



“In this long-overdue biography of Robert Purvis, Margaret Hope Bacon has given us back one of the towering figures in the history of civil rights.”

—FERGUS M. BORDEWICH, author of
*Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad
and the War for the Soul of America*

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Born in South Carolina to a wealthy white father and mixed race mother, Robert Purvis (1810–1898) was one of the nineteenth century’s leading black abolitionists and orators. In this first biography of Purvis, Margaret Hope Bacon uses his eloquent and often fierce speeches to provide a glimpse into the life of a passionate and distinguished man, intimately involved with a wide range of major reform movements, including abolition, civil rights, Underground Railroad activism, women’s rights, Irish Home Rule, Native American rights, and prison reform. Citing his role in developing the Philadelphia Vigilant Committee, an all black organization that helped escaped slaves secure passage to the North, the *New York Times* described Purvis at the time of his death as the president of the Underground Railroad. Voicing his opposition to a decision by the state of Pennsylvania to disenfranchise black voters in 1838, Purvis declared “there is but one race, the human race.” *But One Race* is the dramatic story of one of the most important figures of his time.

“Margaret Bacon has worked tirelessly in her effort to rescue Robert Purvis from obscurity and present him to the modern reader as a man who was both of his time and ahead of it in his demands for an equality that knew no lines of race or sex.”
— Julie Winch, author of *A Gentleman of Color: The Life of James Forten*

“Robert Purvis has long deserved a good biography. Bacon’s penetrating study illuminates both Purvis’s many accomplishments in a complicated and hostile world and his often prickly personality.” — Winthrop D. Jordan, University of Mississippi

“Bacon is effective in setting the context for Purvis’s activities—both in terms of public and family events, and in demonstrating the complex nature of black abolitionism. She has helped to reclaim Purvis’s rightful place in American history.”
— Roy E. Finkenbine, Director, Black Abolitionist Archives, University of Detroit Mercy

MARGARET HOPE BACON is an independent scholar and the author of many books, including *Valiant Friend: The Life of Lucretia Mott* and *Abby Hopper Gibbons: Prison Reformer and Social Activist*, also published by SUNY Press.

279 pages
Illustrated: 12 b/w photographs, 1 table
\$35.00 jacketed hardcover
ISBN 978-0-7914-7007-7

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS

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