



Contemporary Controversies and the American Racial Divide

Robert C. Smith, Richard Seltzer

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Contemporary Controversies and the American Racial Divide is a detailed study of some of the most racially divisive issues America has encountered in the past decade. Smith and Seltzer employ more than forty surveys to explore race-based public opinion differences on high-profile controversies including the Rodney King and O. J. Simpson cases; the arrest, trial, jailing, and subsequent reelection of Washington, D.C., Mayor Marion Barry; the Million Man March and Louis Farrakhan; and the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill controversy. The authors also look at race-based opinion differences on the inner-city crack cocaine epidemic and the spread of A.I.D.S. among the American populace. The divisions in opinion between blacks and whites on these controversies are explained in terms of the distinctive historical and cultural experiences of the different races and the gaps, gulfs, and chasms in their contemporary social and economic conditions. While also noting significant commonalities in opinion across the color line, the book focuses on racial differences and their sources, and in a concluding chapter advances suggestions as to how the nation might overcome its racial divisions. This innovative study is a unique, rich, contextualized, dynamic analysis of race opinion, unlike anything else in literature.

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