

Contract and Domination

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First published in 2007 by Polity Press

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148, USA



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ISBN-13: 978-07456-4003-7
ISBN-13: 978-07456-4004-4 (pb)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset in 10.5 on 12 pt Monotype Times
by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester
Printed and bound by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

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2009/9254

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5

Race, Sex, and Indifference

Carole Pateman

Voters in Alabama were asked in 2000 to vote on a constitutional amendment to eliminate a provision prohibiting interracial marriage. This had remained on the books although in 1967 the US Supreme Court, in *Loving v. Virginia*, had finally declared such laws to be unconstitutional and a Federal District Court judge had told Alabama in 1970 that the provision could not be enforced. The amendment passed, with 40 percent of voters against it.

In December 2003, Essie Mae Washington-Williams revealed at the age of 78 that she was the daughter of Strom Thurmond who had died in June, aged 100. Thurmond, a member of the United States Senate for 48 years, was for most of his life one of the most prominent supporters of racial segregation. Washington-Williams's mother, Carrie Butler, was the Thurmond family's black maidservant and only 16 when she gave birth. Thurmond never publicly acknowledged the existence of his daughter.

About 1,200 Danish couples were living in Malmö in Sweden in 2004 because they were partners in "mixed" marriages. In early 2006 about 60 couples were moving there each month. Changes to Danish immigration law in 2002 included requirements about housing, finance and family reunion that make it very difficult for interracial partners to remain in Denmark.

The sexual and racial contracts have been intimately connected since modern states (civil societies) began to be created in the (seventeenth) century and the three dimensions of the original contract – social, sexual, and racial – have cut across and reinforced each other. The state has upheld laws and policies that have consolidated structures of racial and sexual power, the sexual contract has been refracted through race,

the racial contract has shaped sexual relations, and both contracts have structured citizenship. Modern civil societies developed as patriarchal "racial states" (Goldberg 2002). It not possible fully to understand or analyze either the major institutions of modern civil societies or the construction of the world system of modern states without reference to both race and sex. The idea of "race" and the conviction that women must be governed by men became interwoven social and political forces that were at the heart of structures of power and subordination and molded the beliefs and lives of individuals.

My analysis in *The Sexual Contract* (and chapter 2 of this volume on the settler contract) are tied more closely to early modern theories of an original contract than is Charles Mills's conception of the racial contract. I confined my argument to Britain, the United States, and Australia, societies that can plausibly be seen as contractual "civil societies" (the modern political order created to replace "the state of nature"). Mills ranges much more widely: "the Racial Contract is global." I agree, but part company with him when he writes of the application of "the social contract" to "non-Europe, where it becomes the Racial Contract" (Mills 1997: 20, 42). My argument is not that the "social contract" becomes the racial contract, or that the latter has separately to be applied. The racial contract is one dimension of the original contract and shapes Britain as well as British colonies, although in a different fashion. Most colonies were not seen as *terra nullius* and transformed wholesale in the manner of (what became) the United States, Canada, or Australia (see chapter 2 above). Rather, British rulers made enough changes to allow power and control to be exercised and wealth extracted. Thus, I agree with Mills that economic exploitation is central to the racial contract, but I do not see it as "the most salient" aspect (Mills 1997: 32). Sexual difference is just as important for the racial contract.

My approach here is, for the most part, similar to my book. I use selected historical illustrations – this time from Britain and the United States – to show connections between the sexual and racial contracts and to provide a context to consider the relationship today. I refer to "illustrations" because an adequate discussion of the extraordinarily complex interrelationship between the sexual and racial contracts cannot possibly be undertaken in a single chapter. In section IV I broaden my discussion to include economic exploitation, move to the present and to a more diffuse sense of "contract", and draw on Norman Geras's (1998) argument about the contract of mutual indifference.

The concepts of race and racism are often conflated but my discussion here is not about racism. My interest is in the development of the idea

of race as part of the structure of a modern state. "Race" is necessary for and breeds racism, which remains a major problem, anti-Arab racism being one of its most prominent recent manifestations; the UN World Conference Against Racism in 2001 was surrounded by clamor and controversy.

"Race" developed differently in the United States and Britain and this further complicates any discussion. In the United States, founded in slavery and the forcible seizure of the territory of Native peoples, racial segregation was enforced by law until the 1960s. British racial conceptions and practices were played out in the context of a vast, diverse empire (initially including the American colonies) in which, as Linda Colley (2002) has recently stressed, the British rulers were a small minority.¹ There was also a metropolitan black population; by the late eighteenth century there were at least 10,000 blacks in London, including a small middle class.²

I "Race" and Reproduction

From the early modern period onward, "race" became the vehicle through which certain groups of humans were deemed to be inferior, to be at the margins of humankind or even outside of humanity altogether. Accounts of differences between groups of people and between men and women have a long history but familiar, modern conceptions of "sex" and "race" began to be developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, together with theories about the stages of "civilization." Indeed, theorists of an original contract played an important part in the emergence of modern ideas about racial and sexual differences and hierarchies, albeit that their theories were couched in the subversive language of universal freedom and equality.

Kant's arguments are of particular interest. In *The Sexual Contract* I discussed his endorsement of the subordination of women, and Robert Bernasconi (2001a, 2002) has argued that he was the first philosopher to develop a concept of race, in the sense of a clearly defined notion

¹ Colley argues that in "all sorts of ways" the British Empire "remains an unknown quantity" and that anyone interested in the Empire needs to understand "Britain itself, the ways in which it was once powerful, but also the ways in which its power overseas was always constrained and sometimes faltered" (2002: 374, 375). It is also worth noting that the first act of the new Australian federal parliament in 1901 was to create immigration restrictions to maintain "white Australia."

² One of its best-known members was Olaudah Equiano; another was Ignatius Sancho, born a slave and brought to Britain as a child, who argued against slavery, became a writer, a shopkeeper, correspondent of Laurence Sterne and was painted by Gainsborough (see King et al. 1997).

with scientific status (see also Eze 1997a).³ Kant upheld both the sexual and racial contracts, but now that attention has been drawn to embarrassing aspects of his arguments, two common responses are to detach the offending parts from his major principles and arguments or to explain them away.⁴ But these strategies ignore his characterization of women and Africans and that he lectured and published on the subject of race for several decades (see: Kant 1965, 1978, 2000, 2001).

For Kant, the concept of race, like the Idea of marriage, is necessary; it is dictated by reason from "the viewpoint of natural history." This viewpoint deals with the "natural science of origins" and so is much more than a description of nature (Kant 2001: 40; see also Kant 2000: 13 n1). The crucial racial differences are permanent and they arise from reproduction and descent. Kant argued that there were "original seeds of the human line of descent" and, together with hereditary predispositions, these were implanted for the purpose of peopling the earth (2001: 42). The seeds and predispositions produced the different races of humans (in "Of the Different Human Races" he distinguishes four).⁵ In principle, the assumption about innate seeds implies nothing about the worth of the human races to which they give rise; all seeds could produce races of equal value despite some fundamental variations among them. Kant, however, makes it clear that white men are the only individuals who possess the capacities required to grasp the universal principles fundamental to civil society and thus the capacities to govern others.⁶

The natural attributes of nonwhite races and women were widely seen in similar terms; in particular, both were seen to lack or have a lesser capacity for reason and self-government. By the late eighteenth century, questions about such issues as why Africans were black, whether or not humans all descended from one original couple as laid down in the

³ Bernasconi (2001a: 15) notes that this argument was first put forward in the 1920s. The relation between Kant's arguments about race and the *Critique of Judgment* has been acknowledged by some scholars, including one of his contemporaries; Bernasconi provides some references (2001a: 27 n84). He also states that "a great deal more work needs to be done, both to establish the context of Kant's discussion of race with reference to his sources and to clarify the various aspects of Kant's theory of race that have been treated largely in isolation from each other" (2001a: 15).

⁴ See, e.g., Hill and Boxill (2000) for an example of the first response, and Ladd (1999) for an example of the second.

⁵ The role of climate in the development of races was much discussed, and one claim was that different environments were the cause of racial differences. Kant argues for the differential development of the seeds over long periods through lines of descent in hot, cold, etc., climates.

⁶ Kant is not entirely consistent. He criticized the doctrine of *terra nullius* but left doors open for the justification of colonization, and his view of slavery was ambiguous.

Bible (monogenesis vs polygenesis), and how human beings were to be classified had become matters of extensive debate and controversy. "Races" began to be seen as distinct human groupings, recognizable by such markers as skin color, hair texture, skulls, facial features, and specific dispositions and attributes.

