

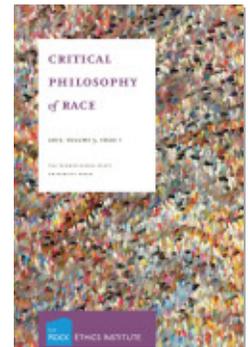


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of Charles Mills

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**SMADDITIZIN' ACROSS
THE YEARS**

*Race and Class in the Work
of Charles Mills*

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**CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF RACE,
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Abstract

This article analyzes the changing relationship of race and class in the work of Charles Mills. Mills tells the story of his career by tracing an arc “from class to race,” which includes “an evolution of both focus and approach” that shifts the terms of his work “from red to black.” The article complicates this story by reading Mills’s evolution through an intersectional lens. An intersectional approach to Mills’s work allows a better appreciation (as he would agree) of how he does not move from class to race in the sense of abandoning the former for the latter, nor in the sense that race is utterly absent from his earlier work on class. Race and class are entangled with each other, and with gender and other axes of identity and power, in complex ways throughout his corpus. Mills’s work remains red in certain respects—sometimes problematically from an intersectional perspective—even as it takes on black concerns and perspectives. On the flip side, as the end of the article asks, can Mills’s work remain sufficiently red—that is, explicitly grapple with class concerns—as it tries to add some color to a whitewashed liberalism?

Keywords: Charles Mills, race, class, intersectionality, liberalism

What would a convincing Marxist theory of race be like?

—CHARLES MILLS, “*Under Class Under Standings*” (1994)

Liberalism in general (both nationally and internationally) has been shaped by race, but that does not preclude reclaiming it.

—CHARLES MILLS, “*Occupy Liberalism!*” (2012)

In this article, I analyze the changing relationship of race and class in the work of Charles Mills. Well-known, of course, for his work on race and global white supremacy, especially in *The Racial Contract*, Mills’s research initially focused on class, and Marxism in particular, for the first nine years after he received his Ph.D. in 1985. Mills himself tells the story of his career this way, tracing an arc “from class to race” (as his 2003 collection is titled) that includes “an evolution both of focus and approach.”¹ As he commented in 1999 about the reasons for this evolution, “the irony . . . is that in the United States the Marxist material mode of group identification in a society does not work for class but works very well for race.”² For this reason, Mills shifts the terms of his work “from red to black.”³

I want to complicate the story that Mills tells, however, reading his evolution through an intersectional lens. Rooted in black feminism, intersectionality does not concern only black women, nor is it restricted to race and gender. Instead, it grapples with the various and entangled relationships of power, privilege, and oppression that help constitute all of us, whatever our gender or race.⁴ (I will return to the topic of intersectionality below.) An intersectional approach to Mills’s work will allow us to better appreciate how he does not move from class to race in the sense of abandoning the former for the latter, nor in the sense that race is utterly absent from his earlier work on class. Race and class are entangled with each other (and with gender and other axes of identity and power) in complex ways throughout his corpus. Mills’s work remains red in certain respects—sometimes problematically from an intersectional perspective—even as it takes on black concerns and perspectives. On the flip side, as I will ask at the end of this article, can Mills’s work remain sufficiently red—that is, explicitly grapple with class concerns—as it tries to add some color to a whitewashed liberalism?

The Early Years of Smadditizin’

The year 1994 is pivotal for my purposes here. In terms of his productivity, it was a very good year for Mills—with many others to follow, of

course—in that he published more articles that year (six) than in any other twelve-month period in his career. It also is a year when the “evolution,” or entanglement of race and class in his work is most obviously concentrated. The range of essays published that year is telling. It began in March with “The Moral Epistemology of Stalinism,” followed in June and July by “Do Black Men Have a Moral Duty to Marry Black Women?” and “Under Class Under Standings,” and it concluded in September with the publication of “Marxism, ‘Ideology,’ and Moral Objectivism,” “Non-Cartesian *Sums*: Philosophy and the African-American Experience,” and “Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy.”⁵ The primary concerns that connect these six essays and that also bridge most of Mills’s work are relatedly ontological, epistemological, and psychological. They focus on personhood and the processes by which personhood—and corresponding structures of knowledge and moral understanding—is created and/or denied. This is no abstract problem for Mills. It is deeply political, sometimes personal, and always tied to concrete experiences, historical realities, and practices of resistance.

