

THE  
**(CLOSEST**  
OF  
**STRANGERS)**



LIBERALISM AND  
THE POLITICS OF  
RACE IN NEW YORK

JIM SLEEPER

NORTON

B O O K N E W S

Praise for Jim Sleeper's

The Closest of Strangers:  
Liberalism and the Politics of  
Race in New York

"So much drivel, some of it dangerous, has been written and spoken of late about racial tensions in New York City that this gritty, honest, and original book arrives as a special gift. Jim Sleeper challenges virtually every article of conventional wisdom about race relations — white liberals and black militants are punctured alike — and for this he is sure to be attacked from all sides. Whether or not you agree with everything Sleeper says, you will come away knowing that what he says is urgent and important."

— Sydney Schanberg, Pulitzer  
Prize-winning columnist for  
*New York Newsday*

"Jim Sleeper's history of racial politics in New York City is eloquent, urgent, and unflinchingly honest. Reading it should be a condition for holding office for all political leaders, of every race."

— Charles Morris, author of  
*The Cost of Good Intentions:  
New York City and the Liberal  
Experiment*

"Jim Sleeper's *The Closest of Strangers* is an extraordinary work. Because it is so richly documented, so passionately argued, so poignantly honest, so attentive to complexity, and thus so powerfully instructive, *The Closest of Strangers* may well become one of those rare books that actually changes readers' minds about that touchiest of American issues — the 'race question.'"

— Randall Kennedy, Editor,  
*Reconstruction Magazine*

"*The Closest of Strangers* is an astonishingly courageous book. Jim Sleeper pulls no punches. He is equally tough on right and left, white and black, on anyone who knowingly contributes to the moral corruption of our time. He offers us the kind of clear, unsentimental honesty that will save us from the public hypocrisy to which we have all become accustomed. In addition to its other virtues, it is a real page-turner."

— Diane Ravitch, author of  
*The Great School Wars*

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"No one knows the story of racial politics in New Yorker better than Jim Sleeper. Yet his insights into these politics could apply in Omaha or San Francisco. He shows how the often good intentions of white liberals and the civil rights establishment have redrawn racial lines that, in the name of social justice, estrange the races even more. Against the madness of racial politics today, Sleeper's common sense is almost visionary."

— Shelby Steele, author of  
*The Content of Our Character*

"Jim Sleeper's book is a plea for moral clarity and political courage. It is also an example of what it asks for: an honest and passionate account of racial politics in New York, a hard story, bravely told."

— Michael Walzer, Institute for  
Advanced Study, Princeton

"Jim Sleeper has written a book that should be taken to heart by all those, from Mayor to the people on the block, who want New York City to work as a model of decent race and group relations. His empathy for the various striving and contending groups in the city is remarkable, and he understands the politics of the city the way few, whether academic experts or reporters, do."

— Nathan Glazer  
co-author of *Beyond the Melting  
Pot*

"[*The Closest of Strangers*] gives a long overdue historical perspective to the state of racial relations in the City. Despite the conflicts which are on the surface, there remains a tradition of civility which, if kept in mind by our citizens as well as our leaders, could help us to a happier day."

— Edward Costikyan

"*The Closest of Strangers* is a powerful cry of anguish and anger over the corruption of the politics of race. Working in the trenches — of politics, local journalism, and poverty — subjecting himself to heartfelt, often deeply painful, introspection, Jim Sleeper has cut through the moral equivocation, the profiteering on victimization, and the political accommodation to lies. The goal of this book is to restore moral legitimacy to one of the most important and most corrupted debates in America today."

— Thomas Byrne Edsall,  
author of *The Politics of  
Inequality*