



# **Race and the Politics of the Exception: Equality, Sovereignty, and American Democracy (Routledge Series on Identity Politics)**

*Utz McKnight*

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The traditional assumption today about race is that it is not political; that it has no political content and is a matter of individual beliefs and attitudes. In *Race and the Politics of the Exception*, Utz McKnight argues that race is in fact political and defines how it functions as a politics in the United States.

McKnight organizes his book into three sections, beginning with a theoretical section about racial politics in the United States. Using theorists such as Benjamin, Agamben, and Schmitt, McKnight discusses how the idea of racial communities went from being constituted through the idea of racial sovereignty and a politics of the exception that defined blacks as the internal enemy, to being constitutionally defined through the institutions of racial equal opportunity. In the second section, McKnight further develops his critical race theory by exploring in more detail the social use of race today. The election of President Obama has brought the politics of racial equality to a critical point. In spite of a very powerful set of political tools to define it as a thing of the past, race matters. In the final section, McKnight engages with important African American fiction from each of the three major periods of racial politics in the US. Earlier descriptions of political theory are used throughout these analyses to refine the argument for a new critical politics of race.

Scholars of political theory, identity politics, African American studies, and American Studies will find this work ground-breaking and relevant.

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