## Off

**GND – 1NC**

**We advocate that the United States federal government adopt the Green New Deal.**

**Climate change accelerates racialized accumulations of advantage and disadvantage at every scale.**

Dr. Olúfẹ́mi O. **Táíwò 22**. Associate Professor, Philosophy, Georgetown University; PhD, Philosophy, UCLA. “What’s Next: Why Reparations Require Climate Justice.” Chapter 5 in *Reconsidering Reparations*. Oxford University Press. 2022. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/reconsidering-reparations-9780197508893?cc=us&lang=en&.

There’s a larger lesson here. A politically serious reparations project—at least one fitting the goals and ethos of the constructive view—must focus on climate justice. Everywhere is New Orleans.

People are usually surprised when I make this argument. The confusion makes sense—after all, they point out, there’s hardly an obvious conceptual connection between climate crisis and reparations for trans-Atlantic slavery and colonialism. They’re right. The connection is largely contingent: it just so happens, given the particular distributions created by this era of global politics and their ecological consequences, that our response to climate crisis will deeply determine the possibilities for justice (and injustice) in what remains of this century—and if we survive to the next. Had some things gone differently even decades ago—had the countries and corporations of the Global North polluted less, had the fossil fuel interests not worked along with coal and freight rail companies to orchestrate misinformation campaigns, protecting their short term financial gains at the cost of their and our collective future—the relationship between reparations and climate crisis could well have been quite different.21

But that’s not what happened, and as a result, the possibility of keeping justice alive in our time hinges on our response to the reality of a warming planet. We are going to have to become firefighters.

While the role of European culture and technology is often overstated in explaining this period of human history, it would be difficult to overstate the extent to which their voyages changed the physical, biological world around us. Prior to this period, different regions of the world evolved in a fair degree of ecological isolation: with the exception of birds, insects, and the occasional coconut, much of the natural world only interacted with other flora and fauna nearby, meaning that ecological connections were constrained by the size and scope of human economic trade.22 The global racial empire stretched that trade across the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans, which meant what some scholars call the “Columbian exchange”: a historically unprecedented flow of plants, animals, and pathogens into environments that had never dealt with them before.

The results of this linkage were immediate and of world-historical scale. The introduction of European pathogens alongside forms of colonial domination, especially the extensive slave trade in Indigenous peoples, created public health crises that disrupted lifeways and caused mass death.23 This toxic combination led to 56 million deaths in the Americas from 1492 to 1600—so many deaths that some Earth System scientists estimate that the “Great Dying” actually cooled the Earth.24 This would represent the first anthropogenic global climate event—since it preceded and set the political stage for the Industrial Revolution. Its most important impacts, clearly, were the unfathomable suffering and loss of life engendered by diseases and the colonial disruptions that helped spread them. Moreover, the catastrophic depopulation of the Americas probably played more of a role in the success of the European campaigns of imperial conquest than the mythical European cultural superiority.

The Industrial Revolution itself followed some centuries later. For the first time in human history, the “shackles were taken off”: “self-sustained growth” in human production was able to outpace the natural constraints of famine and other sources of periodic social breakdown.25 The British empire, where this process started, was hardly the intellectual center of Europe, much less the world.26 But it was a colonial powerhouse, already dominating key parts of the world, including much of the massive Indian subcontinent, thus linking it to the massive potential riches of competitive advantage at world scale. This combined with a crucial bit of geological luck: it had more available coal on its islands than competitors in Europe or South Asia.27 British industrialists developed new techniques to extract and use coal energy in order to compete with the Indian producers, which lead to new forms of iron production and thus mechanization: crucially, of the textile industry that converted cotton from the American South into clothing for the entire world.28 Coal-powered, mechanized production revolutionized British manufacture and the economic world, helping to complete the dominance of the colonial powers. And this aspect of the global racial empire, industrialism, also had world-historical ramifications for the ecological world.

Coal would have pride of place for over a century, and is still a major source of global energy. But in the middle of the twentieth century, it would be overtaken by another world-historically important fossil fuel: oil. After the 1950s, oil served as “the principal source of market growth” worldwide. It not only fuels vehicles, but it serves as a needed ingredient in the production of plastics, the use of which are now ubiquitous.29

The use of oil, coal, and other fossil fuels since the onset of the Industrial Revolution has sent billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere since the nineteenth century. The ecological ramifications of this are tremendous: by as soon as 2070, if present trends continue, an estimated 1 in 3 humans will be pushed out of the climate niche that our species has inhabited for millennia.30 The main threats include sea level rise, which poses an existential threat to the Pacific islands, Bangladesh, and the Nile delta, while drought and potential agricultural failure leave much of Africa on a knife’s edge.31

We are finally beginning to collectively understand the fact that climate change is a present-tense ecological crisis, and that the worst is yet to come. How we respond to climate crisis will define the politics of this century—and this success or failure sets the basic political conditions for the world that reparations projects seek to affect. Years of record-breaking heatwaves in Europe and massive wildfires in the United States and Australia have been tied by scientists to climate change.32 Accordingly, public opinion about climate change has shifted in parts of the global North, as the percentage of people expressing serious concern in countries like the United States and United Kingdom has risen substantially.33

What remains is for all of us, but especially those of us invested in the project of racial justice, is to realize the full implications and urgency of the political crisis that the incoming climate emergency also represents. As climate impacts accelerate, we can expect them to perversely distribute the costs and burdens of climate change, disproportionately impacting those who have been rendered most vulnerable given the accumulated weight of history.

One reason that we can expect the costs of accelerated environmental catastrophe to be distributed in ways echoing the history of global racial empire is that this is already happening. Researchers studying New York City found that heatwave deaths and even the temperature itself was racially distributed: areas with a larger percentage white population had more plants and air conditioners.34 Similarly: after Hurricane Harvey in Houston, negative financial outcomes like bankruptcy were heavily concentrated among poorer residents.35 The Isle de Jean Charles Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw won $48 million in relocation funds from the federal government to move further inland, marking them as the first official climate refugees of the United States.36 It was a landmark in a bleak struggle. Climate change and sea level rise claimed their island, which one local described as the core of their culture.37 Groups without federal recognition of tribal sovereignty have found it difficult to pursue similar claims despite facing similar risks, and as of 2020 the federal government has failed to provide adequate resettlement resources.38

Over the very same years of the 2010s, climate change impacts reared their head in the Global South, to much less media fanfare. Decreased rainfall and increasingly frequent droughts in Kenya have already driven pastoralists and farmers to the brink of survival.39 Researchers link recent violence between neighbors in Mali and Nigeria to resource conflicts exacerbated by climate-related desertification and other impacts.40 Both small island nations and Indigenous nations in climate-affected areas face existential risks for their nations and lifeways.41

Climate crisis is likely to lead to new social divisions between those advantaged enough to buy or coerce security from climate impacts and those who cannot. At a community, local, and national scale, we can expect police to protect the rich and socially well-positioned, often leaving vulnerable those on the business end of nightsticks or behind cell walls.42 At the scale of geopolitics, we can expect the balance of power between nation states and Indigenous communities to be shaped increasingly by forces of the same kind: the climate crisis is likely to shuffle increasing power and control into the hands of those in command of wealth, coercive force, or strategic resources.43

To be sure, some aspects affecting the distribution of climate impacts are fairly directly ecological: whether or not a family is affected at all by a hurricane or sea-level rise depends on how close they are to a body of water. But, as I argued in the chapter on the constructive view, what matters from the standpoint of justice is how these ecological phenomena affect people’s capabilities—what lives they are or are not empowered to live. This is determined not just by what happens to the ecological systems, but by the interaction of those impacts with a host of other factors that are determined by our social and political systems.

Some people who have to, say, retreat from a coastline will have access to money or credit to manage the financial costs of relocation, a passport or citizenship status that will widen the legal possibilities of their relocation, and a social status that will make the receptive communities in the places they are likely to move accepting of their presence. Others will lack some or all of these key advantages. Many will be burdened with some or all of the disastrous mirror image disadvantages: being cash-poor and indebted, having a citizenship status whose immigration is specifically banned or curtailed by other countries, or a social status that attracts stigma and violence.

In short: climate change threatens to turn existing forms of injustice into overdrive at every scale of human life.

If we want insight into how the climate crisis will interact with global racial empire’s distribution of advantages and disadvantages, one place to start is an investigation of how global racial empire already distributes environmental risk and vulnerability.

Figure 5.1 is a boxplot, also known as a “box and whiskers plot”: a form of data visualization developed by contributions from mathematician Mary Eleanor Spear and (later) John Tukey.44 They are a quick, powerful way to understand differences between groups: here, between countries that have been colonized and countries that have not. The “whiskers,” or the lines extending from the box, extend down to the minimum and up to the maximum value in a group excluding the dots, which represent “outliers,” which are cases so different from the majority of the group that statisticians tend to exclude them from many parts of statistical analyses.45 The solid black line inside of the ‘box’ shows the “median,” or the “middle” value—in our case here, half the countries in either group have this value or higher and half of them have this value or lower. The top of the box is the median of the higher half, and the bottom of the graph is the median of the lower half. Taken together, the “box” shows you the 50 percent of cases (in this graph, countries) closest to the median, the most representative values of the whole group distribution.

[FIGURE 5.1 REMOVED]

This boxplot gives us some insight on how global racial empire distributes environmental risk internationally right now. Most countries that were not colonized during the last five hundred years have a very low mortality rate due to pollution: fewer than 50 deaths per 100,000, less than half the mortality rate in countries that have been colonized. The boxes for the different groups do not overlap: the entire representative ranges are different—the non-colonized country with the most deadly pollution within the ‘box’ range has a lower death rate than the colonized country with the least deadly levels of pollution in its box range. The two groups of countries live in different environmental realities.

