



## **Lewis R. Gordon**

### **Topics**

Activism and Social Justice, Best Selling and Award Winning Authors, Diversity and Inclusion

### **Travels From**

Connecticut

### **Bio**

Lewis R. Gordon is a philosopher, musician, and public intellectual dedicated to struggles for dignity, freedom, social justice, across the globe. His writings address human beings' relationships to reality and the many ways they abuse power in their attempt to avoid it. These evasions include dehumanizing practices ranging from racism to sexism to colonialism and anti-democracy. Gordon has lectured and performed music over the past three decades on every continent except Antarctica. He speaks to communities in all walks of life: from those in academic to community centers; international political organizations to arts collectives and festivals; urban centers to remote rural villages; from state dignitaries to workers collectives and those among the incarcerated. An award-winning author and scholar, Gordon has held distinguished academic appointments in the United States in such institutions as Brown University, Temple University, and Yale University, and in other countries such as Brazil, France, Jamaica, India, The Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, and the UK. He lectured widely across the Caribbean and Latin America in his role as the first president of the Caribbean Philosophical

Association and in his recent ones of Honorary President of the Global Center for Advanced Studies. As a musician and a cook, he has integrated musical performance, dance, and food—including having cooked for celebrations, festivals, and varieties of communities—into many of his lectures.

## SPEECHES

**On the Fear of Black Consciousness** This talk examines Black consciousness as a reality and truth of which many contemporary societies, many of which center whiteness and are antiblack, fear to the point of waging a war against it and its implications of democracy and political responsibility. The speaker draws on themes from his book *Fear of Black Consciousness*.

**On Black Music** Black music is a testament to the quest for freedom, maturity wrought from facing life's contradictions, and affirmations of life. This talk explores these themes through discussions of the blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll, reggae, and hip hop in conversations with varieties of other global forms of Black music. The speaker draws on his knowledge as a musician (percussions, including piano), a scholar of Black music, and a philosopher.

**Black Existentialism** This talk explains what Black existentialism is: a philosophy of dignity, freedom, and social transformation for livable lives. This is done through exploring three questions: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be free? And what can we do when even justifications are in need of justification? The speaker is the leading scholar of Black existentialism.

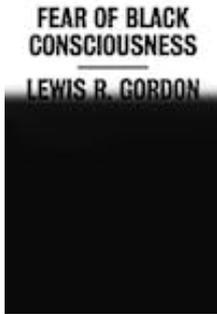
**Decolonizing Universities** This talk addresses the emergence of universities as colonial projects and, through drawing upon its historic predecessors, presents a case for the possibility of future advanced, pluralistic learning communities. In the course of the talk, the speaker invites the audience to rethink concepts such as “disciplines,” “education,” “research,” and “schools.” The speaker draws upon his experience of founding a school for rejected students, founding learning and research centers, departments, institutes, and academic associations.

**Jews in Living Color** This talk summarizes the historical diversity of Jewish people and then examines the ways in which that diversity was erased both through imperial absorption of Jewish people and from varieties of Jewish people adopting misrepresentations of Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life. The talk demonstrates there is no contradiction between being Jewish and of color, with a focus on Black Jews. The speaker was the founder of the Center for Afro-Jewish Studies.

**African Diasporic Jewish Studies** This talk explains African Diasporic Jewish Studies—its themes, its history, and its importance for understanding ancient and contemporary Jewish life. The speaker was the founder of the Center for Afro-Jewish Studies.

**Racism as a Form of Bad Faith** This talk outlines the speaker's work on racism as a form of lie about reality and institutions of power. The talk offers a multidimensional examination of the forms of invisibility racism and related dehumanizing practices produce. This talk builds upon the speaker's forty years of experience in antiracist struggles.

## BOOKS



Hardcover

[Fear of Black Consciousness](#)

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

In this original and penetrating work, Lewis R. Gordon, one of the leading scholars of Black existentialism and anti-Blackness, takes the reader on a journey through the historical development of racialized Blackness, the problems this kind of consciousness produces, and the many creative responses from Black and non-Black communities in contemporary struggles for dignity and freedom.

**REVIEWS: Praise for *Fear of Black Consciousness*** “Lewis Gordon’s expansive philosophical engagement with the current moment—its histories and globalities, its politics and protests, its visual and sonic cultures—reminds us that the ultimate aim of Black freedom quests is, indeed, universal liberation.”  
—Angela Y. Davis, Distinguished Professor Emerita, History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies at University of California, Santa Cruz

“Reading *Fear of Black Consciousness* had me nodding so often and so vigorously, I got a mild case of whiplash. With surgical precision, laser-sharp wit, and the eye of an artist, Lewis R. Gordon doesn’t just dissect race, racism, and racial thinking; he also offers a clarion call to embrace Black consciousness, to take political responsibility for decolonizing and transforming the world as it is.”

—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original*

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“Lewis R. Gordon is a thinker whose reflections on race have produced singular illuminations on our times. In *Fear of Black Consciousness*, he refines our conceptual understanding of how race consciousness is made and lived, and shows how reflection and survival are intertwined for all those who suffer from antiblack racism. Drawing on the history of philosophy and on a wide range of colonial histories, African popular culture, aboriginal histories, contemporary films, and stories, he shows the critical powers of creativity in dismantling racism and the making of a world where breath and love and existence become possible.”

—Judith Butler, author of *The Force of Nonviolence*

“This striking text offers the first systematic examination that I’ve seen of the epistemic dimensions of the universal illness that encompasses neoconservatism and neoliberalism. We learn the differences between a first-level, naive black consciousness and a revised and refined ‘Black consciousness,’ which critically reflects on this world and is capable of radically transforming it. You will want this book among your primary intellectual road supplies for the future.”

—Hortense J. Spillers, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English Emerita at Vanderbilt University

"In *Fear of Black Consciousness*, we are invited to think through the deep racial contours of philosophical thought and notice how black ways of being animate new modes of living together. As atrocity, injury, white supremacy, and racial violence loom, Gordon holds steady a Fanonian outlook, theorizing black consciousness as the realization of possibility—that is, a sustained political commitment that recalculates the stakes of freedom."

—Katherine McKittrick, author of *Demonic Grounds and Dear Science*