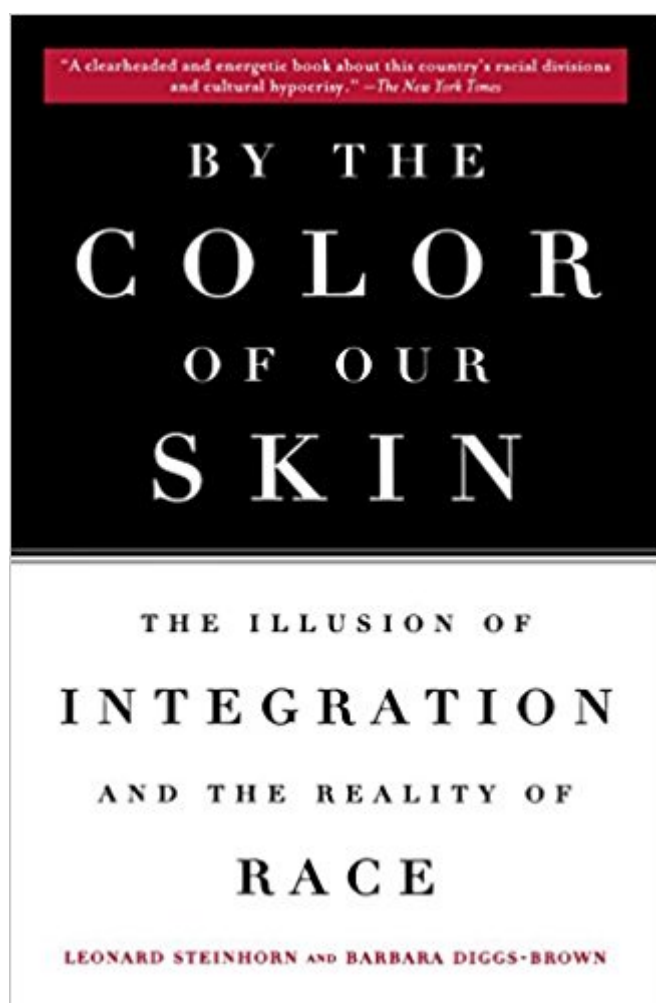


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# By The Color Of Our Skin: The Illusion Of Integration And The Reality Of Race



## Synopsis

While signs of racial progress are everywhere, the reality is that America is hardly more integrated than it was before the civil rights movement. Beyond the rhetoric of politicians, the media, and the prevalent symbols of integration lies a very different reality: 70 percent of black children attend predominantly black schools; and an Hispanic or Asian American with a third grade education is more likely to live in an integrated neighborhood than is a black with a Ph.D. Fueled by these startling statistics, *By the Color of Our Skin* argues that integration does not exist now; that it never had a chance to exist in the past; and that it will never exist in the future. Leonard Steinhorn and Barbara Diggs-Brown would themselves like to see integration become a reality but find--through polls, statistics, interviews, and anecdotes--that the illusion of integration is more damaging than useful because it keeps society from having an honest dialogue about the problem of race. *By the Color of Our Skin* explodes powerful myths and outlines a new vision of race in America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Professors Leonard Steinhorn and Barbara Diggs-Brown take an analytical look at American race relations, pointing out the difference between integration mythology and racial reality. While public facilities have been desegregated and black icons like Michael Jordan, Colin Powell, and Oprah Winfrey enjoy unprecedented popularity, there are still racial barriers left for blacks and whites to deal with. The authors examine the seductive imagery of integration, consider why blacks and whites view race differently, and explore the possibilities of translating some integration success