In environmental economics, the “Ecologically Unequal Exchange theory” gives a specific example of the kind of unequal distribution explained in chapter 2. According to the theory, our world economic system tends to move energy and biophysical resources from poorer to richer countries, and this material distribution has consequences for the distribution of ecological risks.46 This presents a problem for climate justice that is rooted in the distribution system carved into planetary politics by global racial empire: richer countries like those in the European Union are “draining ecological capacity from extractive regions by importing resource-intensive products and shifting environmental burdens to the South through the export of waste.”47 A recent empirical analysis supports the theory, finding that the net appropriation of resources from the poorer nations to richer ones is “systemic and pervasive in the current structure of the global economy” in every year analyzed.48

A group of environmental economists and geographers have proposed a partial explanation of why environmental risk and vulnerability is globally distributed in the way described by those espousing the ecologically unequal exchange theory. The “pollution haven hypothesis” predicts that, in our highly globalized economy, companies faced with stringent and costly environmental regulations in one country or region will move production to places with less stringent regulation. Higher income countries, which tend to have more economic leverage against companies and more politically empowered populations, also tend to have more stringent environmental regulations than lower income countries. As a result, the tendency of multinational corporations to seek less regulated productive environments translates into a tendency to move production and pollution to lower income countries—that is, from countries advantaged by the history of global racial empire to those disadvantaged by it.49 Were this to be the story of our mortality-rate boxplot, it would fit squarely into the very definition of racism offered by geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore: “the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”50 A thesis as controversial and politically charged as the pollution haven hypothesis has, of course, been widely contested. Nevertheless, several empirical studies support this hypothesis as well.51

Researchers have proposed a similar kind of explanatory mechanism within countries, which they call “green crime havens.” Green crime havens are areas of elevated environmental risk, associated with environmental crime violations. Dr. Robert Bullard, pioneering researcher of environmental racism and justice, explains how this kind of thing works: “Many industrial firms especially waste disposal companies and industries that have a long history of pollution violations, came to view the black community as a “pushover lacking community organization, environmental consciousness, and with strong and blind pro-business politics.”

These communities were ripe for exploitation. Residents of economically impoverished areas—intimidated by big corporations and deserted by local politicians—were slow to challenge private and governmental polluters of their neighborhoods. Moreover, the strong pro-jobs stance, a kind of “don’t bite the hand that feeds you” sentiment, aided in institutionalizing risks at levels that are unacceptable in the larger society.52 Researchers at Auburn University and the University of Florida found statistical evidence of green crime havens, and contended that these havens predominantly arise “as part of power differences and corresponding zoning decisions,” not simply the havens’ proximity to natural resources that companies want access to for production.53

Both the pollution haven hypothesis and the green crime haven hypothesis share an underlying point: when citizens are empowered to protect themselves against the harmful effects of pollution, they have the power to make their life and health matter. This is equally true within countries, as Flint, Michigan demonstrates.

Using the pollution haven hypothesis to explain the distribution of risk and vulnerability relies heavily on guesses about the deliberate, strategic action of particular actors who own factories and capital. If we want a story about that distribution that sharply splits the world into present day heroes and villains, we need look no further. But, as we recall from the discussion of responsibility and liability, the world is often not so simple as this. Nor do we need it to be: the distribution of environmental risk and vulnerability can be explained simply in terms of the patterns of accumulation described in chapter two.

Accumulation, remember, is the result of distribution over time. If you and I both save ten cents of every dollar we earn over our working lives, we will both end up with accumulated savings by the time we retire. At small scales there is, as always, an element of choice and responsibility in the matter: if we both make around the same amount of money from our jobs and have access to similarly consistent hours, then in the end the person with the most retirement funds will be the thriftiest or hardest working of the two of us. However, if I make minimum wage and you make seven figures a year, there is no point trying to explain the difference between our retirement savings in terms of our spending habits or willingness to tack on overtime shifts. The distribution of income in our working years, not our work habits, explains the different levels of accumulation we have when we retire. What we can do in our retirement age, how we are cared for, and what we leave are, likewise, primarily determined by this distribution.

The environmental risk and vulnerability facing countries and populations is much like this: it emerges from several overlapping strands of political, cultural, and economic accumulation, which were largely set in motion generations ago. Climate change researchers at the University of East Anglia created an index of eleven key indicators for vulnerability to climate change impacts, identified through a combination of statistical analysis of a much larger list of potential indicators and consultation with scientific experts of various related disciplines.54 The indicators: percentage of the population with access to sanitation, three measures of literacy rate (for 15 to 24-year olds, all adults over the age of 15, and the ratio of literate women to literate men), maternal mortality rate, typical caloric intake, civil liberties, political rights, government effectiveness, life expectancy at birth, and a measure of access to justice termed “voice and accountability.”55

Notably absent from their list are abstract measures of the total economy, such as GDP, or even of economic inequality, such as the Gini coefficient. Present are those aspects of social life that express how material social advantages have been accumulated and distributed throughout a population: access to basic material requirements for flourishing human life, such as sanitation, food, health care, political rights, and literacy. This is right on target from the perspective of the constructive view and its use of the “capabilities” framework: what matters about the economy are the actual lives people are empowered to lead, and we are often better served asking about people’s capabilities directly.

Researchers found that climate vulnerability is largely determined by fairly general aspects of how advantages and disadvantages have been distributed, and as the global racial empire is responsible for that distribution, the connection between global racial empire and climate vulnerability is clear.

Responding to environmental calamity requires working political infrastructure, the accumulated result of years of development of norms, legal structures, and institutional knowledge. For example: strong legislatures can effectively constrain or altogether prevent excess executive power—even that of dictators.56 Yet colonized countries, particularly on the African continent, often inherited relatively weak legislatures, deeply autocratic political structures, and the dictatorial institutional memory of colonial management.57 These initial conditions affected the trajectory of legislative power development even after formal independence was won, since legislative power develops over time and the effects of institutional development survive the rise and fall of particular regimes.58 This form of accumulation would then directly affect a number of the measures that researchers have found to be key determinants of climate vulnerability, including “government effectiveness,” “political rights,” “voice and accountability,” and “civil liberties.”59

Responding to environmental calamity and its impacts on public health requires a working epistemic infrastructure: robust networks of knowledge and trust. Substantial empirical and formal evidence suggests that these are the accumulated result of generations-worth of decisions. Some of these distant decisions shape how cultures of trust or distrust are passed down within and across social groups, which affects how knowledge is produced and distributed in a country, community, or region.60 These factors combine powerfully in institutions, which tend to be built more vulnerably when social trust is low.61

This kicks off a cycle that is both stable and vicious. Low initial trust within and between groups translates into poor social institutions, whose corruption and ineffectiveness earns the next generation’s distrust, thus fueling an atmosphere of distrust that feeds into people’s relationships with each other as well. Other generations-spanning decisions are about building knowledge and the capacity to make use of it: these manifest in levels of investment in public education and research capacity, among other things. Neither the colonizers’ institutions nor the poor institutions built in the resultant atmosphere of distrust were up to the job: as of 2017, not a single one of the world’s top 100 research universities was located in Africa, Central America, or South America.62

Because of the confluence of ecological, political, and other post-colonial disadvantages, climate change is likely to further exacerbate and be exacerbated by every kind of international inequality. Another boxplot makes the case dramatically:

This second graph, Figure 5.2, shows the dramatic, structural difference in historically accumulated climate vulnerability between countries with different colonial histories. The colonizing parts of the world are now much less vulnerable to climate change than the regions they colonized, as measured by the aforementioned indicators (percentage of the population with access to sanitation, three measures of literacy rate, maternal mortality rate, caloric intake, voice and accountability, civil liberties, political rights, government effectiveness, and life expectancy at birth).63 These measures are, again, general indicators of the extent to which people enjoy access to the social advantages and disadvantages that determine their capabilities and empower them to respond to stressors—climate or otherwise.64 What we’ve learned here is simply another lesson about how yesterday’s distribution affects tomorrow’s reality: heightened vulnerability to the incoming aspects of climate change just simply is greater deprivation in the status quo. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

[FIGURE 5.2 REMOVED]

It is not that every aspect of today’s global racial empire is rooted in the impacts of climate change. But every aspect of tomorrow’s global racial empire will be. Climate change is set not just to redistribute social advantages, but to do so in a way that compounds and locks in the distributional injustices we’ve inherited from history. If we don’t intervene powerfully, it will reverse the gains toward justice that our ancestors fought so bitterly for, ushering in an era of what the United Nations Special Rappoteur on extreme poverty and human rights calls “climate apartheid.”65

This represents a double challenge: we need to figure out how to address the ecological and the political disasters. The economic and political systems developed by global racial empire are responsible for the accumulations that explain the crisis: both the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the highly uneven buildup of advantages and disadvantages that determine how climate vulnerability is distributed within and between countries.

**The Green New Deal harnesses the state’s capacity to organize power and constitute markets, which intervenes in neoliberal common sense. That is the only sufficient response to the scope and speed of climate change and environmental racism that animates it.**

Rhiana **Gunn-Wright 20**. Climate Policy Director, Roosevelt Institute; BA, AAS, Yale; Rhodes Scholar, Social Policy, Oxford. “Policies and Principles of a Green New Deal.” Chapter 6 in *Winning the Green New Deal: Why We Must, How We Can*. Simon & Schuster, 2020.

When I asked my mom and grandma why Englewood looked like this, they didn’t tell me about guns or drugs or gangs. They told me about the government. About how the highway system had been built through black neighborhoods, destroying communities that would never be rebuilt. About the public housing authority razing public housing and scattering families in the name of “urban development,” only for city officials to turn around and sell the land to developers on the cheap, now that the projects sat on prime real estate. About the city underfunding black schools and then shutting them down because of “underperformance.” And that’s just what happened to my neighborhood—not even what happened to my family.

At the time I’m writing this, I now know that:

* My grandmother’s family was not eligible for Social Security for at least fifteen years because her mother was a washerwoman, and the New Deal excluded agricultural and domestic workers (nearly all black at the time) from Social Security—President Roosevelt needed to secure votes from Southern Democrats and Southern Democrats needed cheap labor from economically vulnerable black people.
* My grandfather bought our house without any help from the GI Bill, despite being a veteran of the Korean War. My mother told me that he was too proud to apply. The truth is, pride or not, the government denied home loans to black veterans, and the notorious redlining in Chicago meant that he wouldn’t have been approved anyway.
* I grew up in a frontline community—meaning that I lived in an area close to a pollution source and with high levels of air pollution. I developed asthma, like most of my friends in my neighborhood. I could barely run until I was in my late teens, and I regularly missed school, which, in turn, meant that my self-employed mother had to miss work. My mother and I had no idea that I was sick because of where we lived. My lungs are weakened to this day.

