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Sommario/riassunto	A number of arguments have been made to explain the relative weakness of the American Left. A preference for individualism, the effects of prosperity, and the miscalculations of different components of the Left, including the labor movement, have been cited, among other factors, as possible explanations for this puzzling aspect of American exceptionalism. But these arguments, says Richard Iton, overlook a crucial factor--the powerful influence of race upon American life. Iton argues that the failure of the American Left lies in its inability to come to grips with the centrality of race