

The Ordeal of Integration
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From "The Ordeal of Integration" 2-4, as quoted by Peter Schuck in
"Diversity in America"

Any reference to Afro-Americans by Euro-Americans that does not acknowledge the totality of racism or flatter all things Afro-American risks sneers of contempt or the charge of racism. Any but the most professionally qualified expression of sympathy is likely to be dismissed as liberal patronage. Any suggestion that an Afro-American person might be responsible, even in some minor way, for his or her condition invites the knee-jerk response that one is blaming the victim. The result is that no Euro-American person, except one insensitive to the charge of racism, dares say what he or she really means.... So much "race" speech has become ritualized and rhetorical.... The overwrought nature of ethno"racial" talk results in curious forms of self-censorship and privileged speech among ethnic groups in their interactions with each other.... [A]n Afro-American person is privileged to say, "I love my blackness," or "I take pride in the great cultural achievements of my race," or any such chauvinistic clap-trap. No Euro-American person dares say the very same thing, not if she cares about her reputation, even though it is true that nearly all Euro-Americans cherish their appearance and cultural heritage.... Every Afro-American is presumed to be an expert on all aspects of the subject of "race." ... When they are not proving that "race" as a concept has no scientific meaning, most social scientists and even medical researchers are busily controlling away all other variables in a relentless effort to prove that one, and only one, variable explains the condition of Afro-Americans: "race." Having abolished the ontological basis of "race" in biology, American social scientists vie with each other to reestablish its ontological essence as a social fact.... American social science is either uninterested in, or befuddled by, the fact that the vast majority of Afro-Americans, including the majority of those born and brought up poor, overcome their circumstances and lead healthy, happy, productive lives.³¹