The early eighteenth century, and the development of slavery as a condition suffered only by Africans, marked a turning point. From the beginning of the seventeenth century significant numbers of Britons had been captured by corsairs from Barbary and sometimes enslaved, which made it hard to see slavery in racial terms. But in 1672, the Royal Africa Company was established in Britain with a government monopoly to supply African labor to the colonies, and "after the 1730s, slavery became rhetorically established as a polar opposite to Britishness" (Colley 2002: 64). Or, in other words, freedom became signified by a white skin.

The *blackness* of (sub-Saharan) Africans became perceived, in itself, as a mark of lesser humanity. Europeans came to believe that they were *white* and hence superior. "Black" Africans were decisively marked out from "white" Europeans and the civilization and freedom of whites. By the early eighteenth century, lifetime servitude was established for black, but not white, indentured laborers in Virginia (see section II). As Europeans seized more overseas territories and imposed colonial rule, the belief in white superiority fostered a consciousness among other "races" that they were "nonwhite." My historical illustrations are drawn from "white" and "black" since this antinomy – and Africa – lies at the heart of the construction of the political fiction of race. Other developments in the United States, such as the prohibition of Chinese immigration from 1882 until 1944, the expulsion of nearly half a million Mexican American citizens and Mexican nationals across the border between 1931 and 1935, and the internment of most Japanese American citizens in camps during the Second World War, were an outgrowth of the initial creation of a racial order of "whites" who ruled over "blacks."

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, fairs, ethnological exhibitions, and "human zoos" (Bancel et al. 2000) provided a graphic portrayal of white beliefs about "race." Various displays were prompted by the Crystal Palace exhibition in London in 1851. In the United States, 100 million people attended the world fairs held between 1876 and 1916 (D. King 2005: 39).⁷ By the early twentieth century, "the world on view at the fairs had been anthropologized and racialized according

⁷ At the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 black Americans were included in the exhibits. Six African-American women spoke at the World's Congress of Representative Women, part of the Exposition but, Hazel Carby argues, this was not from "concern to provide a black political presence but part of a discourse of exoticism that pervaded the fair" (1987: 5).

to social Darwinian taxonomies provided by leading lights of the anthropology profession" (Rydell 2002: 224). Exhibitions of humans included reconstructions of colonial victories. In France the stocking of displays before the First World War followed overseas conquests: "Tuaregs were exhibited in Paris after the French conquest of Timbuktu in 1894, and the first Malagasies appeared a year after the occupation of Madagascar. The exhibition of Amazons from Abomey followed the defeat of King Behanzin in Dahomey" (Bancel et al. 2000: 9). Nor have echoes of such exhibitions entirely died away. In 2005 there was an outcry in Germany after Augsburg Zoo put on a show of African culture and featured a dance display next to a cage containing baboons (Pancevski 2005).

Human racial exhibitions were also sexual curiosities. The most (in)famous example is that of Saartjie Baartman, labeled the "Hottentot Venus," who was a member of the Khoisan people from the Cape of South Africa. She, and particularly her large buttocks and genitalia, was displayed in London and Paris from 1810; doctors and anthropologists examined her. Robert Wedderburn, a Jamaican abolitionist, was instrumental in a case being brought against her exhibition in London on the grounds that it was indecent and tantamount to slavery, but the court rejected the claim, ruling that she had freely entered a contract. Baartman died aged 25, and after her death she was dissected and her remains put on display until 1976 in the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. Nelson Mandela finally succeeded in obtaining her return to South Africa after he became President.

A good deal of effort and some remarkable contortions were required to fit people into a tidy racial classification. Who counted as "white," and thus privileged, was the most difficult problem. Perhaps the best-known proclamation of whiteness is when Japanese in South Africa under apartheid were deemed honorary whites for economic reasons. The whiteness of immigrants to the United States from Ireland and Southern and Eastern Europe was in question for a long time.⁸ In 1790, shortly after ratification of the United States constitution, Congress limited naturalization to "free white persons." From the 1870s a series of cases was brought to decide which applicants for naturalization counted as white.⁹ Naturalization and citizenship involved both the racial and sexual contracts. On the one hand, if a woman was not

⁸ Charles Kingsley, a Briton, put the Irish on a lower level in a different fashion. He wrote to his wife of a visit to Ireland, "I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw . . . to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much" (quoted in McClintock 1995: 216).

⁹ Haney López (1996) discusses the numerous cases; see especially *Ozawa v. United States* 260 U.S. 178 (1922) and *United States v. Thind* 261 U.S. 204 (1923).

"white" and so ineligible for naturalization she did not, despite coverture, take on the citizenship of an American husband. On the other hand, even if eligible she could not be naturalized if her husband was ineligible (see also Cott 2000: 165).

John Stuart Mill remarked in his *Subjection of Women* (1989 [1869]) that the elaborate social and political stratagems and intimidation required to keep women in their place demonstrated that there was nothing natural about subjection. In one sense, the belief that women's subordination springs directly from biology is more plausible than analogous claims about racial differences. A basic fact about humans is that women, not men, become pregnant and give birth. Human reproduction provides a biological thread running through sexual difference. But it is a very thin thread indeed and is far too slender to bear the weight placed upon it by patriarchal conceptions of sexual difference, views of proper relations between the sexes and women's place in the world. These are not entailed by biology but matters of culture, politics, and power. That is to say, as Mill saw (and as I argued in *The Sexual Contract*), "masculinity" and "femininity" are political constructs.

"Race" is also a political construct, and more completely so than alleged sexual difference. Like an original contract, it is a political fiction, a "rational absurdity" (Gilroy 2000: 14; see also Appiah 2000). Race has no natural or scientific basis. The "science" of race, which reached its peak in the racial classifications of the nineteenth century, was challenged as soon as it began to be developed – Herder, for example, took a different position from Kant – and has been largely discredited since the Second World War; UNESCO rejected a biological basis for race in 1948. A further blow has come from recent advances in genetics which show that variations between human populations are not much greater than genetic variation within those same populations (which is not to deny that some humans are, for example, more genetically susceptible to certain diseases than others). And people are, so to speak, voting with their feet in increasing numbers by forming interracial partnerships.¹⁰

¹⁰ In the United States a movement has begun for the recognition of a "mixed race" category for official purposes (Hollinger 2005). About 12 percent of young people fall into this category, and by 2050 perhaps 10 percent of whites and blacks and over half of Latinos, Asians, and American Indians will marry outside their "race" (Hochschild 2005: 76). Census Bureau projections indicate that whether or not whites remain a numerical majority depends on whether Latinos who identify as "white" on the Census are so counted. If they are not, by 2050 whites are likely to be a numerical minority (Haney López 2005: 43; on Census categories see also Prewitt 2005). One British survey found that, of respondents who had a partner, half of the British Caribbean men and a fifth of British Indian men had a white partner and so did a third of the British Caribbean women (Modood 1998: 387).

Nonetheless, race is popularly seen in biological terms as a matter of "blood." Blood was used in law to classify individuals according to race in the United States. As recently as 1974 the Supreme Court of Louisiana upheld the view that anyone with 1/32 of African blood was black (Allen 1994: 27-8). Now, bloodlines are lines of descent – and here is the point at which human reproduction enters and sex and race come inextricably together. If the idea of race is to have social and political purchase, then populations perceived in racial terms have to maintain themselves over time. Women must have babies if a population is to continue; or, at least, the "right" women must do so and they must reproduce with the "right" men if the population (its bloodline) and its culture are to remain pure. Race is about reproduction and sexual relations, about purity, degeneration, and the right human stock.

II Race and Miscegenation

To create societies in which race was an ordering principle demanded a great deal of theoretical, social, political, and cultural work – and much violence. Individuals had to learn to see themselves as members of races and to believe that one race was superior to another. (This change in consciousness demanded a) particular form of life in politics, law, the economy, and in everyday behavior and sexual relations.

A racial order was established in the first stages of settlement in the colony of Virginia. The "white race" – that is, a social category based on skin color whose members exercised power over, and enjoyed superior standing to, all those with black skins – came into being in the early part of the eighteenth century (Allen 1997). The seeds for the creation of a racial power structure were sown in the seventeenth century. Theodore Allen remarks that initially there was little point in landowners setting up a dual system of service, limited term for whites and lifetime servitude for Africans, because "the death rate was so high for several decades that there would have been no practical advantage for employers in such a distinction" (1997: 178). From the 1620s it became common practice for tenants to be transferred from one landowner to another without their consent and, through a variety of means, the term of service of indentured laborers, both African and white, was lengthened.¹¹ By the 1640s there were indications that lifetime servitude was

¹¹ This broke with the Statute of Artificers (1563) under which specified wages had to be paid and laborers bound by the year were allowed to terminate their employment with due notice. It was forbidden to punish an apprentice by extending the term of his service.

to be reserved for Africans and that an aristocracy of skin color was to be created. Nevertheless, until late into the seventeenth century some Africans owned land, engaged in commercial transactions, and even made use of white laborers.