I would characterize Mills’s overall philosophical project as one of *smadditizin’*, to use a Jamaican creole term that is the title of one of Mills’s 1997 articles.⁶ *Smadditizin’* is “a struggle over who is and who is not to be counted as fully human”; more precisely, it is “the struggle to have one’s personhood *recognized*.”⁷ *Smadditizin’* thus combats what Mills will call in 2001 “the original injustice” from which economic, juridico-political, cultural, somatic-aesthetic, cognitive-epistemological, and all other injustices follow: the injustice of failing to respect the personhood of another.⁸ It involves a “refusal of ontological elimination [which] is an affirmation simultaneously of individual and group existence.”⁹ Whether a classic Marxist, a black radical race theorist, or (most recently) an advocate of racial liberalism, Mills has been *smadditizin’* for the sake of subpersons across the globe for close to thirty years. (See the appendix to this article for an overview of Mills’s career with respect to the themes of class and race.)

The word “*smadditizin’*” is derived from the English word “somebody,” as in to be or to become somebody.¹⁰ The opposite of this situation is to be a nobody, someone who doesn’t count. “To be a ‘somebody’ in this sense,” as Mills explains, “means to be located on or above a certain run on the social ladder.”¹¹ But the English translation is misleading, Mills argues, because *smadditizin’* refers to those who aren’t even on the ladder. The question of whether they are above or below a certain rung doesn’t quite fit their situation—it begs an important ontological question—since their existence isn’t acknowledged. For that reason, Mills claims, *smadditizin’*

addresses “a *deeper* reality” than does the snobby language of somebodies and nobodies. And that means on Mills’s account that with smadditizin’ “we’re not talking about class, but about race.”¹² Race is the reality that “is properly called ontological” and thus most fundamentally deals with questions of personhood, not class.¹³

I claimed just a moment ago that Mills has been smadditizin’ from the first days of his career, which could suggest that Mills also has focused explicitly on race from the first days of his career. That suggestion would be off track, since the early Mills identified with classic Marxism, but I nonetheless will stick with the claim. Admittedly, Mills’s first publication, a 1985 article on the concept of ideology in Marx and Engels, did not yet take up issues of personhood.¹⁴ That did not occur until September 1994, with the simultaneous publication of “Non-Cartesian Sums” and “Revisionist Ontologies.” As Mills later explains about his own work, his first published essay argued that “the conventional spectrum of opinion on what Marx and Engels meant by ‘ideology’ is quite wrong, [and] that their own notion of ‘ideology’ is in fact of little use to a modern audience.”¹⁵ Mills sought to show that “ideology” doesn’t mean class ideas in general, and it isn’t restricted to ideas. It instead means everything noneconomic and thus superstructural, including things like the state and the juridical system.¹⁶

Reflecting on his first essay seven years later, in 1992, Mills draws out the ontology that is implied by Marx and Engels’s distinction between economic base and noneconomic superstructure. Corresponding with ideology is the troubling existence of so-called “ideologists,” who are any and all who work in the superstructure. Mills explains that “what is far less recognized is that Marx and Engels also developed a categorization of people based on this distinction [between base and superstructure]: people occupationally performed either base/economic labor or superstructural/noneconomic [and thus “unproductive”] labor.”¹⁷ Hand in hand with this ontological division, based in labor, is a difference in moral psychology. What ideologists see and understand in the world is very different from what base laborers comprehend. In a phrase that anticipates Mills’s later (1997) development of an epistemology of racialized ignorance, he asks, “Can there by any doubt that being an ‘ideologist’ implies *not* ‘taking the world as it is’?”¹⁸ Ideologists are saddled with an “occupational hazard” that makes them “inclined to propose sociologically inverted theories of society” without being able to realize their error.¹⁹ Communism would bring an end to ideology and eliminate the ontological category of ideologist.

In my view, Mills is preparing in his 1985 essay for the smadditizin' that his work in the 1990s and onward will do. He is laying the groundwork for an upcoming fight against the ontological elimination of black people. On the one hand, the Mills of 1985 likely would have said that race is superstructural, not part of the base. On the other hand, as Mills retrospectively observes in 1992, this early essay's rejection of "the one-dimensional, class-reductionist, and ultimately quite absurd polarization of (Marxist proletarian) science versus (non-Marxist bourgeois) ideology" opens up "a conceptual space . . . for the recognition of ideas fitting into neither category and of systems of domination other than class, with all their accompanying intellectual products."²⁰ These other ideas and intellectual products include personhood. Even though concerns about personhood would be considered superstructural on a classic Marxist account, the Mills of 1985 was only one step away from claiming that the elimination of ideology and the ideologist doesn't necessarily mean the elimination of race theory and race theorists.

