The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America’s Racial Crisis

By Orlando Patterson

COUNTERPOINT, United States, 1998. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Reprint. 224 x 160 mm. Language: English. Brand New Book ***** Print on Demand *****. For many years Orlando Patterson has been a major contributor to the public discussion of race in America. In this eagerly anticipated new volume, the author of the National Book Award–winner Freedom in the Making of Western Culture presents a comprehensive exploration of contemporary interethnic relations. Americans are in the midst of a rejuvenated conversation about race. How we talk about race—or fail to—is one of the central themes of this book, which is certain to spark lively debate among intellectuals and policy advocates. Unflinching in his analysis, Patterson chides professional race advocates, the mainstream media, and his fellow academics for homogenizing the 33 million Americans of African ancestry into a single group beset by crises and intractable dilemmas. His willingness to challenge the received wisdom of conservatives, liberals, and genetic determinists alike affords us the opportunity to critically examine our own preconceived notions and prejudices. An experienced policy advisor, Patterson brings to the national discussion a lifetime of study of slavery, freedom, and ethnic inequality worldwide. His practical recommendations emphasize solutions to problems too often described as unsolvable. For...

Reviews

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How we talk about race—or fail to—is one of the central themes of this book, which is certain to spark lively debate among intellectuals and policy advocates. Unflinching in his analysis, Patterson chides professional race advocates, the mainstream media, and his fellow academics for homogenizing the 33 million Americans of African ancestry into a single group beset by crises and intractable. Race relations, The Ordeal of Integration admonishes Americans to stop exaggerating the intractability of persistent ethnic problems and start focusing on what works. 

Sociologists have long recognized that race is a social rather than a biological phenomenon, and recently the proposition that race is a social and cultural construction has become an academic cliché. But social and cultural constructions can justify the enslavement, forced segregation, or even the extermination of people designated as having inferior ancestry or bad genes. When such attitudes are influential, or have been influential for extended periods in the past with effects that persist, a race problem may be said to exist. As a practical matter, therefore, it is difficult to avoid usi