The establishment of a modern racial system meant that "race" had become widely understood. Moreover, once race became an ordering principle in social life everyone was caught up in it, irrespective of their individual beliefs. Indentured Africans were turned into property and measures were taken to deprive free Africans of rights and exclude them from various trades. Conversely, "white" men became legal "persons" merely because they were white. Married white women were not legal persons but, despite their subordination to their husbands under coverture, they shared in the power and privileges of the white-skinned. "Whites" from the highest to lowest social stratum, both men and women, conscious that they were not "black," took part, actively or passively, in the maintenance of the new power structure or were forced to struggle against it. On the other side, Africans had to bear all the manifold burdens that now accompanied the designation of "black," even if they were not slaves.

"Race" required purity of the bloodline and so fashioned the sexual contract. In a racial order only some women were deemed worthy of "protection" by white men. The women of the ruling race, who continued the racial bloodline and were held to have the attributes of true womanliness ("the fair sex"; see Schloesser 2002), were protected (governed) by the men who shared their skin color. The interrelationship between the sexual and racial contracts meant that the sexuality of whites and blacks was seen quite differently. African sexuality was viewed as untrammelled and degenerate. Black women could never be "pure" like white women and African-American men were greatly feared as a standing threat to white womanhood. Nonwhites were for white people, at one and the same time, objects of desire, revulsion, curiosity, and prurient speculation.

The "white race" was safeguarded through prohibitions, both formal and informal, against interracial sexual relations. Or, rather, the prohibitions were first and foremost directed against relations between white women and black men. This provided some assurance that the white bloodline would not be polluted.¹² For white men, the prohibition came

¹² Elizabethan drama suggests that opposition to interracial sexual relations between white women and nonwhite men was itself produced along with modern conceptions of race. Sexual liaisons between white women and black men were portrayed as the "ultimate romantic-transgressive model of erotic love" (Boose 1994: 41). But once "race" began its course any connection between white women and nonwhite men became the most feared and the most viciously punished relationship.

into play against *marriage* with nonwhite women. Nonwhite women were not “protected” so, outside of marriage, white men demanded sexual access, coerced if necessary, to black women.

In *The Sexual Contract* marriage has a central place. I argued, first, that the marriage contract provided for legitimate, orderly access for each man to a woman of his own. But under the racial contract men’s choice of a wife had to be limited if racial bloodlines and racial power were to be maintained. Maryland enacted the first criminal law in 1664, and this was aimed at “freeborn English women” who had made “shamefull Matches” with African slaves (Cott 2000: 44). Six of the original American colonies prohibited marriage between a white and black or mulatto and three of the thirteen banned interracial sex outside marriage. Nancy Cott states that “the English colonies stand out as the first secular authorities to nullify and criminalize intermarriage on the basis of race or color designations” (2000: 41).¹³

Second, I emphasized the interconnections between marriage, employment, and citizenship in *The Sexual Contract* but under the racial contract the connections were severed for African Americans in the aftermath of slavery. Slaves were prohibited from marrying, thus underlining their exclusion from civil law, but after emancipation the federal government took steps to ensure that as many of the freed slaves’ unions as possible were regularized. The Freedmen’s Bureau took care to enforce the sexual contract, and the labor contracts it promoted upheld coverture (see Cott 2000; also L. Edwards 1996 and Stanley 1996).¹⁴ However, the power that free black husbands gained over their wives did not translate into political standing. The civil rights of black men and women alike were severely limited and, especially in the Southern States, their political rights denied. In the twentieth

¹³ “[T]here seems to be no historical precedent for the sexualization of race in the United States, that is, no earlier cultural example of the assignment of a debased form of sexuality to an hereditary caste, over generations” (Zack 1997a: 148). During the 1860s more states passed antimiscegenation legislation and some Southern states introduced new bans after the Civil War (the Oxford English Dictionary records the first use of “miscegenation” in the United States in 1864); “[i]n Mississippi the penalty was life imprisonment” (Cott 2000: 41). The Civil Rights Act (1866) excluded these laws on the grounds that they applied equally to black and white, and all challenges brought after the 14th Amendment (1868) were rejected by the Supreme Court. The California Supreme Court led the way in 1948 in striking down antimiscegenation laws; the federal Court (as noted at the start of the chapter) finally acted in 1967.

¹⁴ The major function of the Bureau – its official title was the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands – was to turn “ex-slaves into wage workers” (Cott 2000: 85).

century, major social policies, such as Mothers' Pensions and Aid to Dependent Children, largely excluded African-American women, and the GI Bill after the Second World War did not benefit black servicemen in the same way as their white counterparts.¹⁵

White men were husbands, "persons," and citizens and, as I have stressed, their extramarital choice of women was unconstrained, especially if they were slave masters. Slaves were property; that is, they were mere factors of production to be used in the plantations and great houses. They were factors that could be replaced or increased by breeding but, unlike the breeding of livestock, the slave masters themselves could participate directly in their reproduction. Indeed, the paradox of slavery, which I highlighted in *The Sexual Contract*, is perhaps most evident in the case of female slaves. They were property, but it was their humanity that made their reproduction possible and made them sexually attractive to white masters.

Initially, the slave master's part in breeding led to a problem. On the one hand, children of slave mothers were property at the disposal of the master/father who could sell them at will. On the other hand, descent was patrilineal under common law. Race trumped patriarchy to solve the difficulty. In Virginia in 1662 it was decreed that slave mothers would pass their lifetime bondage onto their children. The ruling also meant that, notwithstanding their paternity, all such children were to be treated as "black." In my book (Pateman 1988: 122) I noted Mary Chesnut's comment that, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "Mrs. Stowe did not hit the sorest spot. She makes Legree a bachelor." Wives of slave-owners exercised power over slaves but they had to pretend not to see their husbands' other offspring.¹⁶

Law, social sanctions, and a great deal of violence were used to regulate interracial sexual relations and prevent African Americans from exercising their newly acquired rights. The most violent forms of intimidation were the lynching of black men and the rape of black women; Hazel Carby argues that the rapes were "political terror," "an

¹⁵ Southern politicians were determined to maintain very low wages for their workforce and they opposed the 1935 Social Security legislation. Agricultural, domestic, educational, and hospital workers were not covered, thus excluding most nonwhite and women workers. Vagrancy laws were used to compel black individuals into employment (see Kerber 1998: ch. 2).

¹⁶ See also the comment about a member of Congress who had fathered six children by one of his slaves in Harriet Jacobs's memoir of her life as a slave (1969 [1861]: 215). Jacobs's book was edited by a white woman, L. Maria Child, and Jacobs used the name Linda Brent, necessary protection given that she wrote about her sexual history. She refused Harriet Beecher Stowe's offer to incorporate her memoir into *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

institutionalized weapon of oppression" that was the equivalent of lynching (1987: 18, 39).¹⁷ Few could escape from the taint of such a racial order.

One telling example is the exchange over lynching between Ida Wells and Frances Willard, two remarkable and very politically astute women. Willard, a white woman, was the leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the biggest women's organization in the United States in the late nineteenth century, which not only campaigned against alcohol but was the organizational mainstay of the suffrage movement (this was true too in Australia and New Zealand, though not in Britain). Wells's parents were slaves; she obtained an education, but lost her job as a schoolteacher because she drew attention to the second-class treatment of black children. She then became a journalist and co-owner of the weekly *Memphis Free Speech*.

In 1892 Wells wrote an editorial after the lynching of three black shop-owners, her friends (the paper was then attacked and the business destroyed). Wells wrote that most of the recent lynchings had been prompted by "the same old racket – the new alarm about raping white women," and she warned that Southern white men might "overreach themselves and public sentiment will have a reaction" (Wells-Barnett 2002: 29; she married in 1895). Wells saw the murder of her three friends as an example of the use of lynching to prevent black men becoming economically successful and competing with white businesses, but she used the phrase "new alarm" because, following Frederick Douglass, she argued that three different claims had been made about lynching. The first, immediately after the end of the Civil War, was that lynching was necessary to prevent race riots and insurrections. From the early 1870s lynching was said to prevent Negro domination at the ballot box. By the 1890s, when lynchings were at their peak, it was claimed that the atrocities resulted from the propensity of sexually depraved black men to rape white women.¹⁸

¹⁷ The victims of lynching were predominantly male and black. Lynching began in the 1830s (the term was first used then) and before the Civil War most lynchings took place in California. It has a long history; there were lynchings still in the 1940s. In the 1890s, crowds numbering in the thousands, including whole families, often witnessed the dreadful killings of black men and mementoes were collected and disseminated to friends and relatives.