When Mills thus posits in 1997 that smadditizin' addresses an original racial injustice connected to personhood, what occurs is not so much a complete break with his earlier work, but a transformation in its central concerns. Race is woven in and quickly becomes the dominant thread in the Millsian knot of race and class. This will lead Mills to claim in 2003—heretically, from a classic Marxist perspective—that race is fully material and, in fact, in some ways is "more deeply material than class."²¹ But the Marxist strands of his early thinking do not disappear. In fact, as I will argue, in some respects the further that Mills "evolves" away from class to race, the more firmly committed he remains to certain key tenants of Marxism, such as its base-superstructure model. Smadditizin' contrasts with Marxism in that it primarily concerns race, but it holds firmly to the Marxist idea that one form of oppression is more significant than all others.

Intersectionality and the Oppression Symmetry Thesis

Because it ranks forms of oppression, Mills's development of smadditizin' potentially clashes with an intersectional understanding of personhood and race. This is most evident in his 1999 rejection of what he calls the Oppression Symmetry Thesis.²² The Oppression Symmetry Thesis (OST), which Mills states is held by many radicals, all poststructuralists, probably most feminists, and basically just about everyone who isn't an

unreconstructed Marxist, posits a moral and/or causal symmetry between all forms of oppression, particularly the Big Three of race, gender, and class.²³ OST's moral claim is that all forms of oppression are equally morally bad, and its causal claim is that all forms of oppression are equally significant or powerful in terms of structuring society. Mills argues that OST is false. In his view, not only are some forms of oppression worse than others—Mills gives the example of Nazi Germany's slaughtering of Jews and Romani versus the (mere) confinement of women to traditionally feminine roles in the home—but also some forms of oppression are more causally important than others. When push comes to shove, some forms of oppression systematically trump or override other forms of oppression. For the later Mills, race is the trump card that beats out gender and class when a person's group interests come into conflict with each other. Mills offers as evidence the fact that the wives and daughters of "invading white male settlers" identified with their husbands and fathers rather than with the wives and daughters of Native Americans or enslaved Africans. Likewise, Mills argues, race historically has trumped class when white workers failed to form alliances with black, Native American, and other workers of color.²⁴ In the United States, Mills claims, "it is (perceived) *racial* group interests, not class [or gender] interests, that have been the most important motivator in shaping people's decision making. Racial self-identification and group solidarity have generally trumped other identities and group belongings," making race "the most important shaper of whites' lifeworlds."²⁵

Even as he shifts emphasis from class to race across his work, Mills thus retains a key component of classic Marxism, which is the belief in a primary contradiction in a society that is its most important dynamic factor generating change over time. As Mills himself realizes, the term "primary contradiction" might sound too Maoist, and thus something like "Race as a Differential Causal Significance in a Society of Multiple Systems of Oppression" might work just as well.²⁶ Less clunkily, we might label Mills's 1999 position the Oppression Asymmetry Thesis (OAT). For Mills, there is an "asymmetry between race and other systems of domination in the United States."²⁷ What has stalled socialism in the United States and as a global movement, leaving our world as much pre-Marxist as it is post-Marxist, is the European specter of race, which "remains . . . unexercised."²⁸ Although "there are secondary intraracial conflicts of class and gender," Mills acknowledges, "they take place within a larger structure of white racial domination, which white workers and white women benefit from and generally support."²⁹

Reading Mills's work through an intersectional lens entails rejecting OAT, but this rejection does not mean endorsing its opposite (or rather, flip side), OST. First, it's important to realize that intersectionality need not be committed to any kind of claim about the symmetry of different forms of oppression. In its most streamlined form, intersectionality examines how social hierarchies and identities, such as race, gender, and class, "mutually construct one another," period.³⁰ Intersectionality is far richer than this streamlined definition can capture, but the point is that intersectionality's claim about co-constitution is not a claim that different forms of oppression are morally or causally equal. From the perspective of intersectionality, the main problem with the symmetry claims of OST is that to make those claims, OST implicitly considers race, gender, class, sexuality, and other axes of existence to be fundamentally distinct and separable from each other—and this is precisely the position that intersectionality challenges. The same problem plagues OAT, which from the viewpoint of intersectionality turns out to be the flip side of the same coin as OST. Whether symmetrical or asymmetrical, the comparisons made by OST and OAT implicitly work with an additive model of oppression that intersectionality refuses.

