

THE FIRST WORD

A Conversation about Race

A film by Craig Bodeker

Denver: New Century Productions, 2008

Reviewed by Greg Johnson

When a white person awakens to our race's peril, the first impulse – and the first duty – is to try to awaken others. But where to begin? Becoming a white nationalist often takes years of experience, reflection, and reading. And one has to find one's courage along the way too. How does one condense all that into talking points? Big books like Wil-mot Robertson's *The Dispossessed Majority* may well be the last word on these matters. But what is the first word? How do we begin the conversation? We live in an increasingly post-literate society, so for most people books are not the place to start, big books especially.

This is why I highly recommend Craig Bodeker's masterful 58 minute documentary *A Conversation about Race*. It is an ideal first step on the road to racial awakening.

Bodeker posted an advertisement on Craigslist in Denver under the heading "Ending Racism Now," then interviewed respondents on film. He also did "man on the street" interviews. The interviewees who made the final cut are a very diverse group. About half of them are black, including two blacks in inter-racial relationships. Most of the rest are white, with a couple of Hispanics or Amerindians thrown in.

The premise of Bodeker's film is that he is responding to Barack Obama's call for a national conversation about race.

His first question is about the pervasiveness of racism. His respondents all agree that racism is everywhere. He then focuses on the definition of racism, comparing what his sources say to definitions drawn from Wikipedia and standard dictionaries. Initially, I found this concern for definitions and piety towards dictionaries silly. But my objections vanished once I realized that Bodeker was merely trying to show just how astonishingly vague people's understanding of racism is.

Some interviewees seemed to think that any form of distinction-making is racist, which probably explains why discrimination against

women, homosexuals, and poor people was defined as racism, even when no racial distinctions were involved. Others regarded drawing generalizations about groups based on experience and using these generalizations to predict future experience as racism. Still others seemed to think that any judgment that one person or group is better than another is racist—although subsequent questioning yielded significant exceptions. When racism is defined at this level of generality, cognition itself—perception, generalization, induction, evaluation—becomes morally objectionable. On this account, to be a non-racist is to be brain-dead.

Because of the vagueness of the definitions, Bodeker asked for concrete examples of racism in day to day life. Again, the answers are astonishing. Whites excoriated themselves as racist for noticing the existence of blacks and drawing generalizations about them based on experience. In short, for whites, racism is simply race-consciousness.

For blacks, however, day to day racism seems largely to be a form of self-consciousness, i.e., feeling conspicuous and out of place in white society. Blacks complained about whites staring at them, being overly friendly and solicitous, giving them compliments, not laughing at their jokes (although some blacks would probably describe laughing at their jokes as racist too), and being afraid of them (because of black criminality). That's it. No slurs, no lynchings, just feeling self-conscious.

I drew two lessons from this segment of the film.

First, if a large part of the black experience of racism amounts to feeling self-conscious in the presence of whites, how much of this is due to whites and how much is due to blacks themselves? Frankly, several of Bodeker's black informants seem to have chips on their shoulders, i.e., pre-existing grievances against whites that cause them to view even innocuous white behavior in a jaundiced manner. One might even say they have prejudices against whites.

Second, who are these overly friendly and solicitous whites who make blacks feel so self-conscious? Do these whites think of themselves as racists or as anti-racists? I would lay odds that 99 percent are liberal anti-racists, who think that simply by going out of their way to be *nice* they can charm sullen blacks into acting like white people, absolve themselves of the sin of racism, and demonstrate their good faith and intentions. It is ironic that such liberal solicitousness is the primary example of day to day racism cited by Bodeker's black informants. Presumably, whites who genuinely dislike blacks will *not* go out of their way to be nice to them, and so will not be perceived as racists.

