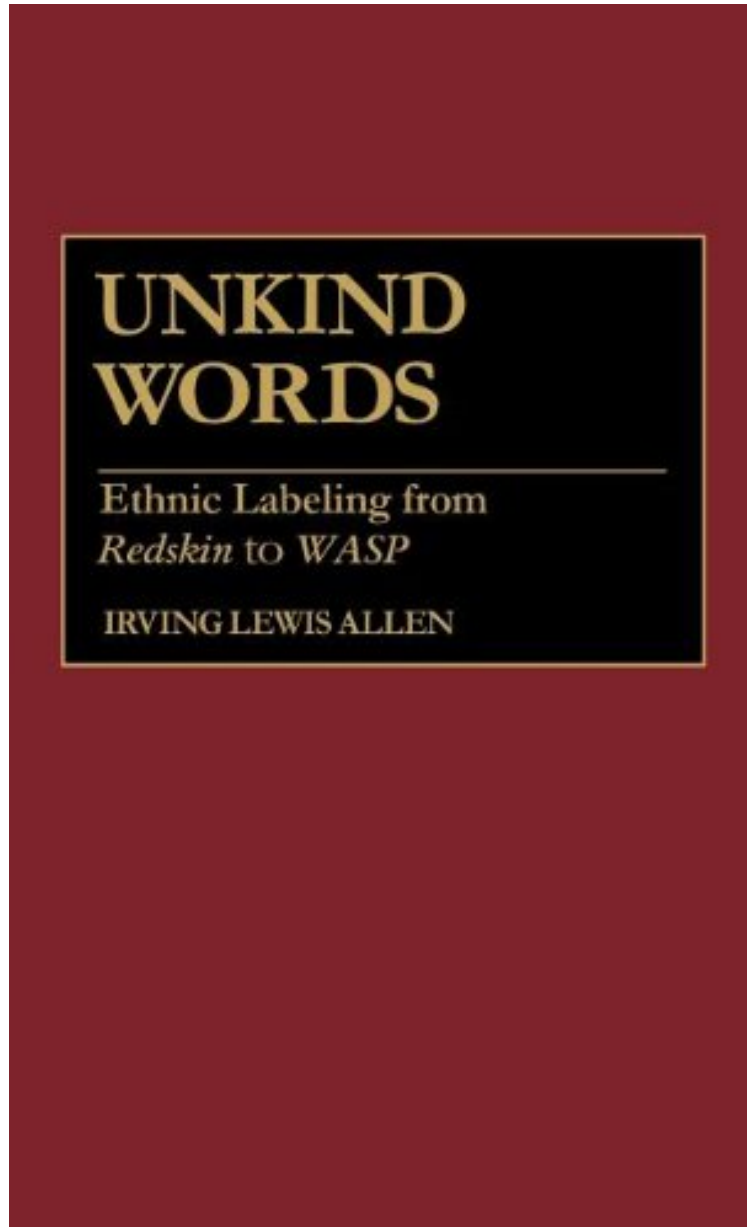


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## Unkind Words: Ethnic Labeling from Redskin to WASP

*Irving Lewis Allen*

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**Irving Lewis Allen : Unkind Words: Ethnic Labeling from Redskin to WASP** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unkind Words: Ethnic Labeling from Redskin to WASP:

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Nunberg What a ridiculous review of a serious study of ethnic slurs from a reader who apparently feels that these words would go away if we JUST DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THEM--the very attitude that ensures they will retain their power. 0 of 20 people found the following review helpful. I am more than a little perturbed By Donna I understand this is a work from a Sociology Professor, however I am afraid that I can not condone any such work being in a middle school library. I have spent a great deal of time trying to teach my children to respect all people regardless of their race and creed. I feel this book is very demoralizing to any race and women of all. I feel this book has no place in middle schools or any school for that matter.

In this extensive study of ethnic labeling in the United States' popular speech and usage, Irving Lewis Allen explores the major traditional themes behind the making of ethnic slurs. Viewing U.S. slang as a reflection of social diversity, rapid change, and the complexity of U.S. society, Allen puts forth a special insight into the social workings of American culture, both past and present. The book offers an overview of the major traditional themes used in the development of ethnic slurs as well as the most recent fads of covert and devious slurring with codewords and various kinds of sly word games. *Unkind Words* delivers its message with unusual clarity, that too often shoddy language shapes our thinking about the politics of ethnicity. Divided into two parts, the book begins with a detailed study of the older and more traditional slurs in American vernacular. These words the author terms fighting words, which, when dropped, often raised fists in schoolyards and barrooms. The book uncovers the origins of these slurs--few are heard in today's public discourse--and places them in a word museum where the reader can view the foolish viciousness of a cultural past. In one chapter, the author singles out the derogatory labels that have been applied specifically to women and reveals slurs that originate in both gender and ethnic conflict. The second part of the book focuses on labels that have appeared in the last few decades, often more genteel and less confrontational. While more subtle than their forerunners, these words often serve the same old psychological and social needs to stereotype and express hostility. Anyone interested in ethnic identity in the United States, in the workings of a plural society, or the origins and uses of American ethnic slurs, will find *Unkind Words* fascinating reading.

"Using plenty of examples, Allen examines the origins of ethnic slang, discussing words that are outright slurs and showing how terms 'masquerade as objective language, '"-Booklist"Eminently readable fare for language buffs and sociologists."-Booklist?Eminently readable fare for language buffs and sociologists.?-Booklist?Using plenty of examples, Allen examines the origins of ethnic slang, discussing words that are outright slurs and showing how terms 'masquerade as objective language, '?-BooklistAbout the Author IRVING LEWIS ALLEN is Professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut. He is the author of some forty articles including *The Sociology of Slang* in *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*.