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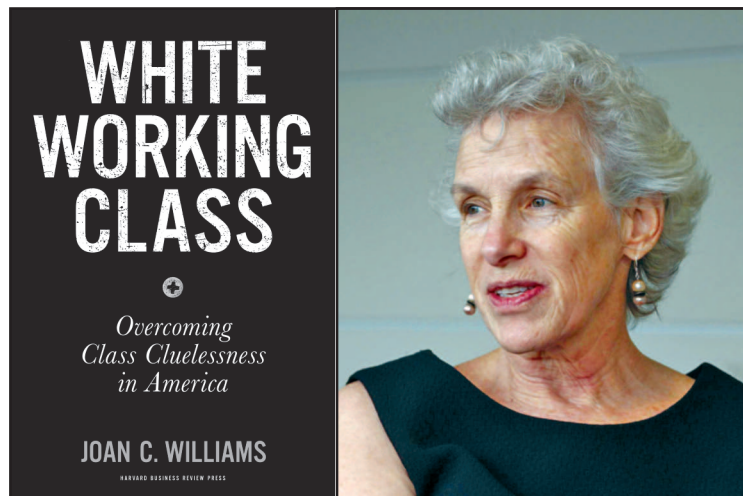
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Clueless about Class

Ivy Leaguer says elites had better start treating the 'White Working Class' with respect

What could a University of California law professor have to say about the white working class? Quite a lot actually. In the days after Trump's election, Joan Williams wrote an essay about it that went viral, with 3.2 million people reading it online. Now it's been developed into a book, "White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America." I interviewed her by phone about the book May 24.



By Don McIntosh

The book is meant to do what? The book is meant for anyone who was surprised that Trump won. It's meant to explain why he won and where we should go from here. I heard in my circles utter disbelief and confusion as to why Trump won. It was crystal clear to me, so I thought I would explain it.

How do you know so much about the white working class? Well I attempted to read every ethnography of the white writing class written from about 1975 to about 2005, as well as

those published after. I've studied it for a very long time. I've also lived it for a very long time. I'm a "silver spoon girl. I come from an elite family, but I married into a white working-class family nearly 40 years ago. The book is really a book about the relationship between the "Professional Managerial Elite" and the "White Working Class." The book describes the very different assumptions, dispositions, customs, and folkways of these two groups, and tries to explain them in the hope of mending what is a seriously busted relationship between them.

What do you mean by "class cluelessness"? Even socially conscious people run through their heads (and therefore interrupt) the biases more privileged people have typically have against less privileged people — when they're talking about the poor, or people of color. But they don't do that when they're talking about people from a different class, because they are convinced, like most Americans, that there are no classes. Very often the cultural elite speak extremely disrespectfully of people in the middle. Think of your cultural images, like

Archie Bunker (white working class man as racist, sexist, and stupid), or Homer Simpson (white working class man as stupid, pathetic, and fat), or more recently the character "Pennsatucky" from the first season of *Orange is the New Black* (white working class women as ugly, coarse and brutish). They're using the kind of stereotypes of non-elite people that elites have used for hundreds of years. And people who would never knowingly let a racist comment cross their lips often use open class insults in talking about working class people. The most obvious example is college fraternity parties called "white trash" bashes. University administrations would certainly not allow that kind of thing to happen if the insult were a racial insult, nor should they. They shouldn't be allowed to happen with class insults either.

Is this book written so members of the professional managerial elite have increased empathy or stop exacerbating

Turn to Page 4

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