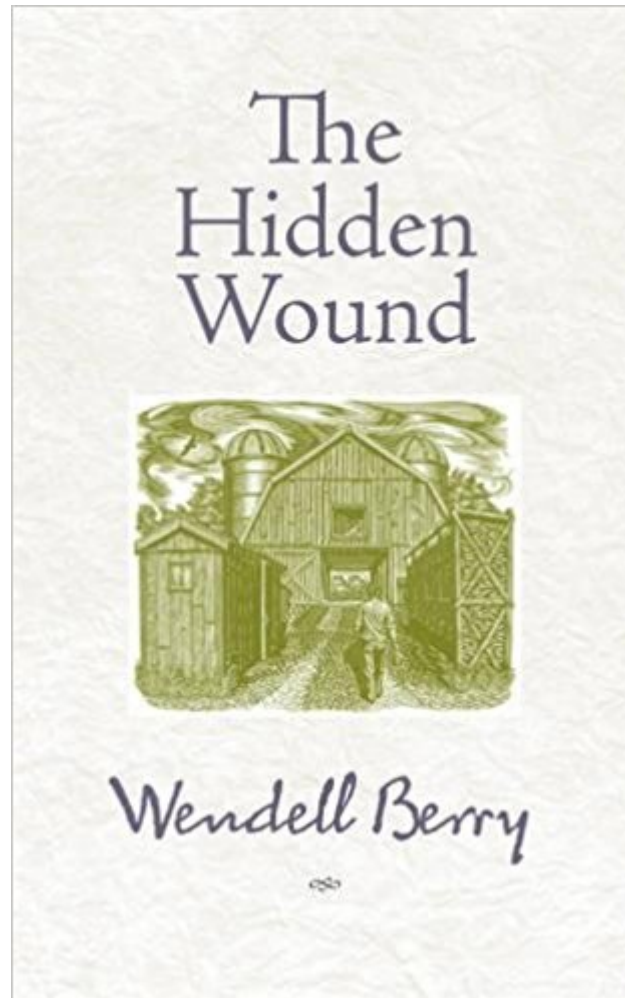




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# The Hidden Wound



## Synopsis

With the expected grace of Wendell Berry comes *The Hidden Wound*, an essay about racism and the damage it has done to the identity of our country. Through Berry's personal experience, he explains how remaining passive in the face of the struggle of racism further corrodes America's potential. In a quiet and observant manner, Berry opens up about how his attempt to discuss racism is rooted in the hope that someday the historical wound will begin to heal.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A profound, passionate, crucial piece of writing . . . Few readers, and I think, no writers will be able to read it without a small pulse of triumph at the temples: the strange, almost communal sense of triumph one feels when someone has written truly well . . . The statement it makes is intricate and beautiful, sad but strong." &#151;Larry McMurtry, *The Washington Post*"Berry has produced one of the most humane, honest, liberating works of our time. It is a beautiful book. More than that, it has become at one stroke an essential book. Every American who can read at all should read it."

&#151;Hayden Carruth, *The Village Voice*"One of the most impressive aspects of Berry's book is the authentic simplicity of his style, the directness with which that style can accommodate Tolstoy, Malcolm X, work songs, anecdotes, speculation, and polemic indignation . . . The strength of this book is its connecting America's two major problems: the exploiting of men and land; it deserves as wide an audience as possible." &#151;Louisville Courier-Journal"One of the most touching and true personal testaments concerned with our country's racial dilemma." &#151;Publishers Weekly"The

brunt of the book is to wake us up, page after page, from stupidity. 'It is a kind of death,' Montaigne said, 'to avoid the pain of well doing, or trouble of well living.' Wendell Berry makes that observation rip the air like an alarm clock." &#151;Guy Davenport, Life

Wendell Berry is the author of thirty-two books of essays, poetry and novels. A native Kentuckian, he lived and taught in New York and California before returning permanently to the Kentucky River region, where he farms on 125 acres in Henry County. He has received numerous awards for his work, including one from the National Institute and Academy of Arts and Letters in 1971, and, most recently, the T.S. Eliot Award. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is an early Wendell Berry I was not familiar with. A colleague recommended it. It is the most intimate book I've read that enlightens us about "our" white racism. I have dealt with my own-as a New Yorker-since working for a multi-ethnic agency for twenty years and had to confront mine over the years. The agency took very seriously the reality of institutional racism, but Berry owns his own southern racism in a credible, painful and honest way. Not since a loving African-American friend helped me to see that "white racism" is not a problem for African Americans-but is rather our white problem have I felt anything so mind changing. Very timely for anyone taking the racism in our political arena seriously. People like Judge Scalia who represents the worst of this disease in our society and anyone, whether D or R who pays attention to the racist criticism just below the surface against President Obama will appreciate this book. Wendell Berry is one of the most humane writers I have been fortunate to follow in print. God bless him.from a "recovering racist."