Progress came with a price, and the price was us. And by the time the Green New Deal came into my life, I would be damned before I paid another dime.

WHAT IS POLICY?

I have spent my life trying to rewrite systems of power, and policy is nothing if not a system for creating and distributing power. This is, of course, not how most people think of public policy. In fact, most “official” definitions of policy say something like this:

Policy [is] a statement by government—at whatever level, in whatever form—of what it intends to do about a public problem. Such statements can be found in the Constitution, statutes, regulation, case law (that is, court decisions), agency or leadership decisions, or even in changes of the behavior of government officials at all levels. For example, a law that says that those caught driving while intoxicated will go to jail for up to one year is a statement of governmental policy to punish drunk drivers. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a statement of government policy toward the environment....

And: “Policy is what the government chooses to do or not to do” about a public problem.

This is all true. But definitions like this make policy design sound like it’s orderly and contained—much like going to the doctor. You have a problem; the doctor diagnoses it; you two find the best treatment. Creating policy is more like going to the doctor with a problem, having fifteen people argue about if it’s a “real” problem that requires a doctor to begin with, then having five of those people (plus some new strangers!) start arguing anew about what the cause of the problem is, only to be interrupted by the doctor’s boss coming in to tell them that they can only choose two of five possible treatment options because the other three would hurt the hospital’s bottom line. And once treatment begins, people argue over how to determine whether it’s successful and if it should be reversed to save money or time.

Policymaking is not a science. It is a fight over whose problems get addressed, how those problems are addressed, and how public power and resources are distributed. If politics is a fight to elect people who reflect and share our values, policy is a fight to actually enact those values—to mold the world, through the work of government, into what we think it should be.

That is why, contrary to popular belief, the most important part of a policy proposal is not the details—at least at the beginning. It’s the vision that the policy presents. As a statement about what the government is going to do, policy inherently tells a story about what went wrong, how the government can fix it, and who has power to shape society—whether it’s the state or the public or corporations. The best policies tell compelling stories, galvanizing legislators and citizens to fight for them, and provide public servants with a clear purpose when they sit down to implement the details. The stories may shift as opponents pick new battles; the details may need tweaks or overhauls as unexpected challenges emerge. A coherent policy vision provides the foundation that both the stories and the details draw upon. Three pillars—the problem, principles, and power—form that foundation, and anchor policymaking from conception to execution.

Problems are the center of any public policy. Because policy is the government’s response to a problem, policy can only be created if we agree that an issue constitutes not just a problem but a public problem—that is, a problem that affects the public that cannot be solved without the government. How we define the scope and origin of the problem determines how we’ll craft a solution. That’s why fossil fuel companies spend millions to sow doubts about the urgency of the climate crisis and cover up their culpability. It’s not just about saving face; it’s about changing our understanding of the problem and preventing government action.

Principles. Policymakers need a compass to navigate the near-infinite variety of policy designs, and principles— which include both our moral values and our theories of government—provide that compass. Remember, policymaking is collective problem-solving—not an objective “science.” Policymaking, like all decision-making, is guided not only by facts but by our values—about freedom and justice, about what we deserve, about what “other people” deserve and, perhaps most crucially, about what the government should and should not do. Principles are, in short, the moral and intellectual core of a policy. They define not only how we engage with a problem but what solutions we consider at all.

Problems in our society are rooted in power. Asking why a problem remains unresolved leads to questions of power: Who wields it and to what end? Are the powerful negligent or malevolent? By directing and entrenching flows of government resources and attention, policy always shapes the distribution of power. Effective, lasting policy changes must change the distributions of power that led to the problem initially, or else the old malefactors will undermine any success. When selecting the mechanisms a policy will use (a loan; a new legal protection; a direct public investment; a new federal agency), policymakers are deciding how to maintain or disrupt the balance of power. And this is not limited to power in the public sector. Governments write the laws, enforce the contracts, and build the infrastructure that make a society and economy possible. Policy changes reverberate beyond the public sector into every domain of our lives.

Problems, principles, and power are the pillars of any policy vision. Together, they animate the policymaking process, guiding not just the story policymakers tell but the decisions they make about what should (or should not) be included in a given proposal.

IS THE GREEN NEW DEAL A POLICY?

The Green New Deal is a proposal for a ten-year economic mobilization to rapidly transition the US to a zero-carbon economy and, in so doing so, regenerate and reorganize the US economy in ways that significantly reduce inequality and redress legacies of systemic oppression. The congressional Green New Deal (“GND”) resolution has five goals:

1.Achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers.

2.Create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States.

3.Invest in the infrastructure and industry of the United States to sustainably meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

4. Secure clean air and water, climate and community resilience, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment for all.

5. Promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of frontline and vulnerable communities, including Indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.

The GND resolution proposes to achieve these goals in two ways. The first is through a set of “projects” that, if completed, would nearly eliminate carbon emissions in the US. The second is through a set of policies that aim to protect Americans from the disruption and instability that transitioning away from fossil fuels will create and reduce inequity. Some people like to refer to the first set of projects as the “Green” part of the GND and the second as the “New Deal” part. While this may be a helpful rhetorical device, it is a dangerous way to conceptualize the GND. All parts of the GND advance decarbonization—even the “non- climate” policies like universal health care, education, and job training. Similarly, the “green” projects can help reduce inequity if they are designed to create millions of well- paying jobs, bolster worker power, invest in local communities, and strengthen the social safety net—all of which the Green New Deal proposes to do.

Addressing decarbonization and inequality simultaneously has prompted critics to accuse the GND of being a “progressive wish list,” not a policy. Their criticism often reveals a narrow policy vision guiding their thinking. The problem is simply the carbon in the atmosphere; Mr. Policy Doctor will prescribe the correct solution based on science; imbalances of power are mostly irrelevant, too difficult to disrupt when an urgent crisis needs solving.

This is a compelling story. But it cannot guide policymakers tasked with averting catastrophic warming, as many authors in this book show.

The Green New Deal is a new policy vision—one that will guide government and society through the biggest task in modern history: decarbonizing our global economy within the next ten to twenty years. The stories and details of GND policy will undoubtedly change in the coming years, but they will be anchored by the vision—a conception of the problem, a set of principles, and an analysis of power—that the GND provides. Vision, however, is not enough. The GND also establishes a framework for a national economic mobilization and a set of ever-evolving and specific policies that fit within this vision and framework.

THE POLICY VISION OF THE GREEN NEW DEAL: A NEW ERA OF CLIMATE POLICY

The Problems

The Green New Deal is designed, first and foremost, to address the climate crisis at the speed, scale, and scope required to prevent catastrophic levels of warming. That is why the Green New Deal resolution has a ten-year time frame; according to the 2018 IPCC report, global emissions have to be halved by 2030, but recent reports have noted that faster reductions will likely be necessary—especially from high-emitting countries like the US.

Only the federal government wields the power to lead a national mobilization that can decarbonize the economy fast enough. But, as Naomi Klein and Ian Haney López write, we can’t sustain a decade-long government-led economic transformation if the reigning ideology of market fundamentalism (described as “neoliberalism” by scholars of history, economics, and politics) and the right-wing’s strategic racism define the limits of political possibility.

The power to burn fossil fuels without limit or penalty requires a political and economic system that 1) allows industrial giants to override the will of the people, who largely want this crisis stopped, and 2) condemns some peoples and places to pollution, disaster, and death. This same system has also led to declining life expectancy and rising economic and racial inequality, and has left millions without access to adequate health care, housing, and education.

These are the “problems” policymakers must address. Not only decarbonization but the ideas, systems, and inequalities that underlie the climate crisis and make sustaining decarbonization year after year a near- impossible task. This is why the Green New Deal addresses health care, housing, job security, unionization, and access to clean water and healthy food. Insecurity, division, and scarcity often prime us to resist big, unknown changes. Until we counter those threats, we can’t move forward—on climate or anything else.

The other reason the Green New Deal addresses these “non-climate” issues is that a massive national effort to zero out emissions will disrupt and permanently change many lives and livelihoods.

Our current economy is predicated on a reliance on fossil fuels. They are our primary energy source. Imagine if we as humans stopped eating food and instead had to eat red algae. How would our lives change? Would we still need to eat three meals a day, or would we need to eat constantly? Where would we get the algae from? How would we grow enough to feed everyone? Who would grow it? How would we ship it? How much would it cost? What would happen to restaurants, to grocery stores? WOULD WE EVEN NEED REFRIGERATORS ANYMORE?!

Transitioning away from fossil fuels is no different. Fossil fuels do not just power our homes and cars. They power everything, from manufacturing clothing to streaming Netflix. Transitioning away from fossil fuels will directly affect the livelihoods of workers in the coal, oil, and gas industries and indirectly affect nearly every other sector. Ending our use of fossil fuels will, by its very nature, cause significant economic disruption and transformation— especially now that we have so little time. The question is simply how we will manage it.

A publicly led mobilization offers the best opportunity to design and manage the transition in ways that both grow the US economy and protect everyday people. But that is not how we’ve managed past mobilizations.

Every economic mobilization in American history has exploited marginalized people. The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC)—created during the New Deal to provide loans to homeowners facing foreclosure—often labeled predominantly black neighborhoods as “high risk,” which discouraged lending and encouraged redlining. Today, 74 percent of the neighborhoods labeled “high risk” are low- to middle-income neighborhoods, and 64 percent are predominantly minority—meaning that these areas are still racially and economically segregated to this day. Similarly, highway expansion and urban renewal programs during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s displaced hundreds of thousands of residents—mostly people of color—without adequate financial assistance, erasing decades of wealth for those who owned homes and businesses. Because of this, the thought of an economic mobilization understandably frightens millions of Americans. The Green New Deal must directly address these fears, or risk losing the public support it needs to sustain itself across a decade.

Furthermore, an economic mobilization that ignores justice and equity is a danger to both marginalized people and decarbonization. For example, the racist distribution of home loans, a product of the New Deal and World War II– era policy, fueled redlining, residential segregation, and suburban sprawl, all of which exacerbate emissions. Similarly, many of the communities that were split open to build interstate highways never economically recovered and have since become frontline communities with high levels of pollution and degraded air quality.