¹⁸ Wells also noted that during the Civil War the slave master had safely left his wife and children with his slaves when away fighting. And at the end of the Civil War many white women came from the North as teachers to the freed slaves and for more than a quarter of a century they had worked without any fear. As Pauline Hopkins wrote, "[t]he men who created the mulatto race" continued to fill its ranks "year after year by the very means which they invoked lynch law to suppress, bewailing the sorrows of violated womanhood" (quoted in Carby 1987: 141).

Wells then embarked on an extraordinarily courageous campaign against lynching. One of her aims was to "[t]ell the world the facts" and to demand that accused black men should have a fair trial (Wells-Barnett 2002: 151). She emphasized one crucial fact: that only about a third of the victims were actually alleged to be rapists.

Before Ida Wells's campaign and the anti-lynching movement in Britain (the first Anti-Lynching Committee was formed in Britain in 1894), the WCTU had never condemned lynching and had no black members in the Southern states. Willard attacked Wells in an address to the WCTU in Cleveland after Wells pointed out that in many cases of lynching where rape was alleged it was known at the time and "indisputably proven after the victim's death" that the relationship was consensual, although clandestine. A charge of assault would have been thrown out in a courtroom. Wells asked the question

what the white man means when he charges the black man with rape. Does he mean the crime which the statutes of the civilized states describe as such? Not by any means. With the Southern white man, any mesalliance existing between a white woman and a colored man is sufficient foundation for the charge of rape. The Southern white man says that it is impossible for a voluntary alliance to exist between a white woman and a colored man, and therefore, the fact of an alliance is a proof of force. (Wells-Barnett 2002: 61)

Willard refused to acknowledge that white women could, and sometimes did, enter voluntarily into sexual relations with black men. She leapt to the defense of white womanhood and insisted that Wells's arguments put an unjust and unfounded "imputation upon half the white race in this country" (2002: 130). Wells replied in a letter, published while both women were campaigning in Britain.¹⁹ She reproduced some earlier remarks of Willard's on the need for "safeguards" against illiterate aliens and Negroes voting and on the "problem" facing white Southerners. "The colored race," Willard had written, "multiplies like the locusts of Egypt. The grog-shop is its center of power" and the safety of women and children was threatened (quoted in Wells-Barnett 2002: 131-3). After the publication of an interview with Willard, conducted in Britain by one Lady Henry Somerset, Wells had to publish another letter in her own defense. Willard never entirely retracted her attack on Wells.

During Wells's first visit to Britain in 1893 she was involved in a very curious incident. She had been invited through the initiative of Isabella

¹⁹ Wells was one of a number of black women and men activists from the United States who visited Britain in the nineteenth century.

Mayo and her friend Catherine Impey.²⁰ Mayo took in nonwhite lodgers as part of her philanthropic activities, one of whom was George Ferdinands, a student from Ceylon. Shortly after the three women departed on Wells's tour, Impey wrote to Ferdinands proposing that they marry. Ferdinands forwarded the letter to Mayo who was scandalized and called Impey a nymphomaniac and a disgrace. Vron Ware writes that "[i]t is hard to believe that Catherine would have made the proposal without any encouragement, and the whole episode remains a mystery" (1992: 191).

Mayo showed the letter to Wells and demanded that Wells turn her back on Impey, but Wells refused. Mayo sent letters to America criticizing them both and continued her attack during Wells's second visit to Britain. She published an article in which she referred to the "diseased imaginations" of "women who will 'fancy' anything which will give them a sensation." In some states of the United States, she wrote, this imagination "would mean *the death of the man*," and "[i]f the women in the South were all 'pure in heart and sound in head,' we should hear of fewer lynchings" (quoted in Ware 1992: 195–6). Willard's reaction to Wells and this strange episode illuminate the complex ways in which the racial and sexual contracts played out, even in circles where one or the other, or both, were challenged.

III White Women, Black Women

Through the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth, women in both Britain and the United States were very politically active, both inside and outside conventional political arenas and in a wide range of women's organizations. They used arguments about rights and equality but stress was also laid on (white) women's particular affinity for morality and much "civilization work" was undertaken, both at home and abroad (Newman 1999). One observer wrote in 1900 of the Hull House settlement in Chicago that it was "a colony planted in a strange land by immigrants from a superior civilization" (quoted in Newman 1999: 23). The London Missionary Society had begun to recruit single women in 1875 and by 1899 women missionaries

²⁰ Impey ran a monthly paper, *Anti-Caste*, which in its final issues stated as its aim that "the dark races of Mankind [should have] equal right to protection, personal liberty, equality of opportunity and human fellowship" (quoted in Ware 1992: 190). She was acquainted with a number of leading black American activists and was especially concerned with racial justice. She was involved in other radical causes, supporting "the abolition of the alcohol traffic, an end to militarism, a respect for the environment and the humane treatment of animals – she was also a strict vegetarian" (Ware 1992: 187).

outnumbered men (Haggis 2003). The women's foreign mission movement was the largest women's movement in the United States by 1915 (Newman 1999: 53).

White women who attacked the sexual contract could still compare their position favorably to that of the women of lesser races. Female slaves, wives in polygamous marriages, inhabitants of harems or victims of suttee were frequently invoked. For white women to see black women as political equals was very difficult in a context of "race" and colonialism. Their ambiguous attitude is nicely illustrated by the image adopted by British women anti-slavery activists in 1828. They modified a famous cameo, first produced by Josiah Wedgwood in 1787, to portray a female slave, with the words "Am I not a woman and a sister?" But, like her earlier male counterpart, the slave was on her knees, a suppliant before a standing white woman.

The sexual and racial contracts reached into the anti-slavery movement. Black campaigners rarely had an equal place, even though the genesis of the anti-slavery movement lay in the activities and writings of blacks in Britain in the 1760s. The Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1823 but it was not until the 1850s that the first steps were taken to include women in national committees. In 1840, the British organizers of the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London refused to accept women delegates from the Garrisonian wing of the American abolitionist movement, and the question of women's rights was thus thrust in front of the British movement.²¹ But British women did not take part in the debate at the Convention; they could attend only as visitors.

Yet (middle class) women were at the heart of the British anti-slavery movement. They had begun a campaign against the slave trade (abolished in 1807) in the 1780s, they organized a boycott of sugar from the West Indian plantations from 1791 and, after the British ended slavery in 1833, turned their attention to the United States. From 1825 women developed their own extensive network of independent anti-slavery organizations and engaged in a wide variety of extraparliamentary activities, some of which they pioneered. British anti-slavery organizations initially supported gradual emancipation and it was a pamphlet by a woman, Elizabeth Heyrick's *Immediate, not Gradual Emancipation* (1824), and the women's associations that changed this. Heyrick's arguments were grounded in the principle that freedom was a "sacred

²¹ In the United States "women's discontent with their position was as much cause as effect of their involvement in the antislavery movement. What American women learned from abolitionism was less that they were oppressed than what to do with that perception, how to turn it into a political movement" (DuBois 1978: 32).

unalienable right." She saw gradualism as "puerile cant" and slave insurrections as self-defense against appalling oppression.²²

But Heyrick was unusual among women anti-slavery activists, who more resembled missionaries than revolutionaries. They commonly came to the movement out of Christian duty, and focused on the plight of women slaves, the tearing apart of slave families and education. Their Christianity meant that the humanity and spiritual equality of the slave was emphasized, a radical position. But this was counteracted by a general sense of cultural superiority. Most women in the movement, however benevolent and opposed to slavery they might be, failed to see blacks as other than in tutelage, waiting to be assisted by their white mother. It was not until Sarah Remond, an African American, arrived in 1859–61 that a (very short-lived) anti-slavery organization had black committee members. The case of Mary Prince, a slave brought to London from Antigua by her owners, Mr and Mrs Wood, who refused to emancipate her, is instructive. In 1831 she published her autobiography, *The History of Mary Prince: a West Indian Slave*, widely used by the Anti-Slavery Society in its publicity.²³ Clare Midgley summarizes Prince's position. She was treated "not as a fellow-activist but rather as a victim of slavery, as a possibly unreliable individual whose account needed authentication, and a working-class servant. Given this, it is hardly surprising that they did not think to recruit her as a member of one of their ladies' anti-slavery associations" (1992: 91).

The racial order permeated the women's movement in the United States. The enormous suffrage movement, for instance, was largely segregated. A difficult political dilemma arose with the Fifteenth Amendment; should suffragists support the enfranchisement of the freed male slaves despite the fact that black women continued to be excluded from the ballot box? The two most prominent white leaders, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan Anthony, opposed the Amendment

²² Heyrick believed that everyone was implicated in slavery and called on the population to act themselves through mass abstention from slave-produced goods (Midgley 1992: 104–8; see also M. Ferguson 1992: 253–8). In 1804 Maria Edgeworth wrote in her tale "The Grateful Negro" of the benevolent slave-master Mr Edwards: "He wished that there was no such thing as slavery in the world; but he was convinced, by the arguments of those who have the best means of obtaining information, that the sudden emancipation of the negroes would rather encrease than diminish their miseries. His benevolence therefore confined itself within the bounds of reason" (2003 [1804]: 49).

