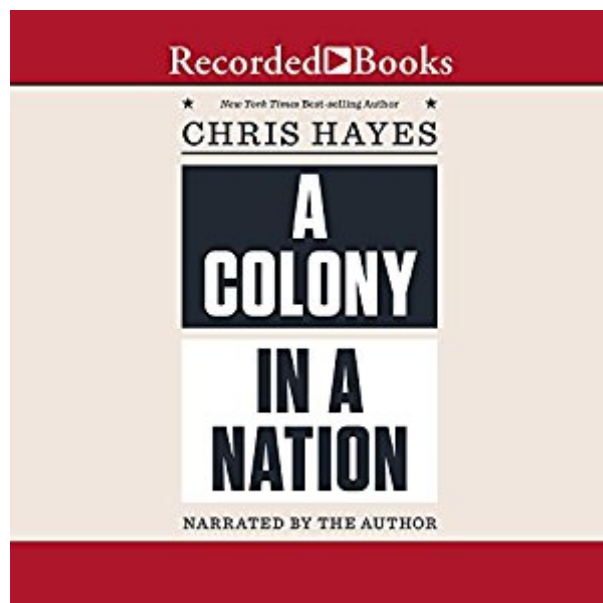


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# A Colony In A Nation



## Synopsis

Emmy Award-winning news anchor and New York Times best-selling author Chris Hayes argues that there are really two Americas: a Colony and a Nation. America likes to tell itself that it inhabits a postracial world, but nearly every empirical measure - wealth, unemployment, incarceration, school segregation - reveals that racial inequality hasn't improved since 1968. With the clarity and originality that distinguished his prescient best seller *Twilight of the Elites* ("a stunning polemic," said Ta-Nehisi Coates), award-winning journalist Chris Hayes offers a powerful new framework in which to understand our current crisis. Hayes contends our country has fractured in two: the Colony and the Nation. In the Nation, we venerate the law. In the Colony, we obsess over order, fear trumps civil rights, and aggressive policing resembles occupation. How and why did Americans build a system where conditions in Ferguson and West Baltimore mirror those that sparked the American Revolution? Blending wide-ranging historical research with political, social, and economic analysis, *A Colony in a Nation* explains how a Nation founded on justice constructed the Colony - and how it threatens our democracy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*A Colony in a Nation* by Chris Hayes is a stunning polemic. A Colony in a Nation is an interesting book on social justice. Emmy Award winning news anchor and New York Times best-selling author Chris Hayes provides the public with an interesting analogy that captures and drives his main premise, the terrifying truth that we as a people have created the Colony within our

Nation with the purpose of subduing our fellow citizens. This stimulating 256-page book includes six unnamed chapters, notes and a selected bibliography.

**Positives:**

1. A well-written, well-researched and succinct book.
2. Hayes makes use of the clever analogy of a colony in a nation to drive home his interesting perspectives on social justice.
3. Many topics revolving around social justice are discussed.  
“Nearly one out of every four prisoners in the world is an American, though the United States has just 5 percent of the world’s population.”
4. Racism plays a prominent role in this book.  
“Though Dayvon and I are both Americans, we live in different countries.”
5. Discusses three key things that happened in the 1960s to shape the politics of how and upon whom we enforce law. Find out what they are.
6. The driving forces of politics in America.  
“This rhetoric and framing would become the template to justify forty years of escalating incarceration: Order is necessary for liberty to flourish. If we do not have order, we can have no other rights.”
7. The most provocative quote in the book, IMHO.  
“But the terrifying truth is that we as a people have created the Colony through democratic means. We have voted to subdue our fellow citizens; we have rushed to the polls to elect people promising to bar others from enjoying the fruits of liberty. A majority of Americans have put a minority under lock and key.”
8. Interesting historical perspectives.  
“This great land of ours, this exceptional beacon of liberty, was founded by men who, to borrow a phrase, refused to comply. Who not only resisted lawful orders but rebelled against the government that issued them.”
9. Hayes makes it perfectly clear that in America there are two worlds.  
“In Ferguson, just about every single black person I spoke to had at least one story (often many) about humiliating traffic stops by Ferguson police officers that had nothing to do with public safety.”
10. A look at enforcement in America.  
“American society has witnessed a kind of arms race between its citizens and its police, resulting in forces that in many places patrol and occupy rather than police, that straightforwardly view themselves as waging war.”
11. The concept of white fear. One of the best discussed topics of the book.  
“Despite the fact nonwhite people are disproportionately the victims of crime, the criminal justice system as a whole is disproportionately built on the emotional foundation of white fear.”
- Bonus quote,  
“In ways large and small and constant, the Nation exhibits contempt for the lives of its subjects in the Colony and indifference to their value. This is the central component of the white fear that sustains the Colony: the simple inability to recognize, deeply, fully totally, the humanity of those on the other side.”
12. A look at criminology, the concept of  
“broken windows”

