



## Thomas Sowell: Maverick Intellect

### Suggested Videos

**Thomas Sowell: Common Sense in a Senseless World (Free to Choose, 2020)**

<https://youtu.be/WK4M9iJrgto>

(56 minutes, 57 seconds)

**Firing Line: The Economics and Politics of Race (Hoover Institution, 1983)**

<https://youtu.be/TEBPCOG5RHs>

(58 minutes, 17 seconds)

**The Great Thomas Sowell (PragerU, 2021)**

<https://youtu.be/1RN7X-De2RA>

(5 minutes, 48 seconds)

**Thomas Sowell Dismantles Egalitarianism (Free to Choose, 1980)**

<https://youtu.be/26QxO49Ycx0>

(5 minutes)

From a larger program: **Free to Choose, Part 5 (1980)**

<https://youtu.be/YRLAKD-Vuvk>

(57 minutes, 45 seconds)

**Thomas Sowell: Speech From the 1980 Fairmont Conference (Free to Choose)**

<https://youtu.be/ae4aseiR6nM>

(20 minutes)

**Thomas Sowell's Maverick Insights (ReasonTV, 2021)**

<https://youtu.be/5a6uouatCM0>

(9 minutes, 57 seconds)

**Think Tank with Ben Wattenberg: *The Vision of the Anointed* (AEI, 1995)**

<https://youtu.be/waEc4YbQQX0>

(25 minutes, 24 seconds)

# Thomas Sowell: Maverick Intellect

## Video Discussion Questions

### Common Sense in a Senseless World

How did Thomas Sowell go from being a Marxist to an advocate for free markets? What personal and professional experiences shaped his thinking about culture and economics?

### Firing Line: The Economics and Politics of Race

Who was William F. Buckley, Jr.? Why would he be interested in conducting an in-depth interview with Thomas Sowell? What seems to be his attitude towards Sowell's work?

Sowell argues that economic development and education, not political power, are the surest paths to prosperity for ethnic minorities – in America and throughout the world. Do you think this is true? Which examples from history support this view? Which ones complicate it?

### The Great Thomas Sowell

In this introduction to Sowell's work, Jason Riley summarizes Sowell's "empirical" approach to social policy as: "Results matter much more than good intentions." Why do so many people in positions of authority focus more on *intent* than *results* when it comes to issues like race, inequality, education, family planning, and other contentious issues?

What are some examples of "Stage-One Thinking" in the world today? What seem to be the negative consequences (or potential consequences) of policies grounded in this thinking?

### Thomas Sowell Dismantles Egalitarianism

What does "egalitarianism" mean? Do you think Sowell's arguments here actually "dismantle" the arguments in favor of egalitarianism? Why or why not?

Why might Sowell be in favor of equality of *opportunity* but not equality of *outcomes*?

### Speech From the 1980 Fairmont Conference

This influential conference, officially known as Black Alternatives, was hugely influential in giving black conservatives and libertarians a voice. Are the issues Sowell brings up still relevant today? What has changed for black Americans – and Americans of all races – since then? Which aspects of politics and society are still much the same as they were in 1980?

### Thomas Sowell's Maverick Insights

Sowell rejects "utopianism," believing that social problems have no perfect solutions – only trade-offs. Do you agree? What are the dangers posed by "utopian" projects and thinking?

### Think Tank with Ben Wattenberg: *The Vision of the Anointed*

The subtitle of the book Sowell discusses here is "self-congratulation as the basis for social policy." Sowell identifies four stages in the development of such policy by "anointed" intellectuals and politicians: Crisis, Solution, Results, and Response. In Sowell's mind, because the Crisis in stage 1 is manufactured, the subsequent discussions around stages 2-4 usually miss the point. What kinds of policies today do you believe follow this pattern?