The problem of climate change requires a vast, rapid mobilization, but that mobilization won’t succeed if it is not just and equitable.

Principles

When it comes to climate change, you will hear people support (or refute) certain policies because it’s what “science dictates.” Science can help us to understand the extent of the climate crisis, identify its causes, and measure its severity. It can even suggest timelines for action. But science cannot tell us what policy solutions to pursue. That is a matter of principles.

If you cut your teeth in policymaking anytime in the past forty years of American politics, you’ve been surrounded by neoliberal theory presenting itself as “common sense.” Thus the compass you’re given to navigate the weeds of policy design is guided by a conventional wisdom soaked in the assumptions of neoliberalism: markets self-regulate, efficiently producing goods and growing the economy; government intervention is inefficient and harmful, except for the essential interventions governments make to establish and protect “free” markets; privatization, deregulation, tax cuts, and union-busting are needed for the market to function properly; inequality is a natural and acceptable consequence of capitalism. Society and government owe you nothing but the chance to work for your sustenance, and you owe nothing back.

If we try to steer a sustained national economic transformation with that compass, we will fail. Before we debate the details, our policy needs a new compass—a new set of intellectual and moral principles.

The Economic Theories Behind the Green New Deal

Several histories and theories influenced the vision of the Green New Deal, including the environmental justice movement, Keynesian economics, and the histories of World War II and the New Deal. But the most significant influence—at least during the early development of the GND—was a body of economic theory that we called the “new consensus.” Exemplified by the work of economists like Ha-Joon Chang, Mariana Mazzucato, Kate Raworth, Ann Pettifor, and Joseph Stiglitz, the new consensus rejects neoliberalism as the “right” governing paradigm for modern states. Instead, it contends that many of the crises that we face are the result not of government overreach but of government’s abdicating its economic responsibilities: as a market creator, as an industrial planner, and as an innovator.

Neoclassical economists believe governments should only seek to correct market failures, but as Mazzucato writes in The Entrepreneurial State, “that view forgets that markets are blind... They may neglect societal or environmental concerns... they often head in suboptimal, path-dependent directions that are self-reinforcing.” When oil companies relentlessly pursue extraction in deeper and more dangerous parts of the earth while ignoring clean energy investment, this is “not just about market failure,” Mazzucato argues, but “it’s about the wrong kind of market getting stuck”; we need government “actively creating and shaping (new) markets, while regulating existing ones.”

Following Keynesian theory, Green New Dealers are guided by the principle that government can and must do things that no other institutions do—be they the market, the church, or the family. It’s the reason why strengthening the public sector and empowering the government are crucial to the policy vision of the GND, because we need a direct, efficient, and just economic transformation, which the market alone cannot—and will not—provide.

Governments have an essential, constitutive role to play in steering national economies, and the GND seeks to embrace this role by rebalancing the relationship between the public (the state) and the private (the market). This does not mean that businesses and financial markets should not or cannot have a role to play. New Consensus economists see the private sector as essential to economic transformation and prosperity. In the GND’s policy vision, the government is not a handmaiden of the market, relegated to only fixing market failures; it’s a leader and a risk-taker that uses its unique abilities to create, regulate, and shape markets.

With government playing a leading role in the economy, the arsenal of public powers available to policymakers is expanded, allowing us to comprehensively and equitably solve climate, social, and economic crises. Three additional principles from New Consensus economists should guide Green New Dealers as we craft policy.

First, the US government, at all levels, must have a coordinated vision and strategy for a new “green” economy. As Mazzucato argues, one of the reasons the US has failed to significantly reduce emissions and develop a competitive clean technology sector is that the federal government has adopted a “patchwork” approach to climate policy, uncoordinated across state agencies and jurisdictions.

Second, public spending and investment are essential, not just for infrastructure and “public goods” but for innovation. Federal investment in R&D funded some of our most important technologies, including GPS, nanotechnology, and many key components of smartphones. Although we have most of the technology we need for decarbonization, we still need additional breakthroughs to fully transition from fossil fuels. However, as a share of gross domestic product (GDP), public spending for R&D has declined nearly 50 percent since the 1980s. GND policies must set aside neoliberal dogmas about the need to keep public spending low and instead embrace large-scale public investment strategies that rapidly decarbonize our economy and reposition the US as a leader, instead of a laggard, in the global green economy.

Third, the Green New Deal should invest in the real economy, not financialization. Although engagement with financial markets and products is important to the success of the GND, its policies should invest, first and foremost, in the “real economy,” meaning the parts of the economy made up of the flow of goods and services. GND policies should focus on factors that translate to real economic outcomes for everyday people (for example, job creation, wage levels, rates of unionization, and so forth) before focusing on what makes sense for financial markets and monetary policy. Monetary policy still matters, but financial markets should not be a primary concern when designing and implementing policy for the Green New Deal.

Our values informed how we interpreted the theories of New Consensus thinkers. We designed the Green New Deal as an economic mobilization not simply because it was the best solution to meet the need to rapidly decarbonize but because it was the solution that also provided the greatest opportunity for compassion, dignity, and justice. From the New Deal to World War II, economic mobilizations built the American middle class; but, as we discussed before, they only served certain Americans. With the Green New Deal, we have a chance to decarbonize, rebuild our economy, and correct those failures, but only if we design policies that do not treat injustice as a necessary—or acceptable— consequence of capitalism.

Power

The GND’s vision of power is one of redistribution: from private to public, from employer to worker, from the historically advantaged to the historically disadvantaged. Unchecked burning of fossil fuels requires two things: 1) coal, oil, and gas companies with the power to circumvent or stymie any democratically imposed constraints on their business model; and 2) people and places who can be hurt, even killed, with little consequence. In short, the climate crisis can continue unabated only with immense concentrations of economic and political power.

Over the last forty years, the top 1 percent—elites, as we’ll call them—have captured “more unfettered political, cultural, and intellectual power than at any point since the 1920s,” Naomi Klein writes.

Neoliberal policies have allowed elites to accrue nearly all of the economic gains since 1980, a hoard of wealth they use to finance anti-labor politicians, who then pass policies to weaken unions. The result has been wage stagnation and rampant economic inequality, with declines in union membership alone accounting for about one-third of the growth in income inequality since 1972. The 78 percent of Americans who live paycheck to paycheck are rightfully anxious when a politician tells them that “saving the climate” means losing their jobs. Elites have the power to steer economic policymaking and keep working people insecure; everyday folks live at the whim of their boss and “the market.”

Stagnant wages have also weakened local tax bases while increasing the need for social services, strapping state and local governments for cash and making them more vulnerable to the influence of moneyed interests. The result has been an erosion of local and community control over policy. A 2019 study of one million federal and state bills found that 10,000 of these bills were exact copies of model legislation produced by and lobbied for by elite- funded special interest groups and think tanks. Thousands of other bills included provisions from such model legislation. The majority of these bills advanced the interests of corporations and industry, even if they overrode the “will of the local voters and their elected leaders.”

The success of the Green New Deal depends on the ability to reroute power away from the 1 percent and the political and economic institutions designed to serve them. If we are going to become an economy that serves people and the planet, then the people—all of the people—need power, and we need it now.

The Green New Deal presents a clear vision of what we need to do to address the climate crisis. But vision alone is not enough. The US has not undertaken a substantial economic mobilization in nearly eighty years, and, in the wake of neoliberalism, policymakers do not know how to design one. They need a framework, which the Green New Deal provides.

The Green New Deal as a Framework for Economic Mobilization

The only time that the United States has scaled up production at anywhere near the speed that the climate crisis requires is during economic mobilizations. The Green New Deal is, as we have seen, a proposal for a ten-year economic mobilization. But what is an economic mobilization, and why is it the best way to address the twin crises of climate change and economic insecurity?

What Is an Economic Mobilization?

An economic mobilization coordinates and deploys (“mobilizes”) a nation’s resources (its “economy”) in response to a national crisis. Economic mobilizations organize an economy to achieve goals that are only possible when all of a country’s resources—public and private—are mobilized in accordance with a central common strategy and in relentless pursuit of shared objectives that supersede all other priorities. The question of whether an economic mobilization is an appropriate tactic is thus less a question of the type of crisis and more a question of the scale and nature of the crisis. To justify an economic mobilization, a crisis must be serious enough— existential, really—to demand an all-out “total war effort” from both the public and private sectors.

Given the time frame, the climate crisis—vast, existential, worsening by the day—is solvable only through an economy-wide energy transition, which requires an economic mobilization. Only a national coordinated all-out push can ramp up production of clean energy infrastructure fast enough—and ramp down emissions fast enough.

Consider the energy sector. In 2018, only 11 percent of the energy consumed in the US came from renewable sources. Electric vehicles account for less than 2 percent of all the cars sold. Buildings produce 40 percent of our nation’s carbon dioxide emissions. To transition to 100 percent renewable energy, one study estimates that the US will need roughly 78 million solar panels; 485,000 wind turbines; and 48,000 solar power plants—all new—to generate approximately 95 percent of all energy from wind and solar (about 1.5 million megawatts). A utility-scale wind turbine has about 8,000 parts, many of which need to be manufactured locally, near the site of deployment. And that is only the energy sector. Similar transformations need to happen in nearly every sector of the US economy, including housing, transportation, agriculture, and manufacturing. And, as in World War II, the US has to not only equip itself but develop and produce low-carbon goods for other nations, too.

As with any industrial mobilization, it is not enough to simply produce the necessary technologies; we must also build—and manage—the infrastructure to support them. That means millions of miles of new transmission cables to support “smart” electric grids that can integrate renewables; thousands of new charging stations for electric vehicles; and new manufacturing facilities to produce electric furnaces, heaters, and stoves to equip our homes and businesses—and that is still the beginning. We also need new practices to replace carbon-intensive industrial and agricultural processes. Regenerative agriculture, ocean farms, and even electrolysis—we need all of it to zero out emissions, and we need it fast.

An industrial mobilization can make the rapid, vast transformation we need possible. This is due, in part, to the policy coordination they generate. There are few other times when all of the levers of government—including regulation, legislation, executive action, and procurement— are aligned, coordinated, and leveraged toward a single set of goals. But it is also due, in large part, to the unprecedented levels of public investment they unleash, especially in service to initiatives that are too “risky” or big to attract private investors.