stories into the broader fabric of American society. "We have no illusions that racial honesty will ever integrate our families, lives, schools, or communities," the authors write. "But we do hope that a more racially honest America can build bridges and challenge the stereotypes and images that too often guide our decisions and actions." --Eugene Holley Jr. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The authors, professors of communication, one black, the other white, have written a provocative and timely critique of race relations in America. They focus on both the image and reality of racial integration. The U.S. has created a grand illusion of racial comity and imminent integration. The authors contend that despite the achievements of political and civil rights movements during the 1960s, racial patterns in housing, education, and culture have made real integration all but unattainable. Desegregation is not the same thing as integration. The urban-suburban divide undercuts the goal of integration, the authors assert. The media, television in particular, have produced a "virtual integration," which many whites accept, if not prefer to the real thing. To achieve real integration requires hard work, risk, social engineering, sacrifice, etc. It also requires a more honest assessment of race relations, one that allows for peaceful coexistence, admitting the disadvantaged status of blacks and the need for remedies such as affirmative action. Vernon Ford --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a distinctive book about race and, in particular, the failures of integration in the United States. American University communications professors Leonard Steinhorn and Barbara Diggs-Brown document and discuss black-white relations, drawing upon social science scholarship, the media and popular culture, and their own personal experiences. The authors talk about integration and segregation not only in schools and the workplace, but also in worship, leisure, and recreational pursuits. In doing so, they provide a well-rounded but perhaps even more dismal assessment (than others) of the failures of formal, legal efforts to achieve both equality and integration. Drawing upon their varied professional experiences, they argue that the media has helped to foster an illusion of integration. In particular, they point to the typically diverse casting of on-air television news reporters at the national and local level that suggest an interpersonal racial ease only rarely achieved. The more common view, they argue, is a society where black and white people may work together [if mostly on unequal terms], but then pass each other like ships in the night on the way home to neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly white or black. Their analysis is especially significant for large northeastern and midwestern cities, where black-white relations mostly define the race

landscape. In the end, this book challenges scholars and citizens alike to reflect honestly on our values, our residential choices, and personal practices, not just on rhetoric. Steinhorn and Diggs-Brown show us that a commitment to integration requires hard work and difficult choices, both at the personal and community levels, in ways that national rhetoric about race misses.

The subject of race provokes more deceit, denial and dishonesty than any other issue in American life. The authors of this book explore the reality-versus-image dichotomy more analytically than any other work I've read. And they're right on the money with respect to affirmative action, which was developed as a counter-weight to racism, and those critics who declare that it gives rise to white resentment. This position is akin to using an experimental treatment for cancer, and then declaring that the treatment CAUSED the cancer. It is well settled that there was white resentment long before the words "affirmative" and "action" were ever used in the same sentence. This book should be required reading at every college in America.

This is a book that I read for a while, then put down, read, and put down. I didn't WANT the authors to be right. I was born in the "we shall overcome" '60s, & am still getting over the whiplash from R. Reagan's "anecdotes" about "welfare mothers" (people who gave birth to welfare???) and G. Bush I's disgusting Willie Horton spectacle. It has been a couple of decades & I am still hoping that it is just a blip. But of course it isn't. But my local paper, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, had this story last week: The report by the African American Men Project found that in 2000: \*About 44 percent of all black men in Hennepin County between the ages of 18 and 30 were arrested and booked into jail during the year. \*49 percent lived in one of Minneapolis' poorest and most unsafe neighborhoods. \*47 percent were being raised by single mothers. \*28 percent finished high school in four years. The evidence shows that we ARE two countries, separate and unequal. And Diggs-Brown and Steinhorn show that maybe separate and equal are better than what we have now. Their examples of a few settings that are carefully managed to become & stay integrated are enlightening. It can be done, but it sure does take a strong will. The majority of whites, while seeing themselves as decent people, have a poor knowledge of history and don't follow politics. They don't have the will & the commitment to create more integrated communities if the price is higher taxes and constant vigilance. One thing I was puzzled about, though, was that they did not address what is clearly an increased rate of intermarriage among blacks and whites during the 1990s. How was that happening while housing in general remained dismally segregated? As to the comment in another review that Latinos & Asians should have been included, I don't agree. This book examines the

peculiar, sad story of how African-Americans, as a group, came to be in such a bind in this country. Their story is distinctive and troubling and deserves examination on its own. I don't want these authors to be right. But I thank them for making me think hard thoughts.

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