

“Robert Fuller explores how rank has been used throughout history to divide, separate and control people. Equally important, he tells us what we can do to overcome this outmoded and destructive social mechanism and establish social relationships based on the restoration and extension of the notion of dignity. This book is an eye-opener that we can all learn and benefit from in our daily lives.”

— JEREMY RIFKIN, PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION ON ECONOMIC TRENDS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., AUTHOR OF *THE AGE OF ACCESS* AND *THE HYDROGEN ECONOMY*

ROBERT W. FULLER taught physics at Columbia University in New York, where he co-authored the classic text *Mathematics for Classical and Quantum Physics*. He later served as president of Oberlin College, which he led through a series of educational reforms, many of which drew national attention.



A contributor to magazines in a wide range of disciplines, Fuller also served for many years as Board Chair of the nonprofit global corporation Internews, which promotes democracy and international understanding via free and independent media.

Fuller has four children and lives in Berkeley, California with his wife, Claire Sheridan.



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OVERCOMING *the*
ABUSE OF RANK

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“Somebodies and Nobodies is a shrewd and compelling look at the crucial but usually unperceived role of rank in all our lives. How easily we put down those we see as subordinate in title or wealth or origin; how silently we cringe at another’s assumption of superiority... The abuse of rank [also] corrupts relations between nations, and between the governors and the governed in a democracy. Robert Fuller ... makes us understand that equal dignity, whatever one’s place in society or the world, is a key to peace and social order.”

— ANTHONY LEWIS, PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING FORMER COLUMNIST FOR *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

“Whether it’s because of race, religion, gender, class, title, or age, abuses of rank have impeded our attempt to create social justice. Robert Fuller’s exploration of how we use and abuse rank, both personally and politically, could help change that.”

— BETTY FRIEDAN, AUTHOR OF *THE FEMINE MYSTIQUE* AND *THE FOUNTAIN OF AGE*, FOUNDER OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR WOMEN

“A wonderful call to action against the spillover of status. Wealth, job title and social positions are too often allowed to outweigh the respect to which each human being is entitled.”

— ROGER FISHER, DIRECTOR, HARVARD NEGOTIATION PROJECT, AUTHOR OF *GETTING TO YES*

“Somebody, nobody — in my time, I’ve been both. Most of us have. Robert Fuller breaks the taboo on speaking about rank as others have on race and gender. The message is simple; the message is vital: protect the dignity of others as you do your own. To be somebody, the nobody within you has only to take a stand.”

— TOMMIE SMITH, GOLD MEDALIST IN THE 200-METER DASH AT THE 1968 MEXICO CITY OLYMPICS, WHERE HE GAVE THE BLACK POWER SALUTE ON THE VICTORY STAND

“Robert Fuller’s ideas about ‘rankism’ changed my personal behavior. I think they will change the world, in time. It is one of those ‘click’ realizations that you can’t unclick — everything human looks different afterward, and you have to do something about it.”

— STEWART BRAND, GLOBAL BUSINESS NETWORK, THE LONG NOW FOUNDATION, FOUNDER OF *THE WHOLE EARTH CATALOG*, AUTHOR OF *HOW BUILDINGS LEARN*



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“... a wonderful and tremendously important book on the ‘ism’ that is far more encompassing than racism, sexism or ageism. ‘Rankism’ must be our prime target from now on in. Viva Fuller!” — STUDES TERKEL, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Working*

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SOMEBODIES
AND NOBODIES
OVERCOMING *the*
ABUSE OF RANK

Robert W. Fuller

“The quest for recognition, especially by those who lack status, has long been seen as one of the driving forces of human history. Somebodies and Nobodies explains how recognition, or its absence, affects your life, and what we can all do to make sure that we treat each other with the dignity we each deserve.”

— FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY, AUTHOR OF *THE END OF HISTORY, TRUST, AND OUR POSTHUMAN FUTURE*

IN THIS GROUNDBREAKING BOOK, Robert Fuller takes the analysis of discrimination beyond racism and sexism to reveal a form of injustice that everyone knows, but no one sees: discrimination based on rank, or “rankism.” Low rank — signifying weakness, vulnerability, and the absence of power — marks people for abuse in much the same way that race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation have long done.

Somebodies and Nobodies explains our reluctance to confront this phenomenon, and argues that abuse based on power differences is no more defensible than that based on differences in color or gender. It unmasks rankism, demonstrating its pervasiveness and corrosiveness in our personal lives, social institutions, and international relations. Illuminating the subtle, often dysfunctional workings of power in all our interactions — whether on the individual, societal, or global level — it presents rankism as the last obstacle to equal opportunity, brings into focus a “dignitarian” revolution that is already taking shape, and offers a preview of a post-rankist world.

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ROBERT W. FULLER