“Despite these caveats, “broken windows” soon became an article of faith among the nation’s law enforcement leaders, chief among them Bill Bratton, who had been hired in 1990 to run the police department of New York’s transit authority.<sup>13</sup> So is there a broad-based consensus about what “caused” the crime decline? Find out.<sup>14</sup> Hayes periodically makes mention of other great books and highlights their main thesis.<sup>15</sup> The evolution of how to treat drug addicts.

**Negatives:**

1. Oh so brief, I wanted Hayes to go further in the weeds.
2. No supplementary materials, that is, no charts, diagrams, photos or anything to complement the interesting narrative.
3. Notes are not linked.
4. As is the case of most books of this ilk, the diagnosis is better than the cure. Yes he makes general comments like the reduction of incarceration and the like but doesn’t really provide a thorough analysis of it.

**In summary,** I really enjoyed this book. Hayes is a gifted communicator and provides some interesting perspectives on what are difficult social topics. The book examines the evolution of our justice system and what’s behind the social divide. Interesting perspectives, memorable and provocative thoughts but all too brief, notes are not linked and doesn’t really go into the solutions of such problems.

**Further recommendations:**

- “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander,
- “Smuggler Nation” by Peter Andreas,
- “Rise of the Warrior Cop” by Radley Balko,
- “Evicted” by Mathew Desmond,
- “Between The World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coates,
- “White Trash” by Nancy Isenberg,
- “A People’s History of the United States” by Howard Zinn, and
- “Slavery by Another Name” by Douglas A. Blackmon.

To say that America is divided is nothing new, but Chris Hayes brings such a fresh new perspective to this reality. In this aptly titled book he suggests that there are actually two entirely distinct Americas: the Colony and the Nation. As he explains it: “If you live in the Nation, the criminal justice system functions like your laptop’s operating system, quietly humming in the background, doing what it needs to do to allow you to be your most efficient, functional self. In the Colony, the system functions like a computer virus: it intrudes constantly, interrupts your life at the most inconvenient times, and it does this as a matter of course. The disruption itself is normal. In the Nation, there is law; in the Colony, there is only a concern with order. In the Nation, citizens call the police to protect them. In the Colony, subjects flee the police, who offer the opposite of protection. In

the Nation, you have rights; in the Colony, you have commands. In the Nation, you are innocent until proven guilty; in the Colony, you are born guilty." Hayes is an extremely engaging writer, and I was hooked by his conversational style and keen insights within the first couple pages. As someone who was already deeply familiar with the racial disparities in the American criminal justice system going into this, I found myself most fascinated by the different ways that he connected the present-day Colony and Nation to the American Colonies once occupied by Britain. He also has a chapter at the end on America's obsession with punitive justice that perfectly conveys so many thoughts I've had but couldn't properly articulate. Never self-righteous, always plainly and uncomfortably aware that he himself is a member of the Nation and benefits from it every day, Hayes challenges us to think about what it would mean if we all lived in the same America.

Nothing short of revelatory. Most of us already know that America's criminal justice system is unequal. But Hayes lays out the historical context of this inequality, connecting it with, among other things, a long history of excessive policing. As a white New Yorker, he has a unique perspective on white fear, white privilege, and how these things support and maintain structural racism. An absolute must read. If you can get your Trump-supporting, white-privilege-denying relatives to read it, even better. My only complaint is that it ended too soon. With such keen insight, I wanted Hayes to suggest a better way forward. Still, it feels very much like a call to action.

Ever since Albert Memmi wrote *The Colonizer and the Colonized* the world has had the chance to step away from the superficialities focused on race or religion. It's about power. In this world the Colonizers have wealth and power and those who fill the institutions that enforce that will on the Colonized, regardless of their color, creed or religion do so involuntarily or voluntarily, but mostly without consciousness. Thank you Chris Hayes for pointing out this lesson once again.

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