I have read much of Wendell Berry, but had somehow missed this one. It is written with his usual ease and word choices that make me say "YES, that's it....exactly" I grew up in the Jim Crow South, knowing less about it than I now know. I was protected and puzzled and wanted to do the right thing, but did not know how until years later. The writing in this book takes me back there. He uses Aunt Georgie and Nick and their lives to show the time....not to pontificate about it. He lets the reader find his/her own way through these characters. And the way is profound. This is a must read book, even if you think you know that piece of Southern culture well. I was there then, and reading this book, I was there again.

Excellent read! Perspective presented by Wendell Berry is one I have never read from a White American Male in modern day America. It is both a privilege and pleasure to have come across this

book. Every American should have the same privilege to be exposed to this writing. Do not get me wrong, I questioned his reasoning and as you read farther Wendell Berry also questions his own stance and understanding of "Why" I (Black American Male) would question him. Afterword is very important part of this writing....

Wendell Berry is a great writer, unique in many ways. He is a man of the land and writes about it in varying ways. This book is not so much about the land, but of the different people of the land, depending upon their skin color. It is a strong message to white men, an important message and should be read by all men. Doesn't hurt the women either.

"The Hidden Wound" is one of the best books on American racism I've ever read by a white man, but this book is so much more than that- it's a fantastic addition to anyone's collection of books by Wendell Berry, whether fiction or non-fiction, and makes his political philosophy (perhaps better described as his political "attitude") clearer than in almost any other book of his I've read. The first section of the book revolves around Mr. Berry's retelling of various legends and pieces of history from the civil war era, and how legends are often used to cover up the intense spiritual pain that society thrusts upon individuals. Usually, we hear about the horrors of slavery and white supremacy from its black victims, or white liberal activists who stood out in their opposition to these evils. However, Berry courageously places himself in the middle of the white culture that promoted the immoral exploitation of American black folk. In the process, he brings to light the incredible amounts of spiritual masochism, political double-think, and cultural paranoia that white supremacy wrought, all from an insider's point of view. From here, the book moves towards Berry's more direct experiences with the contradictions of white supremacy. We learn about Berry's childhood relationship with the black work-hands on his father's farm. The purpose of this section, as Berry himself tells us, is to show how the personal experience of love and mutual companionship is capable of cutting to the heart of societal evils. If "The Hidden Wound" had been written by an academician, this section would have taken the form of a more abstract, ideological critique of white supremacy. Instead of this well-traveled road, Berry opts for a much more personal touch. We are faced with the power of Berry's feelings of brotherly love for the black folks he knew growing up, and when juxtaposed with the morally insane cultural doctrines of white supremacy he describes in the beginning of the book, the repugnant nature of racism becomes undeniable. Berry, rightfully, tells us that we're making a mistake if we see the problem of "racism" as "just racism." Here, Berry connects the problem of racism to America's abuse of God's creation and our general cultural denigration of

working-class and agrarian work. According to Berry, one of the main economic components of white supremacy was a disgust with what whites termed "n-word work," that is, the simple acts of work that are necessary for the maintenance of good communities and good topsoil. Ultimately, Berry's thesis can be put in these terms: The southern slave owner was addicted to the comfort that his slaves brought him, and was willing to trade his moral dignity for that comfort. The modern middle class suburbanite is addicted to the comfort that ecological degradation and class exploitation brings them, and is willing to trade their moral dignity for that comfort.

Great for people who have not been exposed to racism first hand.

Wendell Berry's luminous account of and reflection on the racism that nearly broke his young heart settles on the reader with all the grace and beauty of poetry. Although first published over 40 years ago, *The Hidden Wound* will unsettle and disquiet any thoughtful American--even more so today. Not a salve, his essay is more a first step toward rehabilitation by one of our country's most powerful and thoughtful essayists.

Thus is an amazing book, showing the loving heart of the author for the African Americans who worked his father's farm when he was young, and how in many wise and precious ways these people helped shape him into the great man he grew up to be.

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