Critics who doubt our nation’s capacity to achieve a transition of the scale and speed the Green New Deal proposes should heed the lessons of the World War II mobilization: set the production targets you need to win, even if they seem impossible at the outset, and then hustle to meet those targets through massive, coordinated, and strategic public investment and collaborations with private industry.

Lessons from the World War II Mobilization

The World War II years are an illustration of the deep cooperation between the public and private sector that a successful economic mobilization requires. The WWII economic mobilization was designed not only to put the US on war footing but also to produce weapons, artillery, and machinery—the “arsenal of democracy”—that Allied forces needed. In his 1942 Annual Message to Congress, FDR set ambitious production targets: 125,000 planes, 75,000 tanks, 35,000 anti-aircraft guns, and 10 million tons of merchant ships in 1943 alone. “Our task is hard—our task is unprecedented—and the time is short,” Roosevelt said after announcing the new goals.

These were impossible targets when compared with US production capacity before WWII. Before the war, a year’s worth of production built enough ships to carry a total of 0.3 million deadweight tons and made 20.3 million pounds of airframes for plane construction; fewer than 100 tanks and 3,700 planes were made annually in prewar America. The mobilization transformed our production capacity. At the peak of ship production in 1943, the US built enough vessels to carry 18 million deadweight tons in a single year. Airframe production peaked the next year—787.1 million pounds built in 1944 alone. By the end of the war, the US had produced 299,293 aircraft and 88,410 tanks.

The production of component materials also skyrocketed, with the production of synthetic rubber, magnesium, and aluminum increasing anywhere from 7 times to 288 times the prewar average. Unemployment plummeted as a result of the industrial boom, dropping from 14.5 percent in 1940 to 1.6 percent in 1945—all while increasing wages and significantly reducing income inequality.

Tightly coordinated public-private partnerships and high levels of public investment made it possible for the US to rapidly increase production capacity in just a few years. The decision to prioritize public-private partnerships and support them with large infusions of public capital was a matter of sheer material need. The US had to equip at least 12 million American troops and also supply the British and French militaries. There was simply no way to manufacture that much materiel solely through public means. The government had to find a way to mobilize the US consumer economy—the largest industrialized economy in the world —to make military goods. The United States spent nearly $20 billion—almost 10 percent of all WWII defense spending—on manufacturing and machinery, and much of that investment went toward building “government-owned, contractor-operated” (“GOCO”) facilities: publicly owned factories run by privately owned businesses. The US government invested so much money in building new manufacturing facilities that by the end of the war it owned “close to a quarter of the nominal value of all of the nation’s factories.”

The success of public investment and the large network of GOCO factories would not have been possible without the involvement of business. Not only did business owners convert civilian factories for wartime production—going so far as to retool auto and radiator factories to produce tanks and helmets—they also lent their expertise and experience. Private engineers partnered with military experts to develop and upgrade new weapons. Corporate executives joined the War Department and traveled the country, recruiting other business leaders to commit to military production. Perhaps most importantly, civilian contractors worked with military officials to manage complex supply chains, train new workers quickly, and run increasingly large and complex production facilities.

Critics argue that economic mobilizations—especially wartime mobilizations—inherently stifle “free enterprise” and disadvantage the private sector. But private industry benefited from the World War II mobilization. Companies that operated GOCO facilities or manufactured war goods received contracts that reimbursed them for all authorized production costs and guaranteed profit. The US government also paid private firms—especially smaller firms—to license new and patented technology so that it could be produced at scale.

National economic mobilization requires huge workforces, which in turn tighten the labor markets, benefit workers, and create opportunities to balance economic inequities much more quickly than in normal economic circumstances. During WWII, for example, the share of the national income that went to the top 1 percent dropped from 15 percent in 1939 to 10 percent in 1945, and it fell even more steeply—13 percentage points—for the top 10 percent. The mobilization especially benefited marginalized workers, as the share of national income for many—including African Americans, women, and agricultural workers—rose sharply during the 1940s.

Economic Mobilization as a Response to the Climate Crisis

Economic mobilizations free the public sector to invest significant capital directly into private industries in ways that are coordinated, targeted, and strategic. During mobilizations, the government “absorbs” risk for new long- term (or large-scale) projects—by guaranteeing loans, providing early-stage capital, and so on—which makes it possible to develop new products without having to wait on private capital that is short-term and risk-averse. That risk- taking is crucial for the climate crisis. Although the US already has most of the technology we need to decarbonize, we still need some new breakthroughs—particularly when it comes to sectors like aviation and shipping. Economic mobilization gives the public sector a green light to invest heavily and directly in necessary R&D and to coordinate private capital to support these projects, once they have been proven to work.

In addition to unleashing public investment, mobilizations also amplify the public sector’s ability to strengthen and stabilize demand. Essential low-carbon industries, like solar and wind, have struggled to gain a foothold in the US, due in large part to inconsistent and insufficient demand. An economic mobilization allows the government—as both customer and regulator—to expand demand for “green” goods and reshape markets to support them.

Take solar energy as an example. To fully transition the US energy system to renewable sources, about 57 percent of all residential rooftops that are suitable for solar installations need to have solar installations. But in 2020, an average-sized residential solar installation will cost between $11,400 and $15,000 after solar tax credits—far more than most American homeowners can afford. Much of the expense is due not to the price of the hardware but to “soft costs” related to marketing, customer acquisition, and navigating different layers of permitting. It is a vicious cycle: fewer homeowners install solar because of the high cost; the price of residential solar does not decrease as fast because “soft costs” remain high; “soft costs” can’t go down until it becomes easier to acquire customers and deal with permitting. Until now, federal and state governments have done little to help, outside of offering tax credits, which do very little to defray upfront costs and thus do little to increase demand for solar installation from homeowners.

Green New Deal policies, however, can permanently increase demand by requiring new construction to be zero- carbon, funding solar retrofits of existing buildings, and streamlining permitting across states. Solar manufacturers no longer need to spend money marketing to hesitant customers—every new home needs solar panels. Instead of buying more ads, manufacturers can invest more in scaling up production to meet the increased demand, and the scaling up of production will spur new innovations that drive down hardware costs even further. Meanwhile, property owners can get grants from newly established green banks, expanding demand for solar to homeowners who otherwise cannot afford the upfront cost. This would employ thousands of people: there are well-paid public sector jobs waiting to be created on your house’s bare roof.

Economic mobilizations also present the possibility of reexamining and renegotiating our social contract—to decide what kind of country, what kind of society, we want to carry into the future. Economies and societies do not exist separately. In mobilizations—especially ones as massive as the one proposed by the Green New Deal—we need social policy that serves the goals and principles of the GND and provides the support necessary to maintain an economy at nearly full employment. That requires changes not only to labor policy but to every part of our social safety net, from health-care policy and childcare policy to workforce policy and housing policy. Some of the most significant economic effects of the original New Deal came from new social policies—like Social Security—and public employment programs that employed hundreds of thousands of Americans, which in turn maintained and prepared the workforce necessary for the production boom of WWII.

Mobilizations also create tight labor markets that redistribute wealth and reduce inequality. In fact, mobilizations distribute wealth far more effectively than redistributing wealth through the tax system, particularly for low-income and marginalized workers. But they are not inherently just—especially if not everyone can access the jobs they create. How can we attract enough workers for a national climate mobilization if the average cost for a year of childcare ranges from $5,500 to $25,000? How can families move to better-paying jobs in the mobilization if they are dependent on their employer-sponsored health care? How can people reenter the labor force if they do not know where to go for training or job placement? They can’t —unless we meet those needs through the public sector. That is why the Green New Deal includes commitments to a federal jobs guarantee, universal childcare and health care, and significant investments in education and workforce education.

These commitments were designed to ensure that any mobilization to address climate change adheres to the principles of the Green New Deal from design to implementation. The price of national progress cannot be systematized oppression—not again.

The Green New Deal as Public Policy

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has described the Green New Deal resolution as a “request for proposals,” and sure enough, communities and leaders from across the country have begun to translate the vision and framework of the resolution into concrete policy proposals. Although still nascent and evolving, these GND policies share four characteristics that differentiate them from traditional climate and economic policies.

First, all GND policy, whether narrow or broad, serves a triple bottom line: achieve the decarbonization goals set out by H.R. 109, reduce income inequality, and redress systemic oppression. The Green New Deal for Public Housing, for example, will retrofit and upgrade 1.2 million federally managed homes, reducing their carbon emissions while also creating hundreds of thousands of jobs. Grants for paid workforce development programs will train public housing residents and prepare them for the 250,000 jobs— all paid at prevailing wage levels—that the bill creates. All grant applications from local organizations must also be approved by resident councils, giving residents unprecedented control over how money invested in their homes will be spent. New York’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act aims for a triple bottom line with equitable investment, mandating New York reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions; establishes intermediate decarbonization goals—including 70 percent renewable energy by 2030; and requires that marginalized communities receive no less than 35 percent of the bill’s investment.

Second, GND policy works to shape markets and create demand so that low-carbon and no-carbon goods become the default, rather than the alternative to carbon-intensive goods. Maine’s Green New Deal and Los Angeles’s Green New Deal include renewable portfolio standards that require 80 percent of all energy be generated from renewable sources by 2040 and 2036, respectively, which will significantly increase the demand for renewable energy. New York City’s Climate Mobilization Act achieves a similar shift in demand and energy markets but through a different mechanism. By altering the city’s building code to include emissions caps for medium-sized and large buildings, requiring all new residential and commercial buildings to include either green roofs or solar installations, and adding wind to the Department of Buildings’ “toolbox” of allowable renewable energy technologies, the bill greatly expands markets for low- carbon building materials, renewable energy, and related technology, in New York and nationally.

