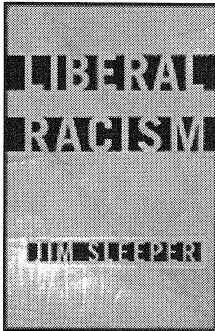


ARCHIVE INTERVIEW

~ Tuesday, August 5, 1997 7 PM ~

Jim Sleeper: LIBERAL RACISM



Moderator: Welcome to the BarnesandNoble.com auditorium. We are excited to welcome, Jim Sleeper, who will be here at 7pm to talk about his new book LIBERAL RACISM. You can go ahead and enter questions into the queue by clicking the SUBMIT QUESTION button on the screen. We look forward to chatting with you this evening. Welcome!

BarnesandNoble.Com: BarnesandNoble.Com welcomes Jim Sleeper, author of LIBERAL RACISM. Welcome to all.

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JS: Publishing a book with a title like this has been an interesting experience. Reactions have been ranging across the spectrum and I can't wait to see what the BarnesandNoble.com audience's reaction is.

Thomas from Jersey City, NJ: What compelled you to write this book?

JS: The slow and painful realization that Liberal "solutions to racism," which I have always embraced, where only compounding the problem. In politics, schools and the legal system, I watched my liberal friends and allies leaping ahead of conservatives to draw new race lines in the American Civic landscape. After fighting so nobly to help Americans rise above color it seemed almost every liberal's "remedy" to racism involved making people define themselves first and foremost by skin color and name -- the very opposite of what we have said we were fighting for. To justify this we kept finding more and more racism under every rock and every bed. In the inner-city communities I knew best, this was so clearly counter-productive that even amid the reality of racism it began to seem wiser to pull back. Incidentally, in some of the lunier Liberal remedies like racial election districting, hard core conservatives where popping up as liberal allies. That was a tip-off that something was wrong.

Craig N. from Chicago, IL: What racial ideology do you think people must embrace in order to get a racially healthy environment?

JS: I think we have to get back to the trans-racial civic faith that Americans once professed to believe in. Liberals were always the framers of great public naratives that inspired people like the black labor leader A. Philip Randolph and writers like Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison to put forward an American vision beyond color. We should be renewing that. I don't mean that we should dispense with racial or ethnic sub-cultural loyalties. I do mean that like the black Baptists in the South during the Civil Rights Movement we should use the best values of the sub-communities to face outward and to embrace a larger American identity. For example, I 'd like to see a

Hollywood movie in which a black or Latino Jimmy Stewart serving on a jury refuses to act only as a delegate of his or her race and instead leaves the jury to a verdict that really rests on the true guilt or innocence of the person regardless of race. What an inspiring story that could be. Why aren't we telling it? We sure need it.

Amelia from North Carolina: Hello Mr. Sleeper. What kind of response have you gotten from the liberal population you describe in your book? Also, if it's possible to generalize, what is the primary reaction from African Americans?

JS: Among Liberals it breaks down in two ways some are defensive and some reviewers will seize on certain lines in the book to complain about it's tone. I think what they are saying is "don't touch my belief structure, it hurts." These are folks who are pretty much hard-wired into the old solutions and in some cases, their careers are based on implementing those solutions. But, many other Liberals are saying to me, "Gee, Liberal Racism is a phrase that has crossed my mind several times a year because I know some things are wrong and I haven't had a a chance to think it through. The book is an attempt to do that and I think that is why people are reading it.

The African American reaction has been really interesting. Most blacks I have spoken with feel drawn to the title, they say "Oh, I want to read that." To some, Liberal Racism refers to people who aren't doing enough to expand the existing racial remedies. But, to others Liberal Racism seems to mean exactly what I say it does in the book: the condescension to non-whites, lowering standards so much that the intended beneficiaries don't get a feeling of real satisfaction, and most important, the drift into racial essentialism -- the "multi cultural assumption" that your skin color makes you the bearer of a particular culture and makes you almost as different as segregationist used to say. I have met more then a few Blacks that feel that is what Liberal Racism is doing, the best of intentions but with the worst of misconceptions.

Moderator: For those of you just joining us, Jim Sleeper, author of LIBERAL RACISM, is here discussing the issue of race in America. Join in! To ask a question, simply click the red SUBMIT QUESTION button on the left of your screen. We're glad you could join us.

Daniel from OLD LYME, CT: Hey Jim, I have been a fan and reading your stuff for years. . . I am curious to get your opinion of some of the other syndicated columnists out there. . . Are you a fan of George Will, Pat Buchanan etc.?

>JS: Hi Daniel, I think the conservative columnists you mention are often correct in how liberals get things wrong, but I don't often endorse their own solutions. Conservatives have a bad record on race and it isn't enough to point accusing fingers. I wish those columnists where taking a stronger stand against discrimination. Some black columnists are very reasonable, William Rasberry and Clarence Page. It is only a coincidence that they both praised LIBERAL RACISM.

Victor Perton from Melbourne, Australia: I regret that your book has not yet arrived in Melbourne. How do you define liberal for the purposes of your text?

JS: To Englishmen and Australian, Liberal often means just individual rights and free markets--precisely what American Conservatives defend. But in America due to our unique racial history, Liberals have become the champions of Big Govt. interventions to redress economic and racial inequities. I think we do need some such intervention, but we can't get stuck with it so that we stop respecting people's ability to change of their own free will. On race, I honestly think Liberals have stopped giving Americans credit for trying to get beyond the black/white divide, and