was Jason L. Riley, Sowell's biographer. Riley characterizes Sowell's approach to scholarship in the following terms: *"...intellectual integrity, analytical rigor, respect for evidence, (and) skepticism toward the kind of fashionable thinking that comes and goes."*

I am in complete agreement with Riley's assessment, except that Thomas Sowell -- like all of us -- has that one blind spot. I suspect Sowell is convinced that if blacks were to learn that -- in general -- they are less intelligent than whites, widespread acceptance of what he calls ***"genetic determinism"*** would work to discourage black academic achievement. (Yet, how could black academic achievement be any worse...?)



**Biographer Jason Riley**

The conclusions of *The Bell Curve* are profoundly important, because whenever blacks fail to perform commensurate with whites in academics or income, the federal courts reflexively assume *de facto* that "*systemic race discrimination*" is the cause, and then impose all manner of unconstitutional "*remedies*" like forced *desegregation* or race quotas. (Somehow, those same federal courts never see "*systemic race discrimination*" in black domination of professional sports.)

Science may provide us with evidence we don't like, but that doesn't mean we can arbitrarily pick and choose what we want to believe. As Alexander Solzhenitsyn stated in *A Warning to the West*, "*we are not free to disregard the evidences of our senses.*"

Or, empirical evidence, for that matter...

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