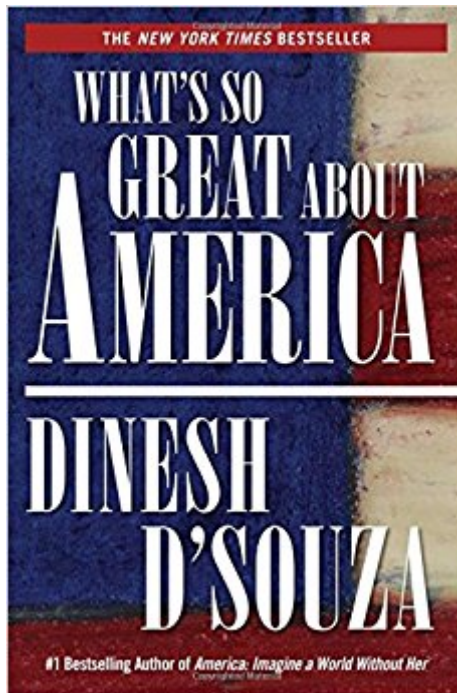




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What's So Great About America



Synopsis

With *What's So Great About America*, Dinesh D'Souza is not asking a question, but making a statement. The former White House policy analyst and bestselling author argues that in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, American ideals and patriotism should not be things we shy away from. Instead he offers the grounds for a solid, well-considered pride in the Western pillars of "science, democracy and capitalism," while deconstructing arguments from both the political Left and political Right. As an "outsider" from India who has had amazing success in the United States, D'Souza defends not an idealized America, but America as it really is, and measures America not against an utopian ideal, but against the rest of the world in a provocative, challenging, and personal book.

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Customer Reviews

What a shame 21st century USA is so polarized where being a liberal, conservative, Democrat, Republican (etc.) means either entirely accepting without question ideas along party or ideological lines -- or entirely without question rejecting them. People don't want to give "the (domestic political) enemy" a full hearing, let alone even partly CONSIDER a foe's arguments, even if they're reasoned and make actually make SENSE. It's a shame because this book (published by the conservative publishing house Regnery, which is itself like waving a red flag in front of a bull for some people) is so engaging, well-written, convincing and solid that Dinesh D'Souza may one day be considered a modern day Alexis de Tocqueville. Three fascinating levels mark this highly perceptive book:1.

D'Souza, who became a US citizen in 1991, shares how his life would have been quite different if he had grown up in his native India.² He makes fascinating observations about how US life and culture differ from various parts of the world, especially the Third World. These are the ones future generations may consider on the same level as de Tocqueville's.³ And then there is material directly related to the book's title. He makes the case, in a nutshell, that other cultures (especially fundamentalist Islamic) detest the United States because Americans are inner-directed and can write their own life's script, while Islamic culture seeks a life controlled and dictated by others. One key conclusion certainly will not endear him to Islamic fundamentalists. He says the Islamic world is nothing without oil revenues. "The only reason it (the Islamic world) makes the news is by killing people," he writes.

What a surprise. From the title and cover art I was expecting a 4th of July - My country 'tis of thee - stand at attention and salute book full of patriotic drivel. But this is a very substantial and thoughtful study of America's institutions and its critics. And the author has a gift for straightforward, easy to understand exposition. Dinesh D'Souza came to the U.S. as an exchange student from Bombay, India in 1978. He has had an illustrious career in this, his adoptive country. He's been active in politics as a Presidential advisor and in other capacities, but is mainly a scholar and writer. He spent ten years with the American Enterprise Institution and at the time of writing this book was a Fellow at the Hoover Institution. The first chapter tackles all the standard criticisms of America which emanate from the Left, Europe and Islam. In a style that characterizes the entire book, D'Souza presents the arguments and/or complaints against America, its actions, culture, or whatever. He then replies with a calm, logical, polite but emphatic refutation. As well as being informative, this book is a lesson in the proper way to conduct a debate. Not all the complaints against America are refutable. America is not perfect and D'Souza is the first to admit it. He never engages in casuistry but admits the faults, past and present, with candor. In a Chapter titled "Two Cheers for Colonialism" he describes the wrongs of Western Colonialism, but also argues convincingly that by and large the benefits for those Colonized have outweighed the wrongs. He avers that the reason the West became the dominant civilization in the modern era is because it invented three institutions: science, democracy and capitalism.

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