



The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege

Robert Jensen

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In *The Souls of Black Folks*, W.E.B. DuBois wrote that the question whites wanted to ask him was: “How does it feel to be a problem?” In *The Heart of Whiteness*, Robert Jensen writes that it is time for white people in America to self-consciously reverse the direction of that question and to fully acknowledge that in the racial arena, they are the problem.

While some whites would like to think that we have reached “the end of racism” in the United States, and others would like to celebrate diversity but are oblivious to the political, economic, and social consequences of a nation—and their sense of self—founded on a system of white supremacy, Jensen proposes a different approach. He sets his sights not only on the racism that can’t be hidden, but also on the liberal platitudes that sometimes conceal the depths of that racism in “polite society.”

The Heart of Whiteness offers an honest and rigorous exploration of what Jensen refers to as the depraved nature of whiteness in the United States. Mixing personal experience with data and theory, he faces down the difficult realities of -racism and white privilege. He argues that any system that denies non-whites their full humanity also keeps whites from fully accessing their own.

This book is both a cautionary tale for those who believe that they have transcended racism, and also an expression of the hope for genuine transcendence. When white people fully understand and accept the painful reality that they are indeed “the problem,” it should lead toward serious attempts to change one’s own life and join with others to change society.

Robert Jensen is the author of *Citizens of the Empire*. He is a professor of media ethics and journalism at The University of Texas at Austin.

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