²³ The book was dictated to and edited by a white woman and included a lengthy supplement and appendices to authenticate it. "[T]here are times when Prince's voice seems more discernable than at others" (Salih 2000: xiii). The editor, Susanna Strickland, excised Prince's sexual history but this was revealed in Wood's libel action against Thomas Pringle, the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society (see Prince 2000: app. 3).

and the controversy split the movement for a generation. By the 1890s, white suffragists, who had already campaigned for decades and were desperate for any political opening, began to attack votes for ignorant, unwashed men, whether African American or immigrant, and entered into extremely unsavory alliances with racist Southern politicians.

Another example: one of Frances Willard's campaigning slogans was "a white life for two." By this she meant that the sexual double standard should be abolished and that sexual equality would be lived out in a teetotal and monogamous life, with chastity for both partners before marriage. But how should the metaphor of a "white life" be interpreted? Did it mean a pure life for all or was it a life suited to a racially superior population? Again, should Charlotte Perkins Gilman's many references to "the race" – in her day she was the most famous feminist writer in the United States – be read as referring to the human race or to the white race? Such uncertainties were well suited to a society that by the 1890s was in the grip of Social Darwinism (derived from Herbert Spencer) and in which popular acceptance of eugenics was growing.²⁴

Gilman provides a fascinating illustration of how feminism (rejection of the sexual contract) and race (acceptance of the racial contract) were interwoven. In modern societies, she argued in 1898, there was too great a differentiation between the sexes; it was "carried to such a degree as to be disadvantageous to our progress as individuals and as a race" (1966: 33). Women traded on their sexual attractiveness, not their talents, and one result was "pathological maternity" (1966: 169).²⁵ Women, she insisted, had a "racial duty of right selection" of a father for their children (1966: 201). Prospective mothers, not fathers, should be responsible for selecting suitable mates to ensure sturdy offspring. But if women were to exercise this responsibility they had to be educated, independent, and men's equals. The human race would thus become fitter, but it is clear that Gilman had whites in mind as the model for progress.

In 1908 she published an essay, "A Suggestion on the Negro Problem." She notes that, as a result of contact with "our more advanced stage of evolution," many Negroes had rapidly become "self-supporting and well behaved" but most had not (1908: 80). To improve

²⁴ Francis Galton invented the term "eugenics" in 1883, but his interest in the subject had begun in the 1860s. He devoted a chapter of *Hereditary Genius* in 1869 to "The Comparative Worth of Different Races" and was explicit that the white race contained the most advanced humans (Galton 1978 [1869]).

²⁵ Wives were nothing more than house servants and one saw all around "innumerable weak and little women, with the aspirations of an affectionate guinea pig" (Gilman 1966: 168). She advocated radical reform of marriage and the home, which she saw as a relic from an earlier era.

and civilize them Gilman suggested that they should be formed into a labor army. This would have its own uniforms, music, and insignia and include all ages, with schools for children. The army would provide its own food and clothing and there would be training in domestic service, but its major task would be in agriculture and in developing the South. Gilman declared that this plan was "not enslavement, but enlistment"; once individuals were deemed capable of working on their own initiative they would graduate "with honor." The army would be "compulsory at the bottom, perfectly free at the top" (1908: 81, 82).

"[C]oncern with eugenics was characteristic of nearly all feminists of the late nineteenth century" (Gordon 1990: 110). The sociologist Edward Ross was one influence on Gilman, and he coined the term "race suicide," popularized by President Theodore Roosevelt. This could mean either that the least fit were breeding too fast and thus endangering the human race, or that the falling birthrate among whites and rapid growth in the nonwhite population was leading to the end of white civilization.²⁶ Either way, *some* women (not even all white women) were required to have more babies. The eugenic argument was that only the better specimens of their kind should be allowed to reproduce.

By the early twentieth century, prevailing opinion across the political spectrum was that a modern society should take scientific steps to ensure that its population was of the requisite quantity and quality.²⁷ Leaders of the birth control movement, such as Margaret Sanger in the United States and Marie Stopes in Britain, joined in the efforts to limit the reproduction of the least fit human beings.²⁸ In principle, examples of poor quality could occur anywhere in the population but, in practice, the "undesirables" were found in certain groups. The criteria hinged on such features as social inadequacy, fecklessness, feeble-mindedness, and sexual indicators, all of which overlapped with the characteristics typically attributed to the poor in general, poor women in particular, and nonwhites.

²⁶ "Race suicide" was a major issue in Australia as well as the United States. Ironically, in the United States between 1870 and 1910 the black birthrate seems to have been declining at a faster rate than that of whites (Gordon 1990: 150-1, and note, 151).

²⁷ Reference was made to "Bolshevik eugenics." J. B. S. Haldane wrote in 1938 in Britain that questions about eugenics spanned the conventional political divisions: "For example, the English National Council of Labour Women had recently passed a resolution in favour of the sterilization of defectives, and this operation is legal in Denmark and other countries considerably to the 'left' of Britain in their politics" (quoted in Paul 1984: 570-1).

²⁸ The movement in the United States had begun as agitation for "voluntary motherhood," part of the campaign for women's rights and reform of marriage law, but in the twentieth century became a professionalized part of population control (Gordon 1990).

By 1904 Galton was arguing that eugenics “must be introduced into the national conscience, like a new religion” (2000 [1909]: 83). In the United States and Europe it became very big business, funded by major foundations and supported by many of the most prominent and progressive figures on both sides of the Atlantic.²⁹ By the end of the 1930s the Birth Control Federation was singling out African Americans, arguing that their numbers were increasing from births among the least fit. Between 1919 and 1964 at least 30 states had eugenics legislation to allow involuntary sterilizations. Huge numbers of women were sterilized, whether voluntarily or not. One estimate is that in 1972 alone the federal government had funded over 100,000 sterilizations, many on black women; in North Carolina the majority of sterilizations were carried out on black women from 1933 onward. Sometimes the operation was performed on girls as young as 12. In Puerto Rico, after legislation in the late 1930s, over 35 percent of women of childbearing age had been sterilized by the 1970s (Davis 2003). Nonwhite women, mostly poor Puerto Ricans and Chicanas, were also used, respectively, to test the birth control pill and the IUD (Gordon 1990: 421–4).

One of the charges made against the women’s movement by nonwhite women in the United States soon after its revival in the late 1960s was that, while the right to abortion was vigorously advocated, little was said about involuntary sterilization.³⁰ This was an example, they argued, of their exclusion from the movement and the failure to see that their interests frequently differed from those of white women. There were differences, too, over feminist critiques of the family and the oppression of women (see, e.g., Joseph and Lewis 1981) and over paid employment. The majority of African-American women had always had no choice but to be in paid work. When welfare measures were introduced in the 1930s, black women with children, unlike white women, were seen as “employable mothers” (Kerber 1998: ch. 2).

²⁹ Eugenics, of course, took its most extreme form in Nazi Germany, where American developments had been eagerly followed. In Sweden and other Nordic countries it was an integral part of the welfare state. A National Commission in Sweden in 1997 drew attention to the scale of eugenic activities there. A National Institute for Race Biology had been established in 1922, and by the time the legislation was eliminated in 1975 over 60,000 sterilizations had taken place, 90 percent of them on women.

³⁰ This remains a pressing issue. In 2002, for example, a report from investigators appointed by the Health Ministry in Peru stated that over 330,000 women, mostly poor Amerindian women, had been sterilized between 1995 and 2001. The report stressed that “they were blackmailed, threatened, or bribed with food; none was properly informed” (Barthélémy 2004: 8). Pharmaceutical corporations also carry out clinical trials in Africa without the ethical safeguards required in the West, a matter dramatized in the movie *The Constant Gardener*.

Many nonwhite women today still see feminism as relevant only to middle-class white women, a perception no doubt reinforced when women's organizations remained silent about the welfare reform legislation in 1996 that abolished Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The beneficiaries of the program were mostly mothers from minority groups, particularly African Americans, caring for children on their own. To be sure, by 1996 most mothers, from choice or necessity, were in the paid labor force and only "welfare mothers" received assistance to be at home with their children. Yet many Americans saw black mothers as moral failures, as lazy and unwilling to help themselves (Gilens 1999). This was why the figure of the undeserving, African-American "welfare queen" was able to haunt the popular political imagination.