The pop-bead logic that underlies what I've dubbed Mills's Oppression Asymmetry Thesis is the same logic at work in some white feminist's claims, such as that of Gloria Steinem during the 2008 American presidential election, that "gender is probably the most restricting force in American life."³¹ Like Mills, Steinem points to select historical facts to buttress her claim that sexism isn't taken as seriously as racism is in the United States. For example, "black men were giving the vote a half-century before women of any race were allowed to mark a ballot, and generally have ascended to positions of power, from the military to the boardroom, before any women."³² While these claims are true, Steinem's pitting of gender against race invisibilizes many of the ways that they are inseparable. As Kathryn Gines points out, Steinem doesn't discuss how white terrorist violence prevented in practice what the law supposedly allowed: black men were prevented from going to the voting booth just as effectively as black women were.³³ Even though Steinem claims she is "not advocating a competition for who has it toughest," she subtly criticizes younger (white?) women who allegedly are in denial about the ongoing existence of sexism and for that reason took the supposedly less radical approach of supporting Barack Obama instead of Hilary Clinton in the 2008 election.³⁴

So which axis of oppression is the most significant, gender or race? The best answer, I would claim, is not to reply, since "if you 'ask an additive

question, [you] get an additive answer.”³⁵ Blanket claims concerning the primacy of any form of oppression—whether race, class, gender, or whatever and even if restricted to the United States³⁶—tend to turn into unproductive pissing matches. They divert energy, affect, intellect, and other resources into fights between folks who should be partners in resistance against multiple, interlocking forms of oppression. I think Steinem falls into this trap and that Mills is in danger of doing the same by utilizing the pop-bead logic of additive understandings of race and class. Giving up that logic, and the pissing match that goes with it, would help better open up his work to intersectional understandings of the role of, for example, gender and sexuality in global white capitalism. In my view, avoiding additive understandings of oppression will be an important factor in—one might even say a crucial test of—the success of Mills’s development of racial liberalism, now that he has moved away from black radicalism/Marxism. The additive model of social structures and identities used by a Marxist base-superstructure model is an element of Marxism that should be discarded, even as there were and are other valuable aspects to Marxism that Mills happily has retained, such as its insistence on a social rather than an atomistic individual ontology.

Interestingly, the early Mills who identified as a classic Marxist did not always operate with an additive understanding of class and race, making some of his classic Marxist work surprisingly less Marxist than his later work on this particular point. The key difference here lies in the distinguishing features of the Caribbean in contrast, for example, with the United States. In 1987 Mills published his third journal article, “Race and Class: Conflicting or Reconcilable Paradigms?,” which criticizes Jamaican poet and social anthropologist M. G. Smith’s cultural pluralism in defense of Marxism.³⁷ As part of his criticism, Mills reviews a number of contemporary Marxist accounts that take up race in fairly sophisticated, intersectional ways. Mills appreciates that in the midst of differences between these accounts, they all agree that “as societal variables, race, colour and ethnicity acquire differing significances in different social contexts. In opposition to conceptions like Clifford Geertz’s, which take ethnicity to be a ‘primordial’ sentiment, Marxists see it as at least partially created by social structure and, in any case, deeply influenced in its development by a class dialectic.”³⁸ Mills follows scholars such as Edna Bonacich, Malcolm Cross, Girvan, and Witter in emphasizing the congruence of race and class in former slaveholding societies in the Caribbean.

What I really like about this essay is that it doesn’t collapse class and race into each other, but instead argues that “the legacy of slavery was a

social structure where race and class were coterminous.”³⁹ While Mills intends this claim to apply to places like the Caribbean and not to the United States, which has a white working class, I think it still serves as a challenge to classic Marxist views that universally separate class and race into base-superstructure models.⁴⁰ According to the early Mills, capitalism and class interests are crucial components of social, economic, and other structures and generate dominant ideological frameworks, but in Caribbean slave societies those structures and frameworks are simultaneously racial. This simultaneity is not the same thing as instrumentalism. In other words, it is not the case, according to early Mills, that capitalists in the Caribbean instrumentally use race in order to advance their class-interested goals. The relationship instead is one of fusion: ideational patterns of class position and race/color become fused together, rendering them inseparable.⁴¹ This fusion produces “particular ways of seeing the world, quite independently of the conscious efforts of pro-capitalist ideologists.”⁴² In Mills’s 1987 account, it is a mistake to assume in all cases that race and other cultural forms can be understood without reference to class (as Smith’s cultural pluralism does) *and* to assume that class structures and interests can be understood without reference to race.⁴³ This insight is crucial to answering Mills’s question, quoted in the first epigraph above, of how one might construct a convincing Marxist theory of race.

