Timely—as the 2012 presidential election nears—and controversial, here is the first book by a major African-American public intellectual on racial politics and the Obama presidency.


Kennedy tackles such hot-button issues as the nature of racial opposition to Obama, whether Obama has a singular responsibility to African Americans, electoral politics and cultural chauvinism, black patriotism, the differences in Obama’s presentation of himself to blacks and to whites, the challenges posed by the dream of a postracial society, and the far-from-simple symbolism of Obama as a leader of the Joshua generation in a country that has elected only three black senators and two black governors in its entire history.

Eschewing the critical excesses of both the left and the right, Kennedy offers a gimlet-eyed view of Obama’s triumphs and travails, his strengths and weaknesses, as they pertain to the troubled history of race in America.
As usual, Mr. Kennedy has written a levelheaded book that looks at the effects of the Obama Presidency on race relations. Readers who are of a conservative, jaded bend will likely view his assessment as some kind of liberal rant. Please do not be influenced by such shallow-minded reviews. I am a happily married, 51-year-old, Caucasian dad (and white wife) with two adopted boys (ages 13 and 11) who are African-American. All five of Mr. Kennedy's books have been very informative, well-reasoned works. The author gives a very accurate assessment of the emotions and political conflicts arising from the 2008 campaign and the first two years of President Obama's term. Not only does he call to task the President on various issues, he also empathizes with our first black Chief Executive having to walk a very fine line for political survival and effectiveness. Mr. Kennedy also gives credit where credit is due (such as Senator McCain's unwillingness to play the race card during the campaign as well as his wonderful concession speech) and lambasts liberal and conservative critics who apparently live in a world where the sky is orange and they only have one toe in reality. The author also covers such issues as the Reverend Wright imbroglio, accusations of playing the race card, the sham carnival show known as the Supreme Court Confirmation hearings, the Henry Louis Gates Jr. arrest with the silly Beer Summit, and an especially poignant, small section (pages 182-185, hardcover edition) about Mr. Kennedy's dad attitudes about patriotism. This is great stuff and truly enlightening. A wonderful educational tool.

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