The complexities of the position of black women, and the corrosive effects of the sexual and racial contracts, were highlighted when Anita Hill, a former employee of Clarence Thomas at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accused him of sexual harassment during his nomination for the Supreme Court.³¹ The hearings of the Senate Judiciary Committee became a major public spectacle after Hill's accusation. The Chair of the Committee ruled that the burden of proof lay with Hill, and the Senators apparently found it difficult to believe that sexual harassment was commonplace in workplaces. The hearings and media coverage turned not on Thomas's conduct but on Hill's truthfulness, another episode in the very long history of distrust in women's ability to tell the truth in court combined with an even greater disbelief in black women's veracity.³² Many African Americans saw the charge of sexual harassment as part of a white feminist agenda that operated to the detriment of black men and so as casting doubt on Hill (Burnham 1992: 311–13). They also saw Hill as violating a code in her own community. She had criticized a fellow African American in public and raised the question of the treatment of black women by black men. The breach, Hill said, "damned me in the eyes of many Blacks whose

³¹ Thomas was nominated by President George H. Bush in 1991, despite the fact that the American Bar Association had found him only marginally qualified and his performance as Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission had been poor. He seemed unwilling to enforce antidiscrimination law (see Burnham 1992; Swain 1992). Resnick (1995) gives an account of the judicial background to the hearings and discusses the procedure. Thomas's nomination was narrowly confirmed.

³² Thomas even famously claimed that he was the victim of a "high-tech lynching." In contrast, Hill was seen as having "betrayed the man who had done me a favor by hiring me" (A. Hill 1995: 275). Moreover, she was a single woman and this gave rise to insinuations that she was attacking Thomas because she had been spurned by a black man married to a white woman.

profound experiences of racism have led them to ignore within our own community what we find intolerable when committed by others against us" (A. Hill 1995: 284).

IV Home and Abroad

It might be objected that my historical illustrations are drawn from a completely different context than my two examples from the 1990s. After all, I argued in *The Sexual Contract* that the heyday of modern patriarchy in Britain was between 1840 and the late 1970s; by then its props had begun to crumble and conventional understandings of "masculinity" and "femininity" were under challenge. In addition, the legal underpinnings of racial power in the United States had been dismantled, and almost all colonies had become self-governing.³³ Further changes have taken place since the late 1970s; for instance, multiculturalism is now public policy. But although the context has changed, the social and economic legacy of old forms of women's subordination and racial superiority linger on, and newer forms have emerged.³⁴

Some insight into the persistence of these patterns of power can be gained by bringing economic exploitation, emphasized by Charles Mills, to the fore and by bringing the racial and sexual contracts – or what, in the wider focus of this section, might be called the global sexual-racial contract – together with Norman Geras's contract of mutual indifference (1998). The latter (and the global sexual-racial contract) are "contracts" in a broader sense than my usage in *The Sexual Contract*, more akin to Mills's conception of the racial contract.

Geras distinguishes the contract of mutual indifference from theories of an original contract. It is not, he argues, about origins or justifying government; nor does it involve a state of nature. Rather, the contract of mutual indifference is "imputed," it "can be read from the realities of our time" (1998: 28). But early modern theories, with their pictures of the state of nature and justification of a particular form of government, also owed a good deal to the realities, as each theorist interpreted them,

³³ I cannot discuss here the contribution made by women to the liberation movements and how they were then typically relegated to lesser citizenship in the new states. There is now a growing literature on nationalism and gender; for two early examples see Yuval-Davis (1997) and McClintock (1995: ch. 10).

³⁴ In Western countries race "persistently correlates with statistically overwhelming significance in wage levels, unemployment levels, poverty levels, and the likelihood of incarceration" (Alcoff 2002: 15). In the United States, African-American men are arrested and imprisoned in extraordinarily large numbers. Brian Barry writes of the "black gulag" in the United States and he notes that a similar trend is occurring in Britain with young black men (2005: ch. 7).

of their present. The crucial question is precisely how we are to read these realities. Not everyone sees Geras's contract, or the sexual or racial contracts, in our past or present circumstances.

The contract of mutual indifference reflects a world in which, in general, people remain unmoved by large-scale atrocities, mass deprivation and distress. Geras does not deny that there are people and groups who are motivated by humanitarianism and make efforts, sometimes very heroic efforts, to assist others in torment or distress, but most people, most of the time, do not do so. The contract reflects *general* not *universal* relations of mutual indifference. The contract of mutual indifference, Geras argues, is a model of our world that is "exaggerated – or, better perhaps, reduced – by omission of such mutually assisting behaviour in dire misfortune as there is" (1998: 29). That is to say, the contract takes the form of a pact that I do not come to your aid in an emergency and I do not expect you to come to mine. Geras's central argument is that we lack a social morality of mutual aid and so feel under no obligation to come to the assistance of others, even in the most extreme circumstances. We are governed by mutual indifference. ✓

Humanitarianism – a concern for the well-being of people unknown to, and often far distant from, ourselves – was created, Thomas Haskell has argued, in an early stage of capitalism in the late eighteenth century. A major change in moral sensibility occurred when individuals began interacting in a capitalist market; ideas of moral responsibility broadened and individuals became "men of principle" (1985: 560).³⁵ Haskell, however, remarked that the later stages of capitalism might provide much less support for humanitarianism. This is the import, too, of Geras's comment that in societies such as Britain and the United States the norm of "collective existence" is for the wealth of some to be accumulated from the poverty of others. Poverty and its deprivations, though often deplored, are accepted as part of the social order and so "to all intents and purposes" the sufferings of the poor "are of little consequence" (1998: 59). That is, we remain indifferent to them. ✓

During the past quarter-century, capitalism, and so Geras's norm of collective existence, has extended across the world and into most areas of social life. Even Marx might be surprised by its scope. The expansion has been accompanied by a marked increase in economic inequality and insecurity, both within the United States and Britain and between rich (mostly white) and poor (mostly nonwhite) countries. The "Overview"

³⁵ Haskell's main example of humanitarianism is the anti-slavery movement but he overlooks both the prominence of women in the movement and that, by the late eighteenth century, capitalism was being constructed as an arena for men. Middle-class women were supposed to confine themselves to the home. How, then, did they become women of principle?

in the 2005 *Human Development Report* (UNDP 2005) provides a summary of the extent of global inequality. Some countries and regions have prospered, but many have not – some African countries have gone backwards – and there are large disparities between urban and rural populations. At present it looks unlikely that the UN Millennium Development Goals will be met by 2015. Income inequalities have increased in countries inhabited by over 80 percent of the world's population; 2.5 billion people live on less than \$2 a day and have 5 percent of global income (more than 1 billion live on less than \$1), while the richest 10 percent enjoy 54 percent of global income.

Africa was at the heart of the construction of the modern concept of "race" and now the image of the starving, about-to-die African infant symbolizes the suffering of the global poor. Predatory, brutal, and corrupt leaders and elites share responsibility for destitution in Africa, as do companies engaged in the latest round of plunder of the continent's riches, but as Thomas Pogge (2002) has recently argued, the structure and policies of global economic institutions have contributed too.³⁶ These institutions are part of the changes now called globalization (for data, see Held et al. 1999). In one sense, globalization is hardly new. It was part and parcel of early modern European expansion and formed the context in which political theorists formulated theories of original contracts. But the present phase is wider, is moving with greater speed (see T. Brennan 2003), and has been driven by neoliberal doctrines of structural adjustment, deregulation and privatization, touted with the same fervor as the old colonial mission.

The extraction of resources from poor countries is now, for the most part, less dependent on the gun and the lash than it was during the colonial period; bodies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization, and agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement have taken center stage.³⁷ But, in the last analysis, just as military force upheld colonialism, neoliberal policies and the power and reach of Western corporations are underwritten by the overwhelming military strength of the United States (demonstrated most vividly by the orders for the complete privatization of occupied Iraq drawn up by the Provisional Coalition Authority under Paul Bremer, which received remarkably little publicity). Few poor countries have escaped the imposition of structural adjustment, the creation of labor

³⁶ Policy for Africa in both the United States and Britain is geared towards privatization and big corporations through the Corporate Council on Africa in the US and the Investment Climate Facility in Britain (Monbiot 2005).

³⁷ Thankfully, King Leopold's Congo is a thing of the past; but, for example, few questions were asked for a long time about "blood diamonds" and oil companies have been accused of complicity in major human rights violations in more than one country.

markets, the entry of Western corporations and the consequent transformation of their economic life and cultures. Their borders must be opened to corporate capital and their social services and resources, including water, handed over to private buyers; their agriculture must be focused on crops for export (though they face tariffs) and compete with imports from the rich countries (subsidized at the level of \$2 billion per week); farmers must cease to save seeds and buy them from corporations each season.³⁸ The poor even sell their vital organs, particularly kidneys, to the rich through thriving illicit global markets.