Third, GND policy mobilizes public investment for sector- wide decarbonization, while ensuring that the investment provides workers, marginalized populations, and vulnerable communities with both a path into the new economy and protection from disaster. For example, the Green New Deal plan put forward by Senator Elizabeth Warren would invest $10 trillion—public and private—over ten years, with $2 trillion going toward green manufacturing and research; $15.5 billion toward sustainable agriculture and localizing food systems; and at least $1 trillion to frontline and fence- line communities. The Green New Deal plan from Senator Bernie Sanders would invest $16 trillion, including $2 trillion toward renewable energy and modernizing our electric grid; approximately $3 trillion to weatherize and retrofit low- and middle-income homes and small businesses; and roughly $2.7 trillion to help working-class families purchase electric vehicles. Sanders’s plan would also invest $40 billion in a Climate Justice Resiliency Fund that would be used for projects as varied as community centers and shelters with reliable backup power on one hand, and, on the other, wetland restoration and climate- related adaptation for frontline communities.

Finally, GND policy works to build power within and among those who are marginalized by prioritizing these communities in funding, policy design, and implementation, enabling local control whenever possible. The GND resolution requires that democratic processes, “inclusive of and led by frontline and vulnerable communities and workers,” be used to “plan, implement, and administer” the Green New Deal at the local level. So far, legislators have listened.

**T – 1NC**

**Topical AFFs must affirm the resolution.**

**The “USFG” is three branches.**

**U.S. Legal ’16** [U.S. Legal; 2016; Organization offering legal assistance and attorney access; U.S. Legal, “United States Federal Government Law and Legal Definition,” <https://definitions.uslegal.com/u/united-states-federal-government/>]

The United States Federal Government is established by the US Constitution. The Federal Government shares sovereignty over the United Sates with the individual governments of the States of US. The Federal government has three branches: i) the legislature, which is the US Congress, ii) Executive, comprised of the President and Vice president of the US and iii) Judiciary. The US Constitution prescribes a system of separation of powers and ‘checks and balances’ for the smooth functioning of all the three branches of the Federal Government. The US Constitution limits the powers of the Federal Government to the powers assigned to it; all powers not expressly assigned to the Federal Government are reserved to the States or to the people.

**‘Collective bargaining rights’ entitle employees to negotiate collectively with their employer in good faith over terms and conditions of employment.**

Mitchell N. **Reinis et al. 16**, Reinis is Attorney at Thompson Coburn LLP, California State Bar No. 36131; Santos is Attorney at Thompson Coburn LLP, California State Bar No. 210185; Higgins is Attorney at Thompson Coburn LLP, Pro Hac Vice; Kraft is Attorney at Thompson Coburn LLP, Pro Hac Vice, "California v. United States DOL," U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, Sacramento Division, 04/15/2016, Lexis

C. The Department's Other Arguments Conflate 13(c)(1) and 13(c)(2), Improperly Rely on NLRA Case Law, Employ an Inapplicable Preemption Doctrine, and Do Not Rationally Distinguish PEPRA From the Law Impacting MBTA.

The Department asserts that Plaintiffs can argue that 13(c)(2) protects the "collective bargaining" process only by ignoring 13(c)(2)'s use of "collective bargaining rights." The Department's suggestion that 13(c)(2) protects more than process, however, improperly conflates the distinct protections afforded by 13(c)(1) and (2) 8 and conflicts with 13(c)'s legislative history and Donovan. Congress intended for 13(c)(2) to protect "collective bargaining," a term that by definition means a "procedure looking toward the making of collective agreements." 9 And Donovan clearly described 13(c) as protecting the process of meaningful, good faith negotiations. 10 767 F.2d at 950-51; id. at 953 (13(c) "protects the process of collective bargaining"). The Department knows this; it has acknowledged 13(c)(2)'s protection of process in its decisions on remand (ECF No. 100 at 26, S.A.R. at 25), its pending motion (id. 99-1 at [\*10] 14: "collective bargaining rights … are … rights to a process"), and in prior certification decisions. 11

[\*11]

The Department attempts to salvage its overreliance on NLRA case law by arguing those cases determine what Congress intended the "generic" term "collective bargaining" in 13(c) to mean. (ECF No. 107 at 14-15.) True, Congress did not "employ a term of art devoid of all meaning," but the Department need look no further than Donovan to divine the meaning of "collective bargaining rights" Congress incorporated into 13(c). "Then as now, collective bargaining was universally understood to require, at a minimum, good faith negotiations, to a point of impasse, if necessary, over wages, hours and other terms and conditions [\*12] of employment." Donovan, 767 F.2d at 949; see id. at 950 (holding that "continuation of collective bargaining rights" requires that employees "be represented in meaningful, 'good faith' negotiations with their employer over wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment").

**Violation – the aff refuses state action as “coercive.”**

**3 impacts.**

**1. FAIRNESS. Their interp wrecks predictable limits which makes negation impossible. Fairness is a terminal impact – it’s the key enabler of debate as a game and thereby a prerequisite to all of its benefits.**

**2. SELF-QUESTIONING. Only a predictable stasis fosters the in-depth process of negation, research, and refinement. Iterative testing over the course of a year produces debaters with a skeptical worldview and breaks down dogmatic conceptions in favor of critical reflection.**

**3. CLASH. A predictable stasis is key to in-depth negation over the course of a year, which builds advocacy skills, critical thinking, and info processing. Clash is an invigorating process that builds Those are valuable skills no matter what for.**

## Case – 1NC

### State Good – 1NC

#### Antiblackness endures in positive feedback loops where it supports and is supported by material infrastructure. The state is a heterogenous collective that we should use to intervene in unjust material infrastructure to help unmake violent social systems.

Dr. Caroline Levine 23. David and Kathleen Ryan Professor of Humanities, Cornell University; PhD, English, Birbeck College, University of London. “Method: Formalism for Survival.” Chapter 2 in *The Activist Humanist: Form and Method in the Climate Crisis*. Princeton University Press. 2023.

3. Some ways of organizing the infrastructures of collective life are more just and capacitating than others. Consider the difference between egalitarian food-sharing to all members of a community and the allocation of the most nutritious food to men of property, or the difference between a thirty-five-hour work week and the continual forced labor of enslaved people. Egalitarian distributions and labor protections are not formless; they are tightly organized. If the polis always entails some structuring of sociability, then the goal is not to push beyond all constraints but figure out which specific shapes are better and worse for collective continuance.

4. Forms carry with them a limited range of capacities, which I call affordances. Affordances are the actions or uses latent in certain materials or designs.12 Wax is good for pouring and molding, but it is not strong enough to use for building bridges. The shape of the dining table affords small-scale conversation, eating, and the paying of bills, but it does not lend itself to mass protests. Inventive people can certainly put things to work for unintended uses—like slicing a cake with dental floss. This is an expansion of the intended affordances of dental floss, but it is still an affordance—a use latent in the materiality and design of the object. What this means is that forms and materials have a limited range of capacities: they will always be able to do some things well and others badly or not at all.

5. Form is a materialist concern. Formalism has long been associated with disembodied abstraction, aesthetic transcendence, and a deliberate withdrawal from politics.13 But a formalist analysis that focuses on the shapes of the material world, including the rhythms of labor and the contours of public spaces, attends to the body, the everyday, and the social.

6. Social, political, and aesthetic patterns and arrangements do not typically lock together in coherent systems. Different forms follow different logics of organization—boundaries do not impose the same order as routes or tempos. For this reason, forms often destabilize each other, getting in each other’s way and creating openings for change. The emphasis of my own work in Forms was on these aleatory possibilities, which was very much in keeping with the field’s long emphasis on rupture and open-endedness.14 And yet, it was also always clear that some forms dominate, and have staying power. White supremacy and patriarchy are especially—obstinately—sticky, enduring despite changes in law, economics, and culture. But because of our strong emphasis on unmaking in the aesthetic humanities, our fields do not know enough about why some forms work together over long periods, while others unsettle each other and come apart. Thus we need formalist methods to understand how different forms work together in both destabilizing and stabilizing ways.

[PARAGRAPH INTEGRITY PAUSES]