In a similar vein but not restricted to the Caribbean, Mills takes pains in 1994 to “leave open the possibility that a convincing historical materialist account of the creation of global white supremacy can be developed.”⁴⁴ This would be an account that pays attention to the role that gender domination plays in global white supremacy; it also would be an account that recognizes that folk religion can be a locus of resistance to it.⁴⁵ Race would be central but not foundational on this account.⁴⁶ Indeed, Mills implies that no one axis of his historical materialist, revisionist ontology would be foundational. In addition to entangling religion and gender with race, Mills’s account would recognize that class differences exist both between whites and across white and non-white populations. In other words, it would recognize that white privilege economically and politically tends to benefit some groups of white people more than others.⁴⁷ There also is, I think, room in Mills’s 1994 account for him to claim that white privilege economically and politically harms some groups of black and other people of color less than others. In any case, we can see here that *smadditizin’* need not be tied to the Oppression Asymmetry Thesis. One can struggle on behalf of subpersons to have their personhood recognized *and* understand

personhood as contextually, historically, and thus variably co-constituted by multiple forms of oppression.

Rehabilitating Liberalism

Mills moves away from the project of constructing a Marxist theory of race soon after the publication of *The Racial Contract* (1997). As he retrospectively explains, the publication of “European Specters” in 1999 marks the last time that he wrote explicitly within the Marxist tradition.⁴⁸ (I note that the arc of that story currently is changing given the topic of his most recent essay, “Materializing Race.”⁴⁹ I will return briefly to this essay below.) From the late 1990s onward, Mills will turn to liberalism, arguing that it can be “occupied” successfully by radicals, as the title of his 2012 article cited in the second epigraph proclaims. Mills’s project of occupying liberalism begins as early as 1994, however, in the transitional essay “Revisionist Ontologies.” That article argues for global white supremacy as a political system, replying to objections that other concepts, such as imperialism or colonial capitalism, are already in place to do its work.⁵⁰ As it does so, the essay argues that one of the virtues of the concept of global white supremacy is that it shouldn’t be controversial the way that Marx’s claims about capitalism and socialism have been. “All good liberals should oppose racism and should want to eradicate its legacy,” Mills claims, as well as to have a version of capitalism that lives up to its name as the best option for humanity.⁵¹ While Marx’s anticapitalism “is currently of severely limited appeal,”

in theory at least one would like to think that all people of good will would support the critique and ultimate elimination of white supremacy, including the whites privileged by it. Doubtless, then, the project [of critiquing global white supremacy] will be broadly supported, insofar as it is consonant with the proclaimed values of the liberal ideology that is now triumphant across most of the globe.⁵²

Good white liberals have not lined up to eliminate global white supremacy (even though they have taken pains to appear that they have). Mills knows this, of course, and he claims that these remarks were meant ironically.⁵³ I confess that I didn’t detect the irony in them until he pointed it out. (I realize this might be because I’m one of those “good” white people!)

But the structure of Mills's argument in this essay doesn't quite make sense if this passage is intended purely ironically. Mills is trying to motivate a shift in critical race projects away from Marxism and toward liberalism. He clearly (and rightly) is skeptical of white liberals and realizes that he is hoisting them by their own petard when he calls for "a capitalism that lives up to its advertising . . . of a color-neutral, racially accessible market society."⁵⁴ But if using the values of liberalism to criticize global white supremacy doesn't have any chance of garnering support and convincing white people to get on board (the pure irony reading), then why turn to it? Why not shift to something else, such as Derrick Bell's racial realism? Or stick with Marxism and work for a violent overthrow of global white supremacy, white people be damned?