This is the context in which the contract of mutual indifference reinforces, and is reinforced by, the global sexual-racial contract.)

If "poverty" were defined as living on 60 percent of median income, 23.8 percent of the population in the United States would have been living in poverty in 2000.³⁹ The richest two-fifths have almost three-quarters of the national income (B. Barry 2005: 175). In Britain inequalities have increased to the point where the poorest 20 percent of the population have an income that is comparable to that of their counterparts in a much poorer country, the Czech Republic (UNDP 2005: 56). In 2002, the poorest 10 percent received 3 percent of the national income and the richest 10 percent received over a quarter (B. Barry 2005: 175). Income inequality is also correlated with other important social indicators such as education, health, and longevity.⁴⁰

These inequalities are fueled by the sexual and racial contracts. In both countries women and nonwhites are overrepresented among the poor.⁴¹ Statistics about wealth are particularly telling; disparities are much greater than for income. In the United States, 80 percent of the population received only 9 percent of gain in marketable wealth between 1983 and 1998; in Britain, the poorer half of the population received only 7 percent of the increase in marketable wealth between 1982 and 1996 (B. Barry 2005: 188). Of households in the United States

³⁸ Thousands of farmers in Andhra Pradesh in India have committed suicide since the early 1990s when their livelihood began to fail as market reforms were introduced. In 2003 the Department of Justice was investigating 120 slavery cases, many involving migrant farm workers in the fields of the United States (Bowe 2003: 38).

³⁹ The Luxembourg Income Study, at www.lisproject.org/keyfigures/povertytable.htm. A level of 50% or 60% of median income is a common measure of poverty in Europe and in cross-national studies. In the United States poverty is measured by the income required to buy a bundle of basic goods, a measure virtually unchanged since the 1960s. This gives a threshold of around 40% of median income.

⁴⁰ In Washington, DC, the infant mortality rate among African Americans is higher than in Kerala in India (UNDP 2005: 58).

⁴¹ See, for example, for figures for Britain, DWP 2004: ch. 3, and for the United States the website of the US Census Bureau, at http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032005/pov/new01_100_01.htm.

with less than \$5,000 net worth in 2000, 45 percent were headed by non-whites (although nonwhite households were only 24 percent of all households). The median net worth of (non-Latino) white households in their highest quintile was \$208,023 compared with \$65,141 in the highest quintile of black households. In the lowest quintiles, the median net worth of white households was \$24,000 – and in black households it was \$57 (L. Williams 2004: 684).

These figures go a long way to explain why it was predominantly African Americans who had no means to leave New Orleans – one of the poorest cities in the United States – during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and were herded into an unsanitary, ill-equipped stadium. In an interesting insight into the workings of the contract of mutual indifference at home, the then head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency is reported to have remarked that “we are seeing people we didn’t know exist.”

The consequences of the global sexual-racial contract are even starker; the poor and destitute of the world are overwhelmingly non-white and the worst-off are likely to be female. Women’s plight is summed up in the well-known statement that women do two-thirds of the world’s work, earn 10 percent of the income, and own less than 1 percent of the property. Most of the world’s refugees and displaced persons are women and their children. Girls and women are likely to be less literate, less well nourished, and to receive less medical care than men and boys; they are also less likely to survive. Amartya Sen (1990) calculated that over 100 million women are “missing” in South Asia and China, cultures where girls have little value.

Increasing inequality has weighed very heavily upon women (and their children) everywhere, but especially in poor countries. The survival of families depends on the work of women, and the reduction, privatization, or elimination of public services means that they now carry extra burdens. An illustration of the global sexual-racial contract is the emigration of many women, who send home remittances to support their children and other family members, to work as maids and nannies. There is now “a global transfer of the services associated with a wife’s traditional role . . . from poor countries to rich ones” (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002: 4). Domestic servants largely disappeared after the Second World War in the United States and Britain but demand is now rising. One reason is that although the majority of women are in the paid workforce they are, typically, still responsible for domestic caring work; men refuse to do their fair share. Thus employing a maid avoids marital conflict – and allows men to continue to free-ride – and maids are increasingly likely to be imported. Maids move from Southeast Asia to the Middle and Far East, from the former Soviet bloc and Africa to

Western Europe, and from south to north in the Americas (see the maps in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002: 276–9, and in Seager 2003: 72–3).

The sex industry and sexual violence are two other graphic illustrations of the global sexual-racial contract. The growth of the sex trade – the demand by men for the sale of women's bodies as a commodity in the market – has expanded apace since I wrote my book. Women emigrate to work in the industry and are also tricked and forced into it; numerous well-organized criminal organizations have women and girls as one of their products. The trade is fueled by women's impoverishment (including in Russia and the former Soviet bloc countries) and by the wars and population displacement of the last two decades.⁴² Women and young girls in refugee camps and conflict zones may have to provide sex to their "protectors" in the form of UN peacekeepers and aid workers for the means of survival.⁴³ The global flows of women into the sex industry are well defined enough to be mapped and reflect men's racial preferences (Seager 2003: 56–7, map 20).

In addition to the violence involved in the sex trade, other forms of violence against women continue unabated. In November 2005, the World Health Organization issued a report on domestic violence showing that it is a global problem, occurring in rich and poor countries alike, something that feminist scholars and activists have been aware of for some time. Men kill women every day.⁴⁴ Rape is endemic worldwide (contributing to the spread of HIV), committed by men with virtual impunity. Women have always been seen as one of the spoils of war and rape is also used on a mass scale as a weapon of war. Many recent wars have involved (what is now called) ethnic cleansing. Here again the sexual and racial contracts are interwoven. Rape has been used not only to humiliate enemy men by violating, shaming and

⁴² The "shock" introduction of capitalism and privatization in Russia has impoverished much of the population while creating the new class of ostentatious millionaires. The poorest 20% receive 6% of the national income, 27% of the population (officially) is below the poverty level (unofficially it is around 40%), and pensions are around 20% of subsistence level; welfare expenditure has remained stagnant since 2000 and public health expenditure is 0.2% of GDP (Clément 2003: 10). In 2004, seven members of Putin's entourage controlled 40% of the GNP (Clément and Paillard 2005: 6).

⁴³ When troops and a variety of civilians arrived in Kosovo in 1999 the sex trade increased enormously; "the international presence . . . initially made up some 80 per cent of the clients." Women are now trafficked from all over the Balkans and Eastern Europe to Kosovo to be sold onward (Vulliamy 2005: 14–15; see also the Amnesty International report of May 2004). In 2005 there was another such scandal about the Congo. But such predations are not new; over a decade ago, for instance, UN forces sent to Mozambique were reported to be utilizing child prostitutes.

⁴⁴ In the town of Ciudad Juarez, over the border from El Paso, Texas, for example, over 300 women have been murdered since 1993. In Guatemala more than 1,600 women have been killed since 2001 (Asturias and del Águilas 2005).

degrading "their" women and girls, but as a way of "diluting" the bloodline of the enemy community through forced impregnation.⁴⁵

At this point it might be objected that, while my examples show that there is still work to be done, the task of eliminating global inequality and the sexual-racial contract is well underway. And, far from being indifferent, people respond very generously to major appeals for help and numerous organizations provide assistance. I do not want to deny that much is being done or to dismiss the generosity; indifference, as Geras argues, is general not universal. However, the problem is not only that problems persist but that not all cases of distress receive the same response.

For example, generosity is generally greater for natural disasters than in the case of man-made catastrophes or deeply entrenched problems. It is, of course, very much easier, at least in the first stages of a natural disaster, to see how a difference could be made than to see what can be done in the face of endemic, grinding poverty or wars which destroy not just numerous communities but whole countries.⁴⁶ Seeing what might be done has become harder, too, because citizens in the United States and Britain have little exposure now to criticism of prevailing economic dogmas. We are encouraged to believe that there is only one "natural" way to organize economic production across the globe and to believe that everything must be on sale in markets.

Besides such obstacles, response and lack of response to distress is refracted through the contract of mutual indifference and the global sexual-racial contract. Many problems have been acknowledged only very recently; violations of women's rights began to receive attention as breaches of *human* rights only during the 1990s and it has taken until the twenty-first century for rape to be prosecuted/as a war crime. Rape during war began to receive major publicity only when it happened in the early 1990s in Europe. Little was heard about the quarter to half a million women, almost all Tutsi, raped in 1994 during the genocide in Rwanda. There is still indifference to the enormous number of victims in the conflicts in the Congo. A great deal of attention was paid to killings in the Balkans, unlike the genocide in Rwanda or the indifference for a quarter of a century to the death toll and atrocities in East Timor

⁴⁵ Raped women, and any consequent children, may be shunned by their communities. For a discussion of rape as a central weapon in genocide see MacKinnon (2005).

