



Vindicating the Founders: Race, Sex, Class, and Justice in the Origins of America

Thomas G. West

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According to the conventional wisdom of our time, our nation's Founders were guilty of racism, sexism, and elitism. They were hypocrites who failed to live up to their own enlightened principles. The fact that Washington and Jefferson held slaves is taken as definitive proof that they never really believed "all men are created equal." It is also widely asserted that women, even after the American Revolution, enjoyed virtually no rights, and that the poor and property-less were denied the basic tenets of democratic participation. Observing that our understanding of the Founders so profoundly influences our opinion of contemporary America, Thomas West demonstrates why the Founders were indeed sincere in their belief of universal human rights and in their commitment to democracy. More importantly, this landmark book explains why their views, and particularly the constitutional order they created, are still worthy of our highest respect. In a straightforward style, West debunks numerous widely held myths about the Founders' political thought. He contrasts the Founders' ideas of liberty and equality with today's, concluding that contemporary notions of liberalism bear almost no resemblance to the concepts originally articulated by the Founders. This controversial, convincing, and highly original book is important reading for everyone concerned about the origins, present, and future of the American experiment in self government.

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