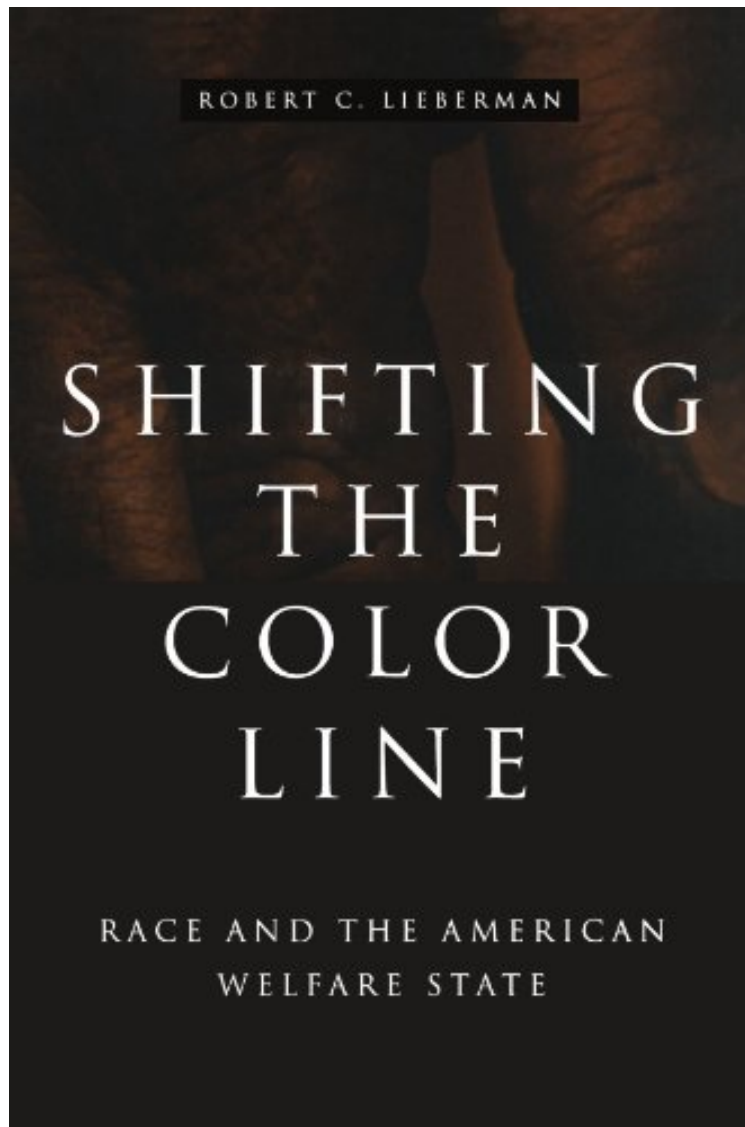


[Download pdf] Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State

Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State

Robert C. Lieberman

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Robert C. Lieberman : Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent BookBy Joya MisraThis is a superb book, one that makes important contributions to the study of race, politics, and the welfare state. I'm not surprised that, per the other review, graduate students had no trouble tearing this fine work down, since many graduate students seem to feel that is the point of a seminar. But scholars in this area recognize the significance of this work, it is very well-cited and deserves

to be. 10 of 43 people found the following review helpful. Academic embarrassment By aufheben Lieberman's *Shifting the Color Line* is a failure in academic writing. His thesis - that federal agencies are capable of running racism-free welfare - is not only unsupported by his evidence, his evidence is itself racist in the exclusion of all other races besides white and black. Lieberman also fails to look at any sort of evidence from anywhere in the country west of the Mississippi, so the experiences of racial minorities in the midwest, southwest, and northwest are entirely left out of this monograph. The blind infatuation with federal policy also ignores the blatant racism present in national politics in the period Lieberman studies in this work. In short, I've seen this book torn down within half an hour by a small seminar of graduate students. Any serious academic would do well to pass on reading this book.

Despite the substantial economic and political strides that African-Americans have made in this century, welfare remains an issue that sharply divides Americans by race. *Shifting the Color Line* explores the historical and political roots of enduring racial conflict in American welfare policy, beginning with the New Deal. Through Social Security and other social insurance programs, white workers were successfully integrated into a strong national welfare state. At the same time, African-Americans--then as now disproportionately poor--were relegated to the margins of the welfare state, through decentralized, often racist, public assistance programs. Over the next generation, these institutional differences had fateful consequences for African-Americans and their integration into American politics. Owing to its strong national structure, Social Security quickly became the closest thing we have to a universal, color-blind social program. On the other hand, public assistance--especially Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)--continued to treat African-Americans badly, while remaining politically weak and institutionally decentralized. Racial distinctions were thus built into the very structure of the American welfare state. By keeping poor blacks at arm's length while embracing white workers, national welfare policy helped to construct the contemporary political divisions--middle-class versus poor, suburb versus city, and white versus black--that define the urban underclass.

A true understanding of welfare, Robert C. Lieberman argues in his provocative book, requires a hard look not at stereotypes but at history. Built into the early architecture of social welfare programs, are nasty political fights and rigged compromises over race and class. To make his point, Lieberman plays bureaucratic archeologist, unearthing and comparing the administrative structures of three social welfare programs: Old-Age Insurance, Aid to Dependent Children, and Unemployment Insurance. *Shifting the Color Line* is an enlightening look at America's failure to ask, without racist or political motives, how poor people can make progress. The book is an intense history course that bypasses decades of deceptive rhetoric to get to the core issues of the welfare debate. (Alyssa Haywoode Boston Globe) Robert Lieberman sets out to explain a profound puzzle in the complicated history of race and the American welfare state. Lieberman combines historical and statistical analysis to show how and why. Clearly this book addresses issues of central importance to historians of race and social policy, and it does so with the kind of tightly argued thesis that is sure to stimulate further discussion and debate. He leaves us with important insights and evidence to build on in understanding the crucial, institutional dimensions of racial inequality. (Alice O'Connor *Social History*) This is a splendid book. Lieberman writes with confidence and verve. He makes real analytic progress on such crucial topics as the development of the American welfare state, contemporary debates about welfare and most important the interplay between welfare policies and race politics. Lieberman deploys the institutional model with enormous sophistication. He shows how a thoughtful historical approach can deepen our understanding of both American politics and public policy. (James A. Morone, Brown University) *Shifting the Color Line* is a giant leap forward in the analysis of American social policy, and will be recognized as an authoritative landmark for years to come. It is well-researched, well-written, and conceptually original and powerful. It will also be sure to excite controversy. (Rick Valezly, Swarthmore College) *Shifting the Color Line* is one of the best studies of race and social policy that I have read. Lieberman's analysis of the role of race in the development of America's peculiar welfare state and, in turn, the role of the welfare state in reshaping the politics of race is a tour de force. (William Julius Wilson, Harvard University) *Shifting the Color Line* is one of the best studies of race and social policy that I have read. Lieberman's analysis of the role of race in the development of America's peculiar welfare state and, in turn, the role of the welfare state in reshaping the politics of race is a tour de force. (William Julius Wilson, Harvard University) About the Author Robert C. Lieberman is Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at Johns Hopkins University.