⁴⁶ It is especially difficult when we are told that wars arise from primordial ties or are fought by peoples much more prone to violence than ourselves. This neatly diverts attention both from the desire for power and control of resources by elites and from sales of small arms – some 640 million in existence worldwide – and torture equipment from Western and other companies (leaving aside the matériel available on the black market).

after it was invaded and annexed by Indonesia.⁴⁷ Indifference continues to the Russian blitzkrieg and violations in Chechnya. There has been little concern about the fate of the 4 million souls who have perished in war and its consequences in the Congo. Indifference persists to the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the destruction of infrastructure, agriculture, and homes, and the killing and maiming of Palestinians (or the construction of roads for the use of Jews only; even South Africa did not go that far).

In 2006, it is relatively easy to find out about these examples and about many other tragic cases. Occasionally they are in the news, and the United Nations, the World Bank and a plethora of nongovernmental organizations issue reports, major international conferences have been held on women's rights, and war crimes tribunals are hearing cases from a number of conflicts. Information is available on the internet. The question is why people prefer not to know about, make no effort to find out about, ignore, remain unmoved by or turn away from deprivation and distress, even extreme torment. This is a very difficult question to answer (and my remarks do not address the politics of governmental and international inaction; why, for example, the World Food Agency announced at the end of April 2006 that it was halving rations being distributed to the traumatized, displaced people of Darfur because donors had supplied only a third of funds needed). But consideration of the past history and present realities of the sexual and racial contracts can make a small contribution to understanding the widespread phenomenon of indifference, of turning a blind eye to suffering.

That, at the beginning of *States of Denial*, Stanley Cohen can list 27 expressions related to "hearing what we want to hear," "not believing that this is happening" and so on, shows how adept we are at avoidance (2001: 1-2). As Geras points out, it is not easy to learn about and think about past or present horrors; indeed, it can be unbearable to dwell on them. It is much less disturbing and a great deal easier to remain as indifferent bystanders, or to adopt the position where "we know and don't know at the same time" (Cohen 2001: 5; see ch. 6 for bystanders). Yet it is easier for some rather than others to maintain "willful ignorance" (Frye 1983). Part of being in power or being privileged is that a choice is available about what is seen or listened to. The powerful can ignore or be shielded from anything that might threaten their position

⁴⁷ Documents declassified in late 2001 confirmed that President Ford and Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, had assured Suharto that the United States would not object to action against East Timor. Aceh has been in the news and a peace settlement has now been reached only because of the total devastation caused by the tsunami in 2004 and the influx of foreign news media and personnel from the UN and nongovernment organizations. West Papua is still ignored.

and their comforts. Frequently they lie about what is going on. On the other hand, their underlings, too, can prefer "to know and not to know" if speaking out would undermine their security or bring down sanctions on their heads. Cohen (2001) discusses such mechanisms in detail.⁴⁸

Knowing but not knowing occurs in the context of the global sexual-racial contract. It is easier to be indifferent to the misery of others if those involved are seen as having brought their distress upon themselves, or are perceived as very different, as alien, as worth less, as inferior, as barely human or as another "race." Their sufferings can then be seen as of little or no account. Charles Mills argues that the racial contract requires that the distress of whites count for a great deal more than that of nonwhites. The sexual contract plays just as large a role in fostering indifference. Prevailing conceptions of masculinity and femininity cultivate and sustain indifference. The lesson that little girls and women are worth less than little boys and men (that women exist *for* them) is conveyed in a multitude of ways, beginning in the home. No emergency or "war on terror" has ever been declared because of the scale of violence against women. Everyday violence by "our" men against "our" women continues remorselessly but we turn away our eyes. We do not want to know about the violence inflicted on "their" women.

Geras's argument is about our response to dire emergencies and extreme suffering, but lack of mutual aid, indifference, and knowing but not knowing are found in less dire circumstances. They are part of everyday life. Indeed, indifference at home helps explain at least something about indifference to the fate of those far away. Perhaps the most common objection to arguments for universal mutual aid is that our natural inclination, and our first obligation, is to care for those closest to us. The most common response to this objection is that, even if this is the case, there is no reason why it should preclude assistance to others abroad. What is usually overlooked is that it is not true that all those closest to us receive assistance. There is a hierarchy of worth at home and abroad. The interrelationship between the sexual and racial contracts encourages turning a blind eye, corroding everyday life at home and fostering indifference to destitution and suffering abroad.

V Concluding Observations

Part of present economic orthodoxy is that there must be unfettered movement of capital, goods and services – but no free movement of

⁴⁸ For a novel in which a whole country "knows and not knows" (and which raises some questions touched on here about a different problem) see Ishiguro (2005).

poor, nonwhite people. The European Union (EU) has expanded east, where skins are mostly not so dark, but at the same time it has become "fortress Europe" against the nonwhite poor outside. Far-right, racist parties are gaining ground and in Britain resistance to the entry of refugees has been growing amid hysteria about "asylum seekers." Immigrant communities – labeled "immigrant" even if large numbers are citizens by birth – tend to be on the margins of society, concentrated in poor areas, their members working in low-level jobs or unemployed. A large part of immigration into Europe has been, as it were, the return of the repressed colonial past.⁴⁹ But the connection between the population flows of the past 50 years and the European expansion that began in the early modern period has largely been erased from the popular political imagination. This is why the history of the sexual and racial contracts is so crucial; it is not possible to understand present-day patterns of global inequality, sexual and racial subordination, and indifference to distress without some understanding of their historical development.

For example, shades of old debates about civilization and lesser races, and of previous claims about the poor treatment of women in colonial possessions compared to the position of women at home, hang over controversies about immigration. Much popular attention is now directed to the oppression of women in immigrant communities. In several European countries the *hijab* and other female Islamic dress has become a battleground for the defense of "European culture." Albeit that all this is a backhanded compliment to the influence of the women's movement, much of the concern appears to have less to do with women than to be a way of presenting the communities concerned as alien. It is reminiscent of the cynical use made by the United States government of the extreme subordination of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban. During the years that the Taliban were forming and after they seized power in Afghanistan little or nothing was said at official levels about the position of women, but when bombing was imminent it was claimed that war on Afghanistan would liberate women, a claim accepted by some prominent feminist spokeswomen.

⁴⁹ This has now been replaced in Britain by large inflows from the East European countries newly part of the EU; estimates in the latter part of 2006 were that around half a million had immigrated, mostly from Poland. A high rate of immigration into the United States continues, but nonwhite illegal immigration, especially from Mexico and Central America, is now a controversial political matter and since 9/11 the southern border continues to be fortified. Hypocrisy is the order of the day. In California the economy, especially the service and agricultural sectors, depends on cheap immigrant labor but in 2005 and 2006 growers were complaining that because of crackdowns on entry they did not have enough workers to harvest their crops.

Two final comments: toward the end of *The Racial Contract* Charles Mills notes that it is not only whites who are implicated in a racial contract and he mentions Japan and World War II (1997: 127–8). There are many current examples of states governed by a particular racial or ethnic group that exploit, ill-treat, or wage war against members of their own population, often in the name of maintaining the unity and borders of the state. It is not only Europeans who see people unlike themselves as backward and unfit to be self-governing. Nor is imperialism a uniquely European phenomenon. The expansions of the Han Chinese into Tibet or the Javanese across the Indonesian archipelago are examples. The strategic and economic importance of numerous countries to the United States and other Western countries means that the global racial contract is now enmeshed in a range of lesser racial contracts. Local rulers and elites support the interests of Western governments and corporations, and are supported by them, assisting the transfer of resources from the global South to the North.

Conceptions of racial and sexual difference are political constructs and both can, and do, change. The possibility is open that “race” could be eliminated and that what it means to be a “man” or a “woman” could alter radically. The racial and sexual contracts could, therefore, become mere historical curiosities. But, as this chapter is designed to show, both are deeply embedded in social and political institutions, national and international, and in individuals’ sense of themselves. A great deal has to change, including the neglect of the history I have illustrated, before the global sexual-racial contract withers away.

Paul Gilroy has recently argued that there is a “crisis” in which the idea of race “has lost much of its common-sense credibility, because the elaborate cultural and ideological work that goes into producing and reproducing it is more visible than ever before, because it has been stripped of its moral and intellectual integrity, and because there is a chance to prevent its rehabilitation” (2000: 28–9). That Charles Mills and I have written this book is, in a sense, a testament to that very crisis. But there can be no certainty whether, or about the manner in which, it might be resolved. In our current global circumstances and the “war on terror” it would be foolhardy to make a prediction about the future of mutual indifference and the sexual and racial contracts.

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