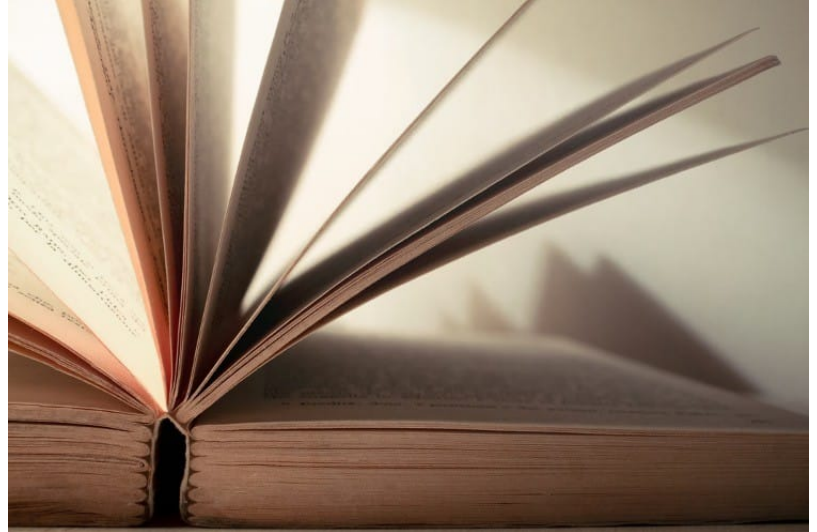




Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on December 9, 2021

## NYT Writer Resents White People Browsing Her Free Library

As racism continues to lead in the news — with white people cast in the role of the villains and “people of color” cast as their ever-downtrodden victims, it seems that mainstream media are running out of good anecdotes to support their weak narrative. Earlier this week, the *New York Times* ran an opinion piece written by an ever-downtrodden “person of color” who described her “resentment” at a racist affront that left her “flooded with emotions — astonishment, and then resentment, and then astonishment.” What was the act of racism that so inflamed her? A couple — a *white* couple — was browsing her “free library” book box. How dare they!



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The piece was penned by Erin Aubry Kaplan, who is described in her bio as “a journalist and author who grew up in the South Central section of Los Angeles and nearby Inglewood.” She explains that about a year ago, she decided to build one of those “charming, birdhouse-like structures filled with books that invite neighbors and passers-by to take a book, or donate a book, or both.” She readily admits that she “borrowed” the idea from “upscale, largely white neighborhoods around Los Angeles.” As she [wrote](#):

I’d spotted the phenomenon on walks through upscale, largely white neighborhoods around Los Angeles and immediately resolved to bring it home to Inglewood. Why not? A library is not so much a marker of wealth and whiteness as it is an affirmation of community and cozy, small-town camaraderie that Inglewood, a mostly Black and Latino city in southwestern Los Angeles County, has plenty of. We deserved no less.

Can anyone imagine a white writer in the year 2021 penning those words with the roles reversed? Cries of “Racism!” would echo through the air until that writer was reduced to jobless, homeless, friendless obscurity. This writer is aware that argument is dog-eared and tired — a bit cliché even — he just doesn’t care. It has to be made, because if we stop making it, we lose ground that we may never regain.

But as racist as that is, Kaplan was just getting started. She explains that her little book box got off to a slow start because “it was the first in the area, and some people mistook it for a birdhouse, or a mailbox.” Eventually, though, people started stopping by for books.

And that is when everything went wrong. Kaplan wrote:

Then one morning, glancing out my front window, I saw a young white couple stopped at the library. Instantly, I was flooded with emotions — astonishment, and then resentment, and then astonishment at my resentment. It all converged into a silent scream in my head of, *Get*



*off my lawn!*

Kaplan went on to say she “hadn’t set it out to appeal to white residents.” She added:

What I resented was not this specific couple. It was their whiteness, and my feelings of helplessness at not knowing how to maintain the integrity of a Black space that I had created.

Again, reverse that and imagine the firestorm that would ensue. “I didn’t put that there for black residents and I don’t want those kind of people on my lawn. This is a white space.”

Kaplan writes of blaming herself:

I didn’t know how to feel. By bringing this modern cultural artifact here from white neighborhoods, had I set myself up, set up the neighborhood? Was I contributing to gentrification and sending the wrong message about how I wanted the neighborhood to be?

Kaplan went on to write of her question to herself as the white encroachers — whom she *invited* by placing the box there for any and all — wandered away “no books in hand.” She wrote:

So what message do I hope they took from my library? The same message I wanted to send to the rest of my neighbors, my community: Black presence has value — in every sense of the word, and on its own terms.

Kaplan does not explain why she seems so certain that they took away *any* message from her library. Or why they should take away any message at all. After all, would they have taken away a “message” from a birdbox library erected by other white people? It is likely that if a white person were to walk away from a black-owned library box with a “message,” they would be accused of racism for being surprised that black people read.

There is a simple reason that Kaplan knew nothing of her white visitors or their frame of mind. She wrote that reason herself, saying of her library box, “While I had seen white newcomers to the neighborhood here and there, the truth was, I hadn’t set it out to appeal to white residents.” Kaplan is a woman whose identity appears to be so wrapped up in her blackness that she sees a couple doing something as normal — as *mundane* — as browsing books in a free library and her immediate response is fear and outrage at their whiteness. It is a fair assumption that though she “had seen white newcomers to the neighborhood here and there,” she never met them, never approached them, never welcomed them to the neighborhood, never spoke to them at all.

And that is because Kaplan is a rank racist who just happens to be so oppressed by whiteness that she managed to get her drivel-laden screed published by one of the most famous newspapers in the world.



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