Whatever the answers to these questions, Mills's most recent efforts to rehabilitate liberalism are more sober in tone. In *Contract and Domination*, coauthored with Carole Pateman, Mills continues his project of combining contract theory with a social ontology that recognizes the importance of social groups and group-based domination. As he thus attempts to transform liberalism, his argumentative strategy is to throw the burden of viable alternatives to his critics. As he asks after acknowledging the difficulty of adjudicating the various rights and freedoms of different social groups, "what's the alternative? It can't be to leave things as they are, in regimes of systemic injustice. And what alternative theory has the resources and legitimacy of liberal democracy?"⁵⁵ Liberalism might not be great, but we don't have anything better. Either put up or shut up, Mills effectively tells his critics. Criticism of oppression alone isn't going to achieve personhood for all the subpersons across the globe; something else is needed. Liberalism and smadditizin' can work hand in hand in a positive fashion, Mills would insist.

Most recently and in classic Millsian style—Mills loves outlines and lists—"Occupy Liberalism!" provides ten reasons why radicals are wrong that liberalism is bankrupt, which I will bundle together here. First, liberalism need not operate with an individualist ontology. "A revisionist, radical liberalism," as he calls it, "would make the analysis of group oppression, the denial of equal standing to the majority of the population, and their impact on the individual's ontology, a theoretical priority."⁵⁶ Here we see that Mills rightly has retained from his Marxist years the importance of a social ontology. A related second point is that radicals should appreciate the way that a revised liberalism retains, rather than eliminates, the subject and

its abilities to resist oppression, as some understandings of Foucault's work have done. For Mills, "radical liberalism is capable of recognizing both the extent of our socialization by the existing oppressive social order and the ways in which, nonetheless, many people resist and struggle against this oppressive social order."⁵⁷ Third, liberal values such as freedom, equality, and autonomy are not necessarily tied to possessive individualism, Mills argues. It will take political struggle to do so, but these ideals can be harnessed to serve the whole population, including its oppressed, not just the privileged. Fourth, liberalism need not rely on moral persuasion and rational argumentation to pursue a more just and equal society. Mills again displays his Marxist background when he claims that "a radical liberalism should, in some sense, by 'materialist,' recognizing the extent to which both people and the social dynamic are shaped by material forces, and not over-estimating the causal role of rational argumentation and moral suasion on their own."⁵⁸ Finally and perhaps most importantly, unlike mainstream liberalism, radical liberalism does not have its head in the sand. It is a non-ideal political theory that looks injustice in the face. Whether the issue is the (lack of) neutrality of the state and its juridical system, rectificatory justice, social rights, or other radical issues of redistribution and structural change, radical liberalism starts from the actual sociopolitical systems that are in place, distinguishing them from their ideal (and mostly nonexistent) versions. This would allow radical liberals to put in place safeguards against racial and other inequalities, since they know that the ideals of radical liberalism have not (yet) been achieved.

Closing Questions

I want to close with three questions directed at Mills's project of "occupying," "salvaging," and/or "retrieving" liberalism for radical egalitarianism, as Mills alternatively has called it.⁵⁹ The first question, which is rather basic, concerns liberalism's aversion to the concept of class. Can black radical liberalism talk about not just gender domination (as Mills does in *Contract and Domination*) and not just social or group ontologies (as Mills does in a number of recent articles), but class hierarchies and oppression in particular? In "Occupy Liberalism!" Mills briefly addresses Marxism's criticism of liberal rights of equality, freedom, and so on as bourgeois concepts and discusses the (lack of) viability of market socialism, but his response does

not directly name class. (I note in a related vein and perhaps contra Marx that material forces and conditions, which virtually no one would deny are a necessary element of human existence—for example, human beings have to eat and excrete—are not necessarily the same thing as class inequalities and oppression.) Can liberalism speak about class structures as a central component of contemporary global white supremacy and still be recognizably liberal? I think that doing so will be important to the development of a radical liberalism.

Mills's recent essay "Materializing Race" takes a valuable step in this direction, returning to Marx (although not to Marxism's hierarchy of class over race) to argue for "a social materialist analysis that recognizes how the social ontology of a racialized body politic becomes incarnated in the material bodies of its members, fleshed out in their reactive behaviors, incorporated in their perceptions and conceptions."⁶⁰ Is the next development in Mills's work to incorporate new materialisms into his radical liberalism? This would be an exciting prospect, in my view. The topic of new materialisms does not appear in Mills's November 2014 "The Stone" interview, in which he introduces the specific label "black radical liberalism," but the interview necessarily is brief.⁶¹ The answer, which I eagerly await, likely lies in Mills's forthcoming *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism*.