Form and Ideology So: where does a formalist account of politics begin? Most cultural critics start with ideology. That is, they understand social and aesthetic shapes and arrangements as effects of specific systems of value and belief. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue, for example, that heteronormativity shapes “almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; education; plus the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture.”15 The ideological explanation is persuasive. It is true, for instance, that a predominantly heteronormative culture produces and maintains some forms at the expense of others—like the sanitizing and policing of public spaces to make heterosexual couples and families feel safe and visible while concealing and criminalizing queerness.16 But this account also assumes that forms follow from ideologies. Is it possible, instead, that beliefs and values grow out of material shapes and arrangements? For example, patriarchal values are clearly responsible for limiting women’s wages, positions, and kinds of work. But does women’s lower economic status then help to reinforce beliefs in male dominance? Could both be at work? If so, how would we know? Do forms and ideologies operate in a kind of feedback loop in which each reinforces the other? That is, could ideology sometimes be a cause and sometimes an effect? It is my hypothesis here that material forms can in fact shape and engender some worldviews and practices of sociability while foreclosing others. That is, all kinds of arrangements—from occupied territories to environmental regulations to classroom seating—produce us as much as we produce them, not only organizing and constraining but also creating the very fabric of social relationships. Imagine, for example, that you grow up in a city with inexpensive, safe, and accessible public transportation. As a teenager, you can explore the many corners of the city. You and your friends gawk at expensive homes, wander through queer neighborhoods, and sneak into music venues. You are crammed together with strangers on the bus every morning on your way to school, and on the way home you make up funny stories about the few scattered adults who are sleeping on the bus. When it comes time to find a job, you are able to look across the whole city. Now, imagine instead that you live in a rural area without public transit, where houses are spaced so far from each other that you rarely see your neighbors. If as a teenager you want to see your friends, you might have to ask an adult for a ride, and most often you are stuck at home. Your local school may be full of people who look like you, racially and economically, and when you start looking for a job you will need to borrow or buy a car just to get to the interviews. In other words, your worldview may flow at least in part from the shape of the transportation infrastructure that you have inherited, perhaps from several generations before you. From this perspective, power is not best described as the work of dominant groups intentionally exerting control. It is true, of course, that the public transportation system is the result of human intention and design in the first place: it had to be planned, fought for, and built. Like all infrastructures, it also needs to be maintained over time, and some groups will deliberately allow public transportation systems to crumble. In this sense, people can make, unmake, and remake forms. And yet, once the public transportation system is in place, it will also give shape to the lives of many who are not responsible for making it for years to come. Thus a form held over from the past maintains its power to direct experience and shape values now and into the future, molding neighborhoods, daily routines, education, work experience, the freedom to roam, and the understanding of lives unlike our own. That does not mean that agency is altogether foreclosed, but it does mean that building and installing durable forms can have formative effects on beliefs, values, and practices for long periods to come. It will be clear from the argument so far that this book focuses most closely on the shapes of human communities and the possibilities of human action. Environmental and animal studies readers will probably object that this is too human-centered a project. Yet, the formalist methods at work here in fact emerge out of posthumanist and ecological theory. It is this thinking that has allowed me to see how arrangements of non-human materials—from sewer systems to classrooms to beehives—capacitate better and worse collectivities. But I also deliberately keep my sights on humans in this book for a few reasons. First, because a certain anthropocentrism seems unavoidable in scholarly debate. As Matthew Flisfeder puts it, posthumanists do not try “to convince a rock that it is noumenal.” We write to convince each other about our ethical responsibilities.17 Second, while the critique of the human subject that understands itself as separate from nature and seeks to master objects for its own use is persuasive and urgently important, it does not follow, as I argued in the first chapter, that all human action is conquest. And the desire to avoid all complicity is troubling in its own right, risking a principled inaction, a withdrawal from responsibility—and therefore an acquiescence to the violent forces of the status quo. “While it is obviously dangerous to overestimate human agency,” Min Hyoung Song writes, “there is also grave danger in underestimating it.”18 The definition of the human at work in this book is closest to Barbara Epstein’s, who writes that “humans, like other animal species, have characteristics, including specific needs, abilities, and limits to those abilities.” This account puts its emphasis not on mastery but on shared materiality, capacities, and constraints. “Socialist humanism,” as Epstein defines it, “is based on the view that humans require social cooperation and support, are capable of collective effort and individual creativity, and are most likely to thrive in egalitarian communities dedicated to the common welfare rather than the pursuit of private profit.”19 A formalist account can certainly work for multispecies collective continuance. Animals and plants, after all, also depend for their survival on forms, from seasonal cycles to sheltering spaces. Climate change is devastating for not only the forms that sustain human communities but those that support literally millions of other species as well. In this context, the goal is to figure out what I and whatever other willing humans can do, within the limits of our own capacities, to make the planet more livable for all species; and to see communities that include humans—and not only those narrowly counted as human by Euro-American settlers—survive, and do so with more justice than our current systems and practices allow. Form across Disciplines Aesthetic critics have analytic skills that we can take to the forms of social worlds, but we are not the only ones carrying a formalist toolbox. A vast range of objects, from sounds to neighborhoods to coral reefs, can be analyzed for their structures and patterns, which means that there are scholars attentive to shapes and structures working across fields, from religious studies to entomology to urban planning. In this respect, formalism belongs to all fields, or to none. Formalism in fact has the potential to be a useful metadisciplinary method in two specific ways. First, a formalism that works across disciplines can help us recognize the limits and the possibilities of different forms of knowledge. My own disciplinary training has taught me to focus my attention on the novel, and in the past I, like many other critics, would have thought it was my job to ask how the novel seeks to understand and respond to a whole range of political problems, from gender inequality to racial capitalism. But a metadisciplinary formalism allows me to think as much about the limits as the capacities of the novel, and to see it as one form among others, with constraints that may be obstacles to both knowing and reshaping the polis. The contemporary novel, according to Amitav Ghosh, “banishes the collective from the territory of the fictional imagination.” He blames this limitation on the specific ideologies of our historical moment.20 But it is also a long-standing problem of form. The realist novel has long been organized around plots and protagonists—exciting events and exceptional individuals—which makes it especially well suited to the scale of a few persons. Even when the classic nineteenth-century realist novel has aspirations to convey massive social structures and systems, as Alex Woloch has argued, it repeatedly narrows its attention to a small number of richly rounded characters at the expense of the mass.21 A huge range of novels since then, from Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway and Mulk Raj Anand’s Untouchable to Toni Morrison’s Beloved and Yuri Herrera’s Señales que precederán al fin del mundo, train our attention on a single protagonist or two in a specific historical situation. Many novels work in the Lukácsian mode, using one main character’s experience to convey social structures or conflicts.22 Sometimes the novel uses specific characters to stand for whole populations. The postbellum American novel, to give just one example, repeatedly joins a Confederate man with a Northern woman in its marriage plots, recruiting this narrative arc as an illusory resolution to the ongoing problem of national disunity.23 Janice Ho defines the novel tout court as “a genre preoccupied with the relationship between the protagonist and the social contexts in which he or she exists.”24 We could certainly cite experiments in the novel form that expand its usual cast of characters—from Honoré de Balzac’s Comédie Humaine to Helena Maria Viramontes’s Their Dogs Came with Them. But we could also begin from an altogether different starting point. Instead of analyzing a field of objects defined in advance as aesthetic—like the novel—and from that point trying to cross the gap between art and politics, we could ask which forms—both those that are conventionally aesthetic and those that are not—most readily invite an understanding of collective life. Let’s take the political problem of wealth inequality. The traditional plot-and-protagonist form of the novel is good at exploring some aspects of this problem—and bad at others. Capitalism and urbanization clearly shape experience in Charles Dickens’s Britain and Chris Abani’s Nigeria, for example, but Oliver Twist and Graceland tell us little about the forces, structures, and political decisions that produce these effects. What we do learn from the novels is what it is like to struggle to survive in these conditions, with desires repeatedly thwarted and serious dangers always threatening. Contrast the novel’s accounts to a very different form, a Center on Budget and Policy Priorities bar graph showing average gains and losses in U.S. incomes between 1979 and 2007. The graph divides the population into five groups and focuses on a single variable across those groups, showing simplified general trends that gather together huge numbers—reducing vast quantities of people, jobs, and dollars to one stark comparison. What is most striking, of course, is not the specifics of the numbers but the remarkable contrast—the Gestalt: that incomes lagged for the bottom four-fifths of the population, while skyrocketing for the top 1 percent. The graph uses color to set of the top 1 percent as a separable category: blue bars mark the five quintiles, but then an extra bar in red registers a single percent within the top quintile. This contrast in color foregrounds the startling difference—with red evoking stop signs and emergencies—between the 1 percent and the rest. There is a powerful and striking—even, one might say, aesthetically compelling—account of inequality at work in this bar graph. At the same time, it has clear limitations when it comes to our knowledge of wealth and poverty. It does not tell us how structural inequality came to be, a task for historical narrative. And it cannot give us a rich sense of what it feels like to live within and against the many structural barriers of poverty, bumping up against obstacles to transportation and adequate nutrition and racial justice and homeownership and high-quality education. That is a task better left to the novel or the news story. While some critics might insist that the novel does intrinsically better political work than the graph because it keeps us attentive to difference, refusing to agglomerate a vast range of situated experiences into knowable and governable categories, like “nation” or “population,” a politics of social justice needs both. To understand poverty as a consequence of structural forces, rather than individual moral failure or bad decision making, we need to grasp the obstacles that constrain the lives of the pluckiest of characters. At the same time, any single case of hunger and hardship could be an anomaly; to understand the reach of powerful structures like race and disability across social groups, we need to be able to recognize large-scale patterns. Both the novel and the graph thus afford a knowledge as well as an ignorance. And each reveals the limits of the other.

[FIGURE 1 REMOVED]

In the university today, our disciplines typically divide forms from one another—we put statistics in one department, history in a second, poetry in a third, visual images in a fourth, and the ethnographic interview in yet a fifth. Even within literary studies, we have experts in fiction who do not study drama, and vice versa. But what if we need all of these forms, precisely because each has powers and limits that the others do not? A map can show the distribution of world hunger, but it does not give us a sense of what it is like to wake up every day to an empty stomach; a photograph can show the devastating effects of war on a civilian scene, but it does not tell us how the violence started. In short, the first reason to use formalism to move across the disciplines is that we need many forms to know the world, and we need formalists to help us see what it is—and how it is—that we know. If the first reason to turn to a metadisciplinary formalism concerns knowledge, the second has to do with action. Both the novel and the bar graph lead us to understand something about inequality, but neither form readily invites us to gather together or to pursue particular political strategies. Typically absorbed in silence and solitude, the material form of the paperback affords isolation and separation—even a temporary retreat from social pressures and responsibilities.25 Novels can of course be read aloud in classrooms, clubs, pubs, and other collective spaces, and the serialized novel and unfolding news story afford the interruption of private absorption with pauses for collective reflection, as audiences gather over the water cooler or on the internet between episodes to reflect on the work so far and to speculate about what is coming. But other forms more readily afford the production of collectives. Live theater, for example, brings people together into a shared space, where audiences may be prompted to share laughter, applause, or song, and sometimes even erupt into riotous violence. The conflictual and dialogic forms of dramatic plots also afford radical questionings of authority and sovereignty, which together with its crowds have made drama seem like an especially threatening political form over the centuries.26 The public square, a less conventionally aesthetic form, has afforded many of the most famous political protests of recent years, including Tiananmen, Tahrir, and Trafalgar Squares, and New York’s Zuccotti Park. Because these public spaces afford highly visible vast crowds, they are well suited to putting the sheer enormity of collective resistance on display. But the “movement of the squares,” as we will see in a later chapter, has also been sporadic and ineffective at exerting and sustaining a lasting political force. In short, all forms afford certain possibilities and foreclose others. And a formalism not limited by discipline can ask: what versions of collective life is it possible to know and build with different forms? This is not an aesthetic question, exactly, but it is not outside of aesthetics either. It allows us to ask how art forms interrelate with political arrangements and how they may give shape to worlds. But it does not prompt us to seek out works that are particularly innovative or beautiful or complex objects in themselves. It does not focus on the ways that cultural forms express specific contexts. It does not try to track the particular values and associations that different forms have accrued historically. Instead, this approach asks us to look for forms of all kinds that might help us fight for, design, build, and maintain a just and sustaining polis.

[PARAGRAPH INTEGRITY RESUMES]

Formal Survival

Up to this point, I have argued that an expansive formalism can help us understand how some forms afford particular kinds of knowledge and action more effectively than others. Now let’s turn to the particular challenge of collective continuance. Scholars in the aesthetic humanities have tended to privilege discomfiting processes, unruliness, and flux over fixed and stable structures. But collective continuance requires an understanding of that which lasts. What forms afford stability, reliability, and predictability over time? And are there ways to design and build just and capacitating forms—like public transportation or food security—so that they can take hold and endure?

