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Liberal For Conservative Reasons: How To Stop Being Obnoxious And Start Winning Elections



Synopsis

We know from opinion polls that Americans basically agree with the liberal agenda. But on election day, they vote for conservatives. So what gives? Journalist Peter Rice argues that liberals cheat themselves out of victories by being annoying. They're all-too-quick to judge opponents as stupid, racist, insufficiently compassionate toward polar bears, and otherwise morally inferior. And they throw dry statistics and appeals to empathy at voters who are in no mood for either. In short, they sell liberal ideas with liberal values, which is about as effective as the guy at the dealership selling you a pickup by telling you about the fat commission he's got coming. Luckily, there's a simple solution: Use arguments that actually resonate with the other side. Be liberal, but for conservative reasons.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was great! This book was so well written that I've read it four times since ordering it in May. It offers thought-provoking insight and witty commentary about our current political climate in the United States. I'd really like to see a series of these books, if not, more political strategy in the clever words of Peter Rice.

A must read for all of the liberals (I'm a liberal). Mr. Rice has some very good solution on how we can win elections and how American's can embrace each other for the good of our country. I love the book!!

Full disclosure: Not only am I NOT a liberal, I'm probably closest to a libertarian. Now that I've put myself in that box, I'll try to work my way out of it to explain why this book took and kept my interest. And earned my respect! The recent presidential election has uncovered deeply held beliefs on all sides of the political spectrum that only their ideas are worthy of consideration. The "others" are wrong, nasty, incorrect people. I have spent a lot of time in recent months trying to get away from hate speech on all sides, which has seriously cut back on my social media time. I have lost and purposefully given up friends. I was skeptical that Rice's book would add much to the conversation. I was pleasantly surprised. At the beginning of the book I kept reading and thinking "I should have written this! I agree with that! This makes a lot of sense! Wish I had thought of that!" Rice tackles topics like poverty, Islam, refugees, health care, foreign trade, global warming and reframes them. Reframes them by explaining why the liberal arguments carry little to no weight with people who are not already sold on the liberal arguments. Liberal arguments are frankly, annoying as heck to those of us who don't share the basic ideas that all life should be "fair" (whatever that means) and that if anyone/ anywhere is harmed then automatically it's a terrible thing. This line of thinking is hardly going to appeal to people who believe that hard work can bring rewards, that not everyone needs or deserves a trophy for showing up, that people have a stake in making their own futures work, regardless of their present day circumstances and that we really, really don't want to pay for everyone else's problems all the time. As the book unfolded one of the features I liked the best is that Rice, short and sweet, laid out the usual liberal point of view, the condensed version of a conservative point of view and suggested a THIRD WAY -- the nexus point where a conservative could hear an argument they might agree with that is presented in a way that makes sense. Now we are talking -- literally. We do have plenty of room to agree once people get off their high horses and stop trying to pretend they are morally superior. Really. We all have a stake in who comes into the country, who lives here and how, school choices, birth control choices, trade policy. We are sharing the country and the planet with plenty of others, including non-human species. No matter where you think you are on the political spectrum this is a valid, candid, must read as we navigate the muddled waters of the late 2010's.

Reporter Peter Rice has learned how to talk to Conservatives and wants to share his secrets with big city liberals. Turns out that liberal moralizing is *really* annoying to conservatives, and that makes them vote Republican, even when they actually share common ground with liberals on many practical matters. Basically he is saying that liberals should treat red state territory like a

foreign country and be a good guest, avoiding touchy subjects, like that old advice to not talk politics or religion when visiting with certain relatives. This approach makes sense at first glance. Yet I was left with some nagging questions. Consider the success of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 60s and 70s. They both changed the conversation and the morality. They did not diplomatically submit to traditional red state morality and institution practices but confronted them head on. Now it is true that racism was not entirely vanquished, later re-emerging in the form of law and order mass incarceration of African Americans and now in the Trump administration, but it was a big step forward. Social change does not come easily or quickly, and Rice makes it clear that his Conservatives friends (obviously not poor people) really are very set in their ways, like time has passed them by. Sure, change is hard, but Rice does not dig deeply into why blue state people find it so much easier to understand climate change, for example, than red state people. Yet I immediately thought about the increasingly powerful conservative media a product of escalating economic inequality since 1980 and the more dominant role it has given to right wing billionaires like Murdoch and the Koch Brothers. And new guys, who are just as bad, are coming along to replace this old guard, like hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer, sponsor of Breitbart and Bannon. Those with plutocratic ambitions, along with powerful industries like oil, have gone to great lengths to hide Al Gore's Inconvenient Truths from as much of the public as they can and to buy as much political influence as they can. This has made the job of progressives far more difficult, as these big money interests shamelessly exploit and promote traditional prejudice and moralizing to get the tax breaks and deregulation that make them rich (at the expense of others). Rice gives numerous examples of practical arguments that won't offend Conservatives, even for hot button issues like abortion. Yet all the studies show that reasoned arguments often make little headway against ideology, or even reinforce it. Certainly I have always sought out practical arguments, yet I've come to the conclusion that what we really need is a shift in caring. Specifically, we need to really care about the working class, not just minorities, but the white working class too, which is justifiably angry at the loss of 10s of millions of good jobs. And this was no accident, as Thomas Frank explains in Listen Liberal. It's time to resurrect the old language of class, to talk about what really matters more today - class privilege, not diminishing white privilege. It's time to get serious about full employment and good jobs. And to go after Wall Street, monopolies, and billionaires tooth and nail, just like Bernie says. He can speak the languages of both working people and of liberals. I, for one, am confident that the red state / blue state divergence would rapidly disappear in conjunction with a de-escalation of inequality toward an egalitarian society, like those already achieved in Scandinavia.

Pragmatic Responses for "Bumfuzzled" Liberals! Peter Rice does a good job analyzing the frustration that many pragmatic progressives feel when talking to many of their liberal "true believer" associates. He makes compelling arguments that the moralizing and pretentiousness of many liberals, not only makes them insufferable in political conversation but also undermines their ability to excavate electoral victories out of the pliable middle of the electorate. He focuses on a topic that progressives have neglected for far too long, audience. Throughout his discussion he not only lays out common ground taking points but actual pragmatic policies that on one hand address liberal blind spots while serving to forward progressive ends (see Abortion chapter). At the end of the day you can't govern if you don't win elections so how do we do that with out selling our soul? Peter Rice has some suggestions. Oh, and you'll come off as a better person in the end.

It is refreshing to read political analysis that is both reasoned and not coming directly from one side or the other of our sharply divided society. Peter Rice's prose is witty and well thought out; political punditry could use more of his sensibilities.

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