

Praise for *The Racial Contract*

“This is a significant and compelling work. In the modest compass of an extended essay, Mills succeeds in altering our view of a central strand of modern political thought, the social contract tradition. . . . [H]is most accurate characterization of his enterprise comes, I believe, toward the end of the book when he places it in the tradition of radical enlightenment critique. . . . To this enterprise Mills has made a major contribution.”—*Ethics*

“This is an ambitious little book, as it seeks to place race at the very center of political theory. . . . For those who agree that issues of race and racial justice demand far more attention from political theorists than they are currently receiving, the book is a welcome contribution. By showing the systematic and deeply embedded nature of racism in modern Western political theory and practice, Mills demonstrates that racist policies and ideas are not unfortunate divergences from the general rule of race neutrality but are themselves the rule in Western culture. In the process, Mills provides an analytical framework that connects claims for domestic racial justice and those for international justice. In all these respects the book is an important contribution to current discussions about justice in both realms.”—*American Political Science Review*

“Mills [argues that] most [white people] are still unknowingly influenced by a history of white supremacist philosophies and ideals that undergird our most basic assumptions about personhood and natural rights. But what Mills wants to drive home in his terse, thoughtful book is that white people can change their minds. If they are honest with themselves and non-whites about the importance of race in shaping political and moral culture in the West, they will be one step closer to knowing what people of color have known all along. . . . They will know that racial inequality is not some accidental detour on the road to perfect political justice. Racial inequality is built into the structure of liberal-democratic politics itself.”—*New York Press*

“The objective of this book . . . is nothing less than the reshaping of liberal political philosophy from the bottom up. . . . Mills contends that the ground zero of Western democratic societies is not the mythical social contract that has prevailed among political philosophers . . . but a ‘racial contract.’ . . . In short, we have a white supremacist world because ‘whites’ have agreed to make it so. The revisionary power of this move is evident.”—*The Nation*

“So (seemingly) simple and straightforward, yet quite nicely nuanced, Charles Mills’s *The Racial Contract* is a highly accessible book on an inflammatory topic. He has succeeded brilliantly where so many others have failed.”

—*Nell Irvin Painter, Princeton University*

“Mills’s work on the Racial Contract is a major contribution to modern critical social and political thought, and will become an important, widely discussed work. It exposes, to devastating effect, the unacknowledged racial presuppositions of the entire social contract tradition, which is to say, all of liberal political theory for the past four centuries.”

—Robert Paul Wolff, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

“Fish don’t see water, men don’t see patriarchy, and white philosophers don’t see white supremacy. We can do little about fish. Carole Pateman and others have made the sexual contract visible for those who care to look. Now Charles Mills has made it equally clear how whites dominate people of color, even (or especially) when they have no such intention. He asks whites not to feel guilty, but rather to do something much more difficult—understand and take responsibility for a structure which they did not create but still benefit from.”

—Jennifer Hochschild, Princeton University

“Like Melville’s *Benito Cereno*, this short, explosive book unflinchingly explores the centrality of race—both in its utterly open brutality and in its remarkable ability to remain hidden—to the history of the Western nation-state. Sure to provoke a heated debate far beyond the field of political philosophy, this bold and wide-ranging study makes a clear and convincing case for the view that systemic racial oppression was not an anomaly sullyng otherwise universalistic assumptions about individual rights, but the context in which theorizing about such rights occurred.”

—David Roediger, University of Minnesota

“Charles Mills’s treatment of the biases in western philosophy in *The Racial Contract* is a tour de force.”

—Award Statement, Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Bigotry and Human Rights in North America

“To take the arguments that Mills makes in *The Racial Contract* seriously is to be prepared to rethink the concept of race and the structure of our political systems. This is a very important book indeed, and should be a welcome addition to the ongoing discussions surrounding social contract theory. . . . It would be an excellent critical complement to any course that covers the history of social contract theory or that deals with issues surrounding race and racism.”—*Teaching Philosophy*

CHARLES W. MILLS

The Racial Contract



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**This book is dedicated to the blacks, reds, browns, and yellows
who have resisted the Racial Contract
and the white renegades and race traitors
who have refused it.**

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