For this we need an account of what I call formal survival. That is, we need to understand which social arrangements manage to stay in place over time. Many forms that take a robust material shape, like walls and roads, are built for the long term, but how do less literally inert forms, like racial hierarchies, manage to take hold and last over centuries, despite major changes in law, culture, and economics? My working hypothesis here is that shapes and arrangements are most likely to endure when they operate in self-reinforcing configurations— when material and ideological forms, for example, support each other, and so keep each other going over time.

A well-known example will help to make this clear. In 1934, the U.S. government established a system of defining certain neighborhoods as too risky for federal banks to invest in them. They drew red lines around these areas on city maps. The Federal Housing Administration was willing to guarantee loans only in neighborhoods occupied by “the race for which they are intended” and where local schools “should not be attended in large numbers by inharmonious racial groups.”27 This explicitly racist law subsidized mortgages for houses being built in neighborhoods in the suburbs, as long as only white people lived there, and blocked mortgages for prospective homeowners in urban Black and Latinx neighborhoods. Redlining then shaped other forms, like the construction of mass transit systems that linked downtowns to white suburbs while bypassing minority neighborhoods. Sewage treatment plants often ran to high-income subdivisions but offered no access to the urban poor.28 Since public schooling in the United States is largely funded through local property and sales taxes, segregating neighborhoods deepened inequality between urban and suburban schools. Lack of access to public transportation and high-quality education in turn intensified poverty for Black and Latinx city dwellers.29

In this model, racial hierarchy organizes other forms. It starts by separating neighborhoods by race. It then directs the routes taken by roads, mass transit, and clean water. The lack of access to jobs and healthy food then entrenches and deepens poverty and inequality, which in turn feed a cultural myth of white superiority. Racism is an intentional ideological force in the first place, but then it persists by organizing other forms. And since rock and steel can outlast the intentions of their first construction, these material forms can prolong the work of racial hierarchy through later historical moments. A sewer is designed to be invisible, to function without the conscious attention of most of its users. It can therefore last well beyond the ideology that built it in the first place, continuing to shape and organize collective life without much in the way of ongoing justification, celebration, or consent to keep it going. With redlining, multiple durable forms of organization—housing law, school systems, sewer lines, trains, and roads—thus worked together to write racial hierarchy into the built environment for the long term. Simply to call this ideology is, I think, to miss the actual mechanisms of endurance, which depend on the arrangement of mutually reinforcing forms. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 could remedy some of the most unjust loan practices, but by that point racial hierarchy had written itself into the very shapes of the polis.

This story might well prompt us to want to fight forms and systems, but I am going to take the argument in the opposite direction, to make the case that the success and durability of this formal model also has a valuable lesson to offer to those working for justice. If we understand how portable, generalizable models work together to reinforce one another over time, those who want to work for collective continuance could use these lessons to develop our own sturdy alternatives—constellations of forms that could reliably produce and reproduce fairness over time.

To this end, let me offer the more hopeful model of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, nicknamed “the city that ended hunger.” A leftist government in the early 1990s developed policies to guarantee food as a right for this city of more than 2.5 million. Nearly a fifth of all children in the city were suffering from malnutrition at the time, and there were high rates of child mortality.30 Rather than proposing an emergency program or targeting a particular neighborhood or population, Belo Horizonte introduced a cluster of twenty integrated solutions across the city, which they call a “food security system.” Elements include nutritious school meals, subsidies for fruits and vegetables, training programs for bakers and chefs, seed distribution to school and community gardens, and licenses for food trucks to move around the city with the stipulation they spend a certain amount of time in poor neighborhoods selling fresh foods at a fixed low price.31

Perhaps the best known of all the programs has been the “Popular Restaurants.” Located in busy areas, these restaurants serve locally farmed, nutritious meals at very low prices. With high-quality food and a pub-like atmosphere—sometimes including live music—the Popular Restaurants attract people from across the socioeconomic spectrum, about a quarter from the middle and upper classes, with the consequence that eating there does not stigmatize the poor. Many people eat together at long tables, with students, elderly, professional, and unhoused people sitting side by side.32

[FIGURE 2 REMOVED]

Belo Horizonte’s food security system has had some dramatic effects. Since the 1990s, infant mortality and child malnutrition have dropped by half, and poverty rates have declined significantly.33 There is also evidence that Belo Horizonte’s programs have contributed to local biodiversity by encouraging ecologically sound farming practices.34

But what is perhaps most notable about this food system is that it has long outlasted expectations. At the start, commentators predicted that it would fall apart as soon as the political pendulum swung right. They assumed that food security depended on a kind of political will that would simply disappear with the next election or economic crisis. Now that it has been in place for more than two decades, however, scholars are instead trying to find explanations for the food system’s longevity. As food policy scholar Cecelia Rocha puts it, “Having more than 25 years of an approach to food and nutrition security is unique.”35

A formalist analysis would have it that Belo Horizonte’s food security system is sustainable because its different elements work so well together, as in the redlining example—in a kind of formal feedback loop. The Popular Restaurants offer all city dwellers affordable and healthy meals, for example, but they also bring people from different walks of life together to share food in a deliberately pleasant atmosphere, which—as opposed to so many deliberate forms of segregation—helps expand and deepen feelings of solidarity and connectedness across differences like race and class, which in turn encourages the political will for continuing collective solutions.

Or take Belo Horizonte’s “Straight from the Countryside” program. Here, small family farmers in outlying areas receive government support for growing environmentally sustainable and nutritious fruits and vegetables, which they sell directly to urban consumers in designated public sites, cutting out corporate middlemen. A public process determines which farmers are eligible, based on the size of the farm and income level of the family; the government then requires certain sustainable farming methods from participants and sets low sale prices. The most important form here is the standardized quantity: small farms, low prices. But a different form—the network—also plays a crucial role. The program locates sales sites in busy urban thoroughfares where fresh food is otherwise scarce. These sites are places where two different networks cross: they are hubs for human movement, but they are gaps in the fresh food supply chain, or “food deserts.” The various forms at work then reinforce one another. While city dwellers gain access to healthy food at low prices, rural farmers earn a decent living, which helps stem the migration of the rural poor to urban shantytowns, which in turn takes pressure of government programs, freeing up ongoing resources for the food system. The city can then train more chefs and urban gardeners, promote biodiversity, and put resources into keeping food quality high. Overall health, nutrition, and income rise; the need for city services to respond to poverty falls.36

Many of these elements exist separately in other cities, but part of what makes Belo Horizonte’s program endure is the careful design of its administration across government departments. A single school gardening program could easily be cut by a new party in power, but to undo an integrated citywide system with multiple interconnecting forms that span neighborhoods and classes and municipal departments would involve a radical dismantling. So far it has lasted through multiple political parties, which suggests that it is indeed much more difficult to take apart a self-reinforcing system than a single ad hoc solution.

I have turned to these two examples, one deeply unjust, the other aimed at guaranteeing basic needs, to show how a formalist attention to social worlds can be useful to the project of sustaining collective life. I hope it is clear that I am reading cities in some of the same ways I would read a poem. Like the critic who connects Robert Browning’s short end-stopped lines to the rhythms of train travel,37 I am tracking different organizations of housing and the pathways of food and water through the polis as these interact and intersect. Sometimes social forms support one another, and at other times they get in each other’s way, as when a food security system works against patterns of racialized poverty. But for the project of collective continuance, it is especially important to learn from mutually reinforcing forms. These are the formal feedback loops that afford sustainability over long stretches of time.

[PARAGRAPH INTEGRITY PAUSES]

Designing for Collective Continuance So far, we have seen how formalist methods are valuable in the effort to analyze sustainable social formations. Now I want to make the case that there is an aesthetic tradition that can help us to participate in the building of more just conditions. This is not the anti-instrumental canon of art that has been so central to the aesthetic humanities but rather the tradition of design, which is all about putting forms to practical use. In the work of design, forms move back and forth between aesthetic and social worlds. That is, designs are aesthetic in the sense that they are imagined and constructed, and they are material and social in that they give shape to matter, including the spaces, pathways, and objects that are everywhere organizing our lives. Designers typically depend on models. A traditional architect, for example, might begin with a two-dimensional paper blueprint, which is then used to create an object in another medium, such as a skyscraper composed of steel and glass. As the design passes from sketch to building, what it is doing is abstracting forms—shapes and patterns—so that they can move from one material to another. The same rectangular shape organizes a small drawing of a window and a large glass pane framed by steel. Forms, in this sense, are portable. In fact, the whole point of a designer’s model is to be portable—from small to large, from possible to actual, from place to place. Models move across materials, media, scales. Think of a model of a city, shrinking and simplifying the vast and teeming reality. Or consider a model apartment, the same size as all the others but existing in more than one place. Some models remain imaginary and two-dimensional, like an architectural plan that never becomes a building. Models do not have to be static, either: in a Bayesian macroeconomic model or a board game like Pandemic, the task is to test out multiple scenarios. Models are used in aesthetic, scientific, and social domains: an artist might make clay models for a bronze sculpture; a scientist might use digital models to understand genetic interactions; and an urban planner might design a model for neighborhood revitalization. Models can also cross domains: engineers in Japan turned to the bills of kingfishers to help them design a high-speed train that runs quietly.38 The way that models work is that they sharpen or set in motion our knowledge of a reality that is not available to direct perception. They deliberately abstract relationships so that we can grasp those relationships apart from their details. That is, models allow us to understand forms at work across contexts. By detaching shapes, orders, arrangements from particular media and circumstances, they invite us to play out the work of forms, especially in their interactions with other forms. The kingfisher’s wedge-shaped beak, which allows it to make sudden dives without splashing when it hits the water, inspired the shape of a train that can quietly manage the sudden change in air resistance when it enters a tunnel. The portability of forms is what allows designers to move from imagination to built reality. It is also what allows us to make some predictions about what forms will do as they travel across time and space. In the aesthetic humanities, scholars have often read aesthetic forms as responses to specific historical contexts. But many of the most common sociopolitical forms never begin anywhere in particular: we can find hierarchies and enclