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## The Likes Of Us: A Biography Of The White Working Class

*Michael Collins*

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**Michael Collins : The Likes Of Us: A Biography Of The White Working Class** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Likes Of Us: A Biography Of The White Working Class:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting history and good assessment of the Working class By T. S. C. There's a novelty already; a history of the Working class actually written by a member of the Working class; what

will they think of next?! I bought this and read it over a few weeks off and on. I wasn't at all sure what to expect from this book, but have been pleasantly surprised by it. To be honest, it's a history of Michael Collins' London family throughout the last couple of hundred years or so, rather than a particular history of the Working class in general. But, this is no bad thing; his family are to my mind very archetypal Working class city-dwellers and there is for me a great interest in that alone. As well as talking about his own family tree, which I enjoyed, he talks about the way the English white Working class in general are demonised or patronised or targeted for well-meaning but often missing-the-point 'missionary work' by those educated Middle classes, who always seem to know better than us plebs about how to live life and how to talk and present themselves, and so on and so on. I guess if you're Working class (like I am) you've heard it all before and probably groaned time and time again, at the way even well-meaning Middle class people misrepresent and often totally misunderstand Working class people and our culture and the way we live and behave and relate to each other. He also talks importantly about how White Working class people now seem to be the latest 'hate-figure' and how it's okay basically to attack White Working class people by nice, respectable Middle class, who, because they're not being racist or sexist or anything else, they can hate us without feeling guilty because of course all White Working class people are racist and sexist and misogynistic and uneducated and...you get the picture! Yes, even hatred and contempt seems acceptable, from people who proclaim to be politically correct and decent nice people. In short, it's OK to hate White Working class people but not OK to hate Black people or Asian people; we mustn't be racist now must we? But Michael points out the double-standards and hypocrisy of some Middle class people, and Middle class representation of White Working class people and culture; it's always usually negative or misread somehow. We need a voice, and we need people to hear that voice, or voices, so we are not misrepresented by other people, no matter how 'well-meaning' they may be. Being a Working class boy myself, growing up in a Working class city in a rundown area as a kid, I identify with much that Michael has written and think that London's Working classes have much the same experiences as the rest of urban Working class culture throughout England. If only we could all stop hating each other, if only more Working class people could get on and have the same life chances as some Middle class people seem to, this country would be a better place. I have one thing to say to any Middle class person reading this; see in us the same light and spark of humanity that is in you and your class, don't patronise us anymore than you would like someone to patronise you and understand that many Working class people want to get on, have better lives, be educated, earn a decent living and be treated with respect, just as much as you would hope for all these things; OK?

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. About Britain's weakest and most vulnerable

By Gary Selikow I have a great affinity for Britain's white working class and feel they have been victims of gross social injustice through the centuries, with today those who discriminate against them and downright persecute them in fact being the Britain's modern left elite who have outrageously swapped the noble ideals classlessness to the vile multiculturalism and 'anti-racism' as the author explains in the latter chapters. Multiculturalism and anti-racism are used as a stick to beat the British white working classes, who are the only group people in Britain it is acceptable for the chattering classes to mock and attack. As the brilliant journalist and true voice of and conscience and nonconformity to the prejudices of Britain's left elites, Burchill captured with great skill as the author quotes in the book in a 2001 article from the Guardian "What we now have is a new version of the deserving and undeserving poor—the noble new British working class, who are ethnic and the thoroughly swinish old working class who are white." This consummate, passionate and humane biography of Britain's white working class in the 19th and twentieth century is social history at its best tracing the story of the author's own family with a sympathetic but non-uncritical look at the culture and history of Britain's most abused people. People who have nevertheless have a rich and vibrant culture, which is a victim of a new class war by Britain's left wing middle class privileged hypocrite elite. Julie Burchill also makes the very important and true point that it is easy for the middle and upper classes not affected negatively by immigration to condemn the working classes who suffer as a result of it: "That the working class might have a thoroughly legitimate reason for becoming more agitated about immigration than the tolerant middle class with their health insurance, private schools and comfy cars is never considered by these usually oh so caring people." The author covers much of the story from the viewpoint of the memories of his grandmother Nell Hall (Born in 1892 and passed away in 1991). The first three chapters cover the period of the industrial revolution when the British working classes suffered untold horrors, lived in diabolical conditions, and had no labour or human rights. If Blacks deserve reparations for slavery, then the equally miserable and cruel treatment of the British working classes at this time should entitle them to the same thing. There are chapters covering the immigrants from this class who migrated to the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. A fascinating chapter on late 19th century working class literature, a chapter covering the real admirable efforts of socialist reformers like Robert Owen and William Cobbett who rightly pointed out how it took "a despicable hypocrite to pretend to believe that the slaves in the West Indies were worse off than the (white British) slaves in the manufactories" AS these and other European working classes are the people who inspired Karl Marx's writing, and not the Blacks and Browns of Africa and Asia, the modern left of today should hang their heads in shame at taking up the baton of the middle and upper class ancestors in oppressing the white working class in the name of the despicable multi-multiculturalism and 'anti-racism'. There is a chapter on the tragic 4th August 1912 Boy Scouts Disaster at Leysdown, which was an event of great mourning for London's working classes. Then the author moves onto the

beginning of social reform under the Labour Party, the heroic resistance by the British working class to Oswald Mosley's Fascist Blackshirts when the valiant English workers stopped a Black Shirt parade in Bermondsey in 1937. Who could forget the deprivations suffered by the British working classes who won World War II for Britain between 1939 and 1945. The golden age of the white working classes was no doubt the 50's (when Labour began the social reforms such as NHS and social welfare and the conservatives became more compassionate and reformist, a process reversed in 1979 when Margaret Thatcher revived the cruel war on the British poor) The goal of the British left in the 1960 was classlessness, laudable and noble goal, and has today been replaced by multiculturalism and 'anti-racism' who have replaced the British white working class despicably with the ethnic immigrants as those to champion and justify their snobbery as they label the white working class as 'racist chavs' to justify their newly restored snobbery. A fascinating nostalgic chapter on the author's school days in the 1970s which captures working class youth culture of the time in the multi-racial school the author attended (so much for the charges of racism the white working class is persecuted with) Collins describes of a white middle class avant garde left-winger who had moved into previously working class area and complained the area is 'very white' When the author witnessed this he remarks how he saw the 'urban working class white population booted as far below the stairs as it may have been in the 1890s'-so much for social reform. HE also lambastes the media for sneering, prejudices documentaries where sound bites from selective interviews trump substance and real analysis in an effort to burn the white working class at the stake for 'racism' This book is a magisterial work, of which few of its kind tragically exist and combined poignant and pungent analysis with stinging social commentary. The basic problem is that the privileged left and liberal elite are no longer interested in class equity or the basic rights of the British working class but only in 'non racism' which is a farcical label for favoring the third world exotic brown immigrants and persecuting and demonizing the local white working class who they label as chavs-not worthy in the eyes of the left/liberal toffs of having their suffering, feelings or rights considered. The British working class suffered as much in the Industrial Revolution as the Blacks did under slavery but are still suffering with the privileged elite classes using pc propaganda and favouring of the third world exotic browns against them. Britain's indigenous working classes are put last in line for employment, council housing, health care, education and bank loans in favour of the exotic Third world immigrants (especially Muslims) favoured by the pc left elites.. Those who are flabbergasted at discrimination based on race, gender, sexuality of religion (unless of course you attack Jews for being 'Zionists' or attack Israelis-that is acceptable among the chattering classes) think nothing of attacking the British working class and lumpenproletariat as chavs. This also translates to a politically correct anti-white racism. White British young people who suffer as a result of social problems such as juvenile crime, drug addiction, and teenage pregnancy, as well as child prostitution, and come from broken homes no longer elicit sympathy from the liberal and left elites who consider the white underclass the lowest of the low, not worth saving or empathizing with, whereas they would have the utmost sympathy and support for Third world immigrant youth under the same circumstances. The liberal and left elites now use the race card against the white under classes and point out since the latter are supposedly 'racist' and 'bigoted' they must be punished for this and are the unworthy poor as compared to the impoverished people of colour who are deemed worthy of empathy and upliftment. This amounts to an inverse racism whereby the classes that have so long suffered since the Industrial Revolution and who came under sustained attack under Thatcher are now being made victims again at the hands of the leftist and liberal elites now in charge of Britain, including the media, local councils and the courts. This is not a racist review as leftist correctofascists and reverse racist may charge but instead aims to speak up for Britain's most voiceless and unprotected. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Neither an elegy nor a manifesto By Gerard Lynch Like Michael Collins, I'm another working-white boy who made his way into the professional heartland of the bourgeois-left elite. Like him I get angry at the prejudices of the BBC and the Guardian, not so much towards me, but towards my family, my friends, and the people I went to school with. I enjoyed angrily shouting along with him at the rampaging horde of environmentally-conscious, organic food-eating, inverse racist media trolls who've taken over so much on Inner London. I enjoyed his bitchy putdowns aimed at a class who specialise in the bitchy putdown (for Mr. Collins has a wonderful line in invective). It was a joy to read a book written by and for 'us' for a change. I enjoyed the in depth trolling through the history of his ancestors in Southwark, his accounts, laced with the right amount of working-class sentimentality, of growing up in the 1970s. More seriously, I appreciated the way he deconstructed the media-myth of the working-class white as ill-educated, uncouth and prejudiced. London's working-class whites have been at the sharp end of multi-cultural Britain for 60 years and, in most cases, have adapted to it and even thrived in it. He lifts the lid not only on the poverty and squalor of life for poor Londoners from Dickens' era onwards, but also exposes the bizarre social experimentation imposed on the British working-class by the bourgeois left in fields from architecture to education, from the 1950s onwards. And yet, this book could have been so much more. London is not the be all and end all of the world, and the white-working class experience is radically different in other parts of England - from the all-white rust belt towns of places like Durham or South Yorkshire, to racially charged mill-towns like Oldham or Burnley to the Dickensian squalor and transience of the seasonal workers of South Coast resorts like Torquay and Brighton. And all this is even before you look at Scotland, Wales and especially Northern Ireland. While the rootedness and nativism gives Collins' narrative much of its power, it either needed to claim less or do more. The book

peters out in the end into a sort of de-emotionalised elegy, and an unrealistic one at that where drugs are somehow the final straw that destroys what generations of alcoholism and violence couldn't. Where next for London's working class whites, whether remaining in the Inner City like Collins' school friends who still live in Walworth, or transplanted out to the ageing suburbs of Bexleyheath or Crayford? Collins makes neither predictions or proposals, and that I feel is a weak point that drags his thesis into the realms of the purposeless whinge. Finally, I think the book needed to pursue a little further the connection between the middle-class missionaries of yesterday and today. Why did the vast improvement in material conditions of working-class whites (and working-class blacks and Asians) in the 1980s provoke such anger among the commentariat? Was it annoyance at their rejection of the great Socialist dream propounded through the schools in the '60s and '70s? Was it pique at losing the Cold War both at home and abroad? Was it disgust at seeing many of their social 'inferiors' pass them by in material wealth? Was it the increasingly obvious fact that working-class whites neither wanted much to do with bourgeois-lefty missionaries, nor needed them? Without understanding the bourgeois-left attack on white working-class culture it's impossible to get a handle on why it's become so hip to hate poor whites. However, this is an eminently readable mix of history and polemic, and the very antithesis of the self-congratulatory establishment hype that spawned TV programmes like 'Lefties', and as such deserves to be read.

Once they were portrayed as the salt of the earth. Nowadays, they take to the streets when paedophiles and asylum seekers are in their midst; they expose their lives in TV documentaries; they love Gucci and hate the Euro; the broadsheets cast them as xenophobes and exhibitionists and mock their tastes and attitudes. But who are the white working class and what have they done to deserve this portrayal? *The Likes of Us* is a fascinating and wholly original examination of London's white working class.

About the Author Michael Collins has worked as a journalist, scriptwriter and producer, his television credits including Peter York's *Eighties* for the BBC, and *The National Alf*, a look at comedy, culture and the working class as exemplified by the character of Alf Garnett. Since 1998, he has worked as a freelance journalist for *The Sunday Telegraph*, *the Observer*, *the Guardian* and *the Independent*. He lives in Frinton-on-Sea, Essex.