Second, I think that Mills must confront liberalism's anemic relationship to history and historical processes in the constitution of social groups and individual (sub)persons. The essay "Materializing Race" takes on some of this crucial work, but it does not discuss liberalism. The need to reckon profoundly with history is implicit in Mills's call for a different social ontology than the isolated individualism with which classic liberalism operates. It needs, however, to be made more explicit in my view. Can liberalism be compatible with a rich account of how the past has shaped the psyche, emotions, bodies, and lives of the present, and how the present in turn will constitute the future? Again, I think doing so will be crucial to a liberalism that is truly radical.

Finally, given my earlier comments, it won't come as much surprise that I am skeptical that the insights of intersectionality can be "translated" into contract theory (as Mills says in *Contract and Domination*) without dismantling contract theory's additive analyses.⁶² While I applaud Mills's reference to intersectionality in his work with Carole Pateman, I think that translation is the wrong relationship to establish between intersectionality

and contract theory. Something important about intersectionality is lost when it is translated into the pop-bead logic of contract theory even if that process helps expand asymmetrically the number of contractual status positions from two (white and black) to four (white men, white women, black men, and black women).⁶³ Rather than *translate* intersectionality into contract theory, is it possible for intersectionality to help *remake* contract theory into a domination theory that concerns the complex and context-dependent ways that multiple forms of oppression constitute the lives of both persons and subpersons? Mills is the one to take on that important project. I look forward to many more years of his radical smadditizin' to show us how.

Appendix

Charles Mills's Career 1985–present

Year/Period	Self-Described Philosophical Position	Relationship of Race and Class	Details
1987 Early period	Classic Marxism	Hierarchy of class over race (the universality of which is implicitly challenged, however, by Caribbean slave societies?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnicity (and race) are not “primordial sentiments” • One legacy of slavery in the Caribbean is that race and class are coterminous, fused, in former slave societies • A mistake, which Marxism helps correct, is to think that cultural forms like race can be understood without reference to class
1994 Beginning of self-described “transitional” period, from class to race	Black radicalism: “global white supremacy” replaces capitalism (also, hints of moving to liberalism?)	Collapse of hierarchy of class over race in progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race is central but not foundational; a convincing historical materialist account of the creation of global white supremacy is possible • Antiracism is needed to eliminate capitalism rather than communism needed to eliminate racism • Unlike communism’s fight against capitalism, the fight against global white supremacy fits with liberal ideology

Year/Period	Self-Described Philosophical Position	Relationship of Race and Class	Details
1997 Transitional period	Black radicalism	Race over class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smadditizin' concerns race, which is a "deeper reality" than class
1999 End of transitional period	Black radicalism	Race emphatically placed over class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejection of Oppression Symmetry Thesis • Race is the primary contradiction, not class (in the U.S. only?)
2001 In the wake of <i>The Racial Contract</i>	Black radicalism	Race over class; class rarely mentioned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "original injustice" is that people of color are not treated as persons
2003 In the wake of <i>The Racial Contract</i>	Analytic critical (race) theory	Race over class; class rarely mentioned except in retrospective remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race is more material than class; race is located in the base, not superstructure
2012 Contemporary period	Racial/radical liberalism	Race over class; class concerns seep back in without using the term?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radical liberalism recognizes how people are shaped by "material forces"
2014 Contemporary period	Radical liberalism meets new materialism?	Race "underpins" class (and gender) in modernity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racialized personhood and subpersonhood are material and are invisibly foundational to the materiality of class and gender
Nov 2014 Contemporary period	"Black radical liberalism" (interview in <i>New York Times's</i> "The Stone," plus the forthcoming <i>Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism</i>)	Race over class; the role of class remains muted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberalism historically is racialized (white) and can be salvaged by deracializing it • Marxism's ongoing value lies in highlighting the global effects of capitalism, concentrations of wealth and poverty, and the influence of material economics on politics, culture, etc.