Bodeker rightly dismisses his informants' definitions of racism as vague and their concrete examples as trivial. From that point on, his focus is not the definition of racism, but the double standards that govern its use. Bodeker shows that all people are "racists," to the extent the term has any meaning at all, but only white people are excoriated for it. The charge of "racism," therefore, functions merely as a club to intimidate whites into not looking out for their own ethnic interests. Thus, although *A Conversation about Race* can be viewed with profit by people of all races, whites clearly have the most to gain from it, and Bodeker frankly takes our own side and does not pretend to be impartial.

His first demonstration of the double standard is quite entertaining. He asks if blacks are better than whites at basketball, on the average. His interviewees do not hesitate to answer yes.¹ He then asks if whites are better at some things than blacks. (He asks one young white woman if white men are better at keeping jobs and paying bills than black men.) The reaction is very different. Not one of the respondents gives a simple yes. One white woman grants that it is conceivable that whites might be better than blacks at *something*, but claims she has no idea of what that would be. The double standard is breathtaking: the conventional wisdom on race has no problem with the idea of racial superiority, as long as it is not whites who are superior.

Presumably since none of his informants could come up with a single example of something whites do better than blacks, Bodeker suggests one: whites perform better than blacks on intelligence tests. It was surprising to see how many interviewees explained this away on the grounds that such tests are created by white people and thus culturally biased toward them. Whites, in short, do better only because they stack the deck. Clearly, our enemies are doing a very good job of propagating their ideas.

Bodeker's follow-up question is brilliant: if white performance on intelligence tests is explained by cultural bias, then why do Asians outperform whites on the same tests? It is amusing to see the gibbering this elicits. Again, the double standard is remarkable: when whites outperform blacks on intelligence tests, this result needs to be explained away as cultural bias, not taken at face value; when Asians outperform

¹ TOQ's own J. B. Cash argues that this is not true, but that the college and professional basketball teams in the United States systematically discriminate against white players. See J. B. Cash, "The Racial Caste-System in Sports," *The Occidental Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 37-48. Also see his website, <http://castefootball.us>.

whites, cultural bias is never suggested. Again, people have no problem with racial superiority, as long as it is not white superiority.

Another important segment of the film deals with black criminality. When asked whether whites are right to fear blacks, and whether blacks commit proportionately more crimes than whites, the white interviewees are reluctant to agree and tend to avoid the question by making excuses. The blacks, however, readily answered yes. I found this surprising and really rather admirable. Blacks also frankly admitted that other blacks intentionally intimidate whites. But they also made excuses for it, claiming that it is a response to white misdeeds.

Bodeker cites truly shocking interracial rape statistics: in the United States in 2005, 37,000 white women were raped by blacks, while in the same period “fewer than ten” black women were raped by whites. (The odd locution “fewer than ten” rather than a specific number leads me to think that the number could be zero, but that the statistical margin of error is ten.) Bodeker then makes another brilliant point: according to the conventional wisdom on racism, we are supposed to be worried if, on any given day, a white person somewhere in America is harboring racist attitudes towards blacks; but if one is concerned that, on the very same day, one hundred white women are being raped by blacks, that is racism most foul.

Bodeker also deals with the question of collective racial guilt. He shows handily that blacks and whites are willing to impute collective racial guilt to whites for enslaving blacks and ethnically cleansing American Indians, even through many white Americans, like Craig Bodeker, are descended from people who never held slaves or fought Indians. Yet none of his interviewees were willing to give collective *credit* to whites for the good things about the United States, even though this society was founded by whites and for whites. Moreover, Bodeker points out that the same people who assign collective guilt to whites for black slavery and the ethnic cleansing of American Indians, tend to ascribe collective *innocence* to their putative victims, even though blacks also practiced slavery and American Indians also slaughtered one another for land. Finally, Bodeker points out that Whites today are assigned collective guilt for what other whites did long ago, but if one suggested that blacks are collectively guilty of the crimes committed by blacks today, that would be branded racism.

