



## Race Matters

By Cornel West

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*The fundamental litmus test for American democracy-its economy, government, criminal justice system, education, mass media, and culture-remains: how broad and intense are the arbitrary powers used and deployed against black people. In this sense, the problem of the twenty-first century remains the problem of the color line. --from the new Preface*

First published in 1993 on the one-year anniversary of the L.A. riots, *Race Matters* was a national best-seller, and it has since become a groundbreaking classic on race in America.

*Race Matters* contains West's most powerful essays on the issues relevant to black Americans today: despair, black conservatism, black-Jewish relations, myths about black sexuality, the crisis in leadership in the black community, and the legacy of Malcolm X. And the insights that he brings to these complicated problems remain fresh, exciting, creative, and compassionate. Now more than ever, *Race Matters* is a book for all Americans, as it helps us to build a genuine multiracial democracy in the new millennium.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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## Race Matters By Cornel West Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### From Publishers Weekly

In eight brief but powerful essays, West, director of Afro-American Studies at Princeton, delivers innovative analyses of our nation's racial dilemmas. West is insistently moral, criticizing racial hierarchy and black leaders who cannot transcend race to fight for "fundamental social change." Though he does not spare black liberals, he more harshly criticizes "new black conservatives" who in his view ignore the damaging cultural force of black sexual and military images as employed in advertisements and mass media. Exploring black-Jewish relations, he suggests that the moral voices in black America have been drowned out, and in "Black Sexuality," takes on what has long been considered a taboo subject. These essays, none written in the first person, can have an air of detachment: when West calls for a "politics of conversion" to fight black nihilism, his best example comes from Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*; when he criticizes Malcolm X for having ignored the culturally hybrid character of black life, he proposes the figure of "jazz freedom fighter" as one who could "promote critical exchange and broad reflection." But West is more healing visionary than historian. These essays, most of which first appeared in such magazines as *Dissent* and *Z*, solidify his position as one of the nation's leading public intellectuals. 40,000 first printing; paperback rights to Vintage; BOMC selection; QPB featured selection; author tour.

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### From School Library Journal

YA-Thought-provoking essays that address a number of controversial issues of concern to African Americans. West analyzes such subjects as nihilism in black America, the crisis of black leadership, affirmative action, black-Jewish relations, sexuality, and the legacy of Malcolm X. His writing style is scholarly and sparse—he does not waste words, and his prose is easy to read. Yet his viewpoints are radical and passionately felt. He is not afraid to speak frankly and, while he presents many criticisms, he also offers many solutions. Not everyone will agree with his point of view, but if one of his objectives is to make readers at least think about the problems he has dissected, then he has succeeded admirably.

*Pat Royal, Crossland High School, Camp Springs, MD*

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### From Library Journal

In this collection of essays, many of which have previously appeared in journals, West, the director of Afro-American studies at Princeton and the author of several books, including *Prophetic Fragments* ( LJ 3/1/88) and *Breaking Bread* with bell hooks ( LJ 12/91), addresses a number of issues of concern to black Americans: the Los Angeles riots after the Rodney King verdict; Malcolm X; Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill; and black street life. These topics are all timely yet timeless in that they represent the continuing struggle to include African Americans in mainstream American political, economic, and social life without destroying their unique culture. West's essays have the feel of a fine sermon, with thought-provoking ideas and new ways of looking at the same old problems. They can be quickly read yet take a long time to digest because of West's unique slant on life. Already well known in scholarly circles, West is increasingly becoming more visible to the general public, and this book should make his essays more accessible to a greater number of people. Recommended for all types of libraries.

*- Anita L. Cole, Miami-Dade P.L. System, Fla.*

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#### **Michel Wilkerson:**

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#### **John Threadgill:**

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