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NOTES

1. Charles W. Mills, *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), xiii.
2. Mills, "European Specters," in *ibid.*, 170.
3. Charles Mills, *Radical Theory, Caribbean Reality: Race, Class and Social Domination* (Mona, Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2010) 22.
4. Vivian May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
5. Charles Mills, "The Moral Epistemology of Stalinism," *Politics & Society* 22, no. 1 (March 1994): 31–57; "Do Black Men Have a Moral Duty to Marry Black Women?" *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 25th Anniversary Special Issue, 25 (June 1994): 131–53; "Under Class Under Standings," *Ethics* 104, no. 4 (July 1994): 855–81; "Marxism, 'Ideology,' and Moral Objectivism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (September 1994): 373–93; "Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African-American Experience," *Teaching Philosophy* 17, no. 3 (September 1994), 223–43; "Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy," *Social and Economic Studies*, Special Issue: New Currents in Caribbean Thought, ed. Brian Meeks, 43, no. 3 (September 1994): 105–34.
6. Charles Mills, "Smadditizin'," reprinted in Mills, *Radical Theory, Caribbean Reality*, 164–84.
7. *Ibid.*, 166, 165, emphasis in original.
8. Charles Mills, "White Supremacy and Racial Justice," in Mills, *From Class to Race*, 217.
9. Charles Mills, "Non-Cartesian Sums: Philosophy and the African American Experience," in *Blackness Visible* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) 11.
10. Mills, "Smadditizin'," 164.
11. *Ibid.*, 165.
12. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Charles Mills, "'Ideology' in Marx and Engels," *The Philosophical Forum* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 327–46.
15. Mills, *From Class to Race*, 6.
16. *Ibid.*, 13, 17.
17. *Ibid.*, 14.
18. *Ibid.*, 19.

19. Ibid., 16, 20.
20. Ibid., 31.
21. Ibid., 122.
22. Charles Mills, "European Specters," in Mills, *From Class to Race*, 161.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 165.
25. Ibid., 170.
26. Ibid., 160.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 148.
29. Ibid., 165.
30. Patricia Hill Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3, (1998): 62.
31. Quoted in Kathryn Gines, "Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy," in *Convergences: Black Feminism and Continental Philosophy*, ed. Maria del Guadalupe Davidson, Kathryn T. Gines, and Donna-Dale L. Marcano (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008) 38. See Gloria Steinem, "Women Are Never Frontrunners," *New York Times*, January 8, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/opinion/08steinem.html?_r=0.
32. Quoted in Gines, "Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy," 38.
33. Gines, "Sartre, Beauvoir, and the Race/Gender Analogy," 38.
34. Steinem, "Women Are Never Frontrunners."
35. Vivian May quoting Lisa Bowleg in Vivian May, "Intersectionality," in *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies*, ed. Catherine M. Orr, Ann Braithwaite, and Diane Lichtenstein (New York: Routledge, 2012), 163.
36. As Mills underscores in his debate with Mike Cole about Marxism and critical race theory, Mills's claims about the primacy of race concern the peculiarities of the United States. They are not universal claims, as Cole charges. (See Mills, "Critical Race Theory: A Reply to Mike Cole," *Ethnicities* 9, no. 2 [2009]: 279.) Mills clarifies this with reference to the essay he and Coles are contesting ("European Specters"), but the broad statements in the provocative handout that forms the body of that essay (pages 156–160) make it somewhat easy, I think, to read Mills as Cole does on this point.
37. Reprinted in Charles Mills, *Radical Theory, Caribbean Reality*, 72–100.
38. Mills, "Race and Class," 92.
39. Ibid., 93.
40. Personal communication with Mills, October 8, 2014.
41. Mills, "Race and Class," 95.
42. Ibid., 93.
43. Ibid., 97.
44. Mills, "Revisionist Ontologies," in *Blackness Visible*, 104.
45. Ibid., 117.
46. Ibid., 104.

47. Ibid.
48. Mills, *From Class to Race*, 122.
49. Charles W. Mills, "Materializing Race," in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, ed. Emily S. Lee (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014) 19–41.
50. Mills, "Revisionist Ontologies," 99.
51. Ibid., 106.
52. Ibid.
53. Personal communication with Mills, October 8, 2014.
54. Mills, "Revisionist Ontologies," 106.
55. Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 245.
56. Mills, "Occupy Liberalism!" 314.
57. Ibid., 316.
58. Ibid., 319.
59. "Retrieve" is used on page 305 of Mills, "Occupy Liberalism!" "Salvage" is used on page 244 of Pateman and Mills, *Contract and Domination*.
60. Mills, "Materializing Race," 36.
61. George Yancy and Charles Mills, "Lost in Rawlsland," *The Stone* (blog), *New York Times*, November 16, 2014, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/11/16/lost-in-rawlsland>.
62. Mills, *Contract and Domination*, 174.
63. Ibid., 173.