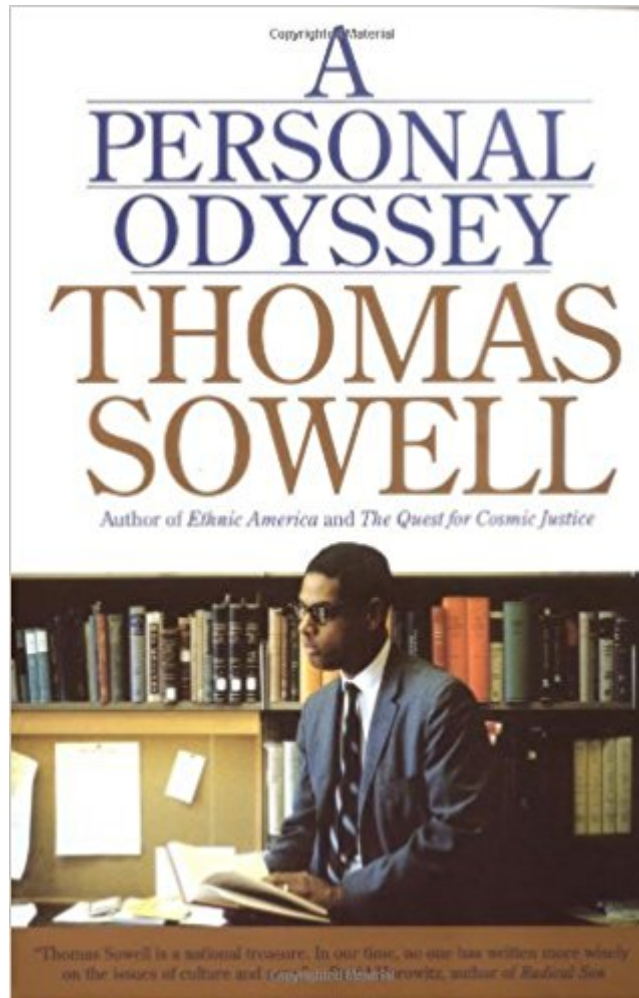




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# A Personal Odyssey



## Synopsis

This is the gritty story of one man's lifelong education in the school of hard knocks, as his journey took him from Harlem to the Marines, the Ivy League, and a career as a controversial writer, teacher, and economist in government and private industry. It is also the story of the dramatically changing times in which this personal odyssey took place.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thomas Sowell is known for speaking--and writing--his mind, even when his opinions won't win him any popularity contests. In thoughtful, straightforward books like *The Quest for Cosmic Justice* and *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* he questioned affirmative action and expressed frustration with government bureaucracy, elaborating on his ideas of personal freedom and responsibility in the process. In *A Personal Odyssey*, we're shown glimpses of the man behind the ideas, and while the narration is sometimes frustratingly distant, it's an enjoyable history of a fascinating man. Beginning with his early life in North Carolina, where his encounters with white people were so limited that he didn't really believe that "yellow" was a possible color for hair, Sowell details his childhood with humor and appreciation for the adults who raised him with love, attention, and high expectations. Throughout the experiences that follow, from the U.S. Marines to Howard and Harvard Universities to his fellowship at Stanford's Hoover Institute, Sowell's strong opinions make him stand out from the herd. His brother sums up this trait in describing Sowell's son: "Tommy, when I see a dozen kids, all doing the same thing, and in the midst of them is one kid doing something entirely different,

I don't have to guess which one is our mother's grandson." You don't have to be familiar with Sowell's scholarly works to appreciate his life--this is a read for any freethinking iconoclast. --Jill Lightner --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

A nationally recognized economist and scholar, Sowell recounts his long, steady climb from a hardscrabble North Carolina childhood to the top ranks of influential conservatives within the Republican Party in Washington. Sowell, who is African-American, racked up a series of notable accomplishments through sheer determination and a refusal to let his race prove an obstacle to a productive life. His grit and focus became evident during his early years as a rebellious schoolboy in Harlem, an unremarkable stint in the Marines, his later studies at Howard University and his frustrating time at Harvard. Of particular note is his unwavering approval of leading economist Milton Friedman, who taught Sowell at the University of Chicago. Known for his attention to detail and the nuance of his theoretical writings, Sowell doesn't consistently display those skills to advantage: he often seems to race through key periods in his life, leaving the reader to wonder what elements of significance have been left out. However, he pulls no punches in his conservative stance on the thorny issue of race, which has frequently put him in opposition with the African-American community, and demonstrates his steadfast belief in meritocracy. He earns points for his revelations about his personal disappointments, his painful divorce and his frustrations with an unkind media, dispelling a common belief that he was a close adviser of President Reagan. Offering only a controlled, muted look at the author's inner world, Sowell's account occasionally seems arrogant, but often reflective and always provocative. (Sept.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the MP3 CD edition.

