

Stupid White Men and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation by Michael Moore was released in February, 2002. It's been on best seller lists for weeks. Paradoxically, in many book stores, it's as rare as desert rain. It's scheduled release date was October 2, 2001, weeks after the attack on the World Trade Centre.

Moore wrote an open letter last April in which he explained, "From September to December of last year, I didn't know whether Stupid White Men was ever going to be read by the public. HarperCollins was trying to decide whether it was now too offensive to a nation which had suddenly fallen in love with George W. Bush."

Moore was told to rewrite large sections, change the title and the cover, reimburse the publisher of up to \$100,000 for the expense of destroying the 50,000 original copies and to print the revised version. Moore refused.

He said, "In my opinion, the book seemed more relevant than before. Enron, Kenneth Lay, Arthur Anderson - it's all in my book."

Word leaked about Stupid White Men being "banned." Librarians organized a letter-writing campaign. HarperCollins decided to release the book as is - unchanged and uncensored.'

Moore says that it came down to the fact that as an American living during a time when our government (and a mostly compliant press) seeks to silence discussion and "manage" the truth, it is important to tell what I have seen, what I have been through, and to wonder what would have happened if I had not been a writer who was known and had an audience and an e-mail list that on a good day reaches a few million people. The outcome was a good one: a rare victory for the cause of free expression.

Isn't that enough to compel you to call the library and get your name on the reserve list for Stupid White Men? If not, read his earlier book, "Downsize This!" or borrow his commercially successful film documentary, "Roger and Me", or try to view his Emmy winning television series "TV Nation" which was yanked for being too controversial not for lack of audience.

Moore delivers serious, constructive, political criticism. It's well-researched and well-written - otherwise the lawsuits would publicly and mercilessly grind him into chopped liver as a lesson to other potential critics. To make his work palatable he sweetens it with an "in your face" style of humour. It's not just what he says, but how he says it that gives Moore his widespread appeal.

Moore's book is political. He explains unethical tactics used by the George W. Bush campaign to circumvent democracy and the sham of Bill Clinton's presidency. He connects the impact of political sleaze with people on the street. On-one-hand, from 1979 until now, the richest one percent of Americans have seen their wages rise by 157 percent while those in the bottom twenty percent are making \$100 less a year. Recently, forty-four of the top eighty-two US companies didn't pay the standard 35% in corporate taxes, seventeen percent paid no taxes, and seven, including General Motors, juggled until the government owed them millions. On-the-other-hand, commercial airlines were so cheap that pilots working for their commuter airlines were legally eligible for welfare.

Moore chronicles the on-going discrimination of blacks in America and he decries the waste of American's demonstrable intelligence. Moore is not a whiner. He offers "how to advice" to reform the country he loves. Is this the reason why his book is so reviled by those in public office?