Another double standard Bodeker explores concerns racial advocacy. In America today, Mexican mestizos, united under the banner of “La Raza,” advocate the ethnic cleansing of whites from vast areas of

the United States. This is not condemned as racism. Instead, that epithet is reserved for whites who object to their ethnic displacement. Bodeker points out the existence of black advocates like Jesse Jackson, but none of his interviewees can name a white advocate. When Bodeker asks a white woman about white nationalists, she says she does not appreciate such groups, but pauses to say that she can relate to their sense of loss. Clearly any form of white advocacy would be branded racism.

Bodeker deals squarely with the long-term consequences of this double standard: white dispossession. If whites, and only whites, are intimidated by the charge of racism from protecting their own ethnic interests, while other ethnic groups are emboldened to pursue their interests at our expense, we will eventually lose what we have: our wealth, our power, our culture, our values, our country, and eventually our very existence, once we become a minority in the land our people created and scapegoats for the failures of the non-white majority.

When Bodeker asks his interviewees about the possibility of their own group being displaced by newcomers, the answers are remarkable. When a white woman is asked what she thinks about whites becoming a minority, the only alternative she can envision is outright white extinction through miscegenation, the creation of a completely homogeneous mongrel race. In short, if one wants to avoid the charge of being a racist, whites must meekly consent to subordination or extinction. Anything else would be immoral. From a biological point of view, such suicidal moralism is a sickness that might indeed doom our race to extinction. Do these people think that a warm feeling of moral superiority will survive their physical annihilation?

When Bodeker asked blacks about their displacement by immigrants from Mexico and Central America, however, their answers surprised me: "Send them back!" "Close the border, build a wall." "They're here bleeding our social services, using our hospitals, without contributing anything to our society." "They come here and don't even speak English. If we went to their country, we would have to adapt." "Cinco Dos Adios. They'd be gone. No problem. They'd be gone. Oh Lawd!" Say what you like about black IQ, these attitudes indicate that blacks may be better adapted for survival than we are. As a friend who viewed the documentary with me quipped, "Maybe it won't be so bad to have a black president after all!"

Clearly the prospects for a harmonious multicultural rainbow utopia are quite dim. More diversity just means more conflict and hatred.

Bodeker's powerful conclusion is the story of how he himself became

a believer in the toxic doctrine of white guilt. He does not describe how he freed himself from it, but I am confident that for many years to come, white people will point to *A Conversation about Race* and say that their awakening began here.

It is interesting to study the faces of Bodeker's white interviewees, particularly a young woman named Tina and an older woman named Mary Ann: one can *see* their minds opening; one can *see* the cognitive dissonance between the facts and arguments offered by Bodeker and the conventional wisdom about racism.

A Conversation about Race is all the more impressive when one learns that this is Craig Bodeker's first film—the first, I hope, of many. It was created on a shoestring budget and put together almost entirely on a home computer. It does not look expensive and slick, but neither does it look cheap and amateurish. It is well-edited, well-paced, and consistently engaging, with simple, hip-sounding music. It is proof that while money is no substitute for good taste, good taste can often substitute for money.

Bodeker also has an appealing onscreen persona. He looks like the recovering liberal that he is, which allows a large target audience to relate to him. He comes across as self-assured but laid-back and non-threatening, personable but not glad-handling, serious but not forbidding. He is proof that one can talk about uncomfortable facts and defend radical positions as long as one is soft-spoken and reasonable. It is encouraging to see people of this caliber openly questioning the racial dogmas of our time. This is a talent to be encouraged and emulated.

I have two suggestions. First, I hope Bodeker makes the raw interviews available online. Not only would they be entertaining and informative, but it would also deflect any charges that the interviews were cherry picked and edited to slant or change their meaning. This film is too important to allow anyone to sow doubts about its credibility. Second, how about *A Conversation about Diversity*?

You can order *A Conversation about Race* for \$20, including postage in the United States, at <http://www.aconversationaboutrace.com/>. The website also contains excerpts from the film, reviews, and interviews with Craig Bodeker.

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