Thomas Sowell is a brilliant man! He's an academic, economist and a columnist. In this book he shares his childhood up through adulthood. He did his college thesis on Marxist economics, which at the time he believed in. Once he entered the work world he began to question his beliefs and how they worked in real life. As a academic he found himself on committees that needed a black face, but not his ideas. It took me awhile to figure out that he changed jobs so much because he didn't want to be the "token" black (his words) he wanted a voice. He goes through what changed him from a liberal ideology to conservative beliefs. I put this guy on my bucket list!

I felt that this was a great read and I plan to read more of his writings. Since I was a teenager and one of my hero's was George Washington Carver. I learned that there were people of the Black race

that were not vindictive of growing up in the slave culture, but wanted to assimilate into the American culture. Thomas Sowell seemed to me though he had a troublesome childhood, came out of it in a superior manner, and went on to be truly great person for the negro race. If the leaders had followed the lead of these early greats and not people such as DuBois, a vowed Communist, our country could as of now been racist free.

The book is very well written and as usual Dr Sowell is very informative as to how he came to be what he is. He does a very good job of describing his formative years and how he interacted with those times in his life. I was very impressed with the fact that he didn't finish High School, but got a job instead and then went into the Marines. Afterwards he resumed his education which was a quite a feat in itself. Goes to show what determination can do. The book doesn't go much into his personal life which I can understand. If you like to read Dr. Sowell I do recommend this book.

This is a compelling story about the life of a man who is one of America's most important thinkers. Born during the Depression in the heavily segregated South, Sowell's family was poor, and constrained, as were all non-whites, by the laws and mores of the Jim Crow era. Moving to New York's Harlem as a youngster, Sowell slowly and painfully gained intellectual force, as he made his way through the public school system and finally found his way to college after serving in the military during the Korean conflict, and paying his way by undertaking various jobs involving manual labor. Despite many obstacles, Sowell's powerful intellect led him to continue studying and ultimately begin writing and teaching. His written work spans the fields of economics, education, ideas and ideology, and race and ethnicity. Unlike many academics (Sowell graduated from Harvard, earned a Master's Degree from Columbia, and then a PhD in economics from the University of Chicago), he has written for both academic and popular audiences, and has long been a popular syndicated columnist, renowned for his masterful use of facts and logic to achieve powerfully cogent arguments. This memoir would be of great interest to anyone interested in how ideas generated by one person can affect the lives of others, and also would be enjoyed by anyone who simply enjoys reading about the ways in which one individual navigated the challenges of developing an extraordinary career despite the obstacles of having been born poor and black in the America of the 1930's. Highly recommended.

I have been a Thomas soul admirer for a long time. When I read an article recently where he was writing his last article for publication I was interested in his personal life was all about. Very

interesting and easy read. I loved every minute of it and I admire this man so much. The story was very enlightening. how he persevered and became the great man that he is in spite of all of the experiences in his life that would otherwise keep most people away from achieving such greatness. His personal story inspires me to continue reading more of his work.

In an era of diminishing standards all around us, it is refreshing that Thomas Sowell, virtually alone, has not forgotten what excellence means and embraces only the highest standards, for himself and for his students. This book should be read by every college freshman, as a model for his own standards and performance. Although this book was yet to be written, I wish I had shared in Mr. Sowell's wisdom when I was a freshman in college, at approximately the same time he was an undergraduate at Harvard.

Was looking for an autobiography. Sowell denies this is an autobiography, but it is close enough. Could not put it down. Read it cover to cover.

Dr Sowell is a wonderful writer, frequently poignant and occasionally very funny. I personally could see the hand of God in his numerous episodes of good fortune. He sees them in his last chapter as only good fortune. I loved his iron will when faced with difficulty, naysayers or uncourageous people. I also believe his perspective adds richness and common sense to the analysis of resolving the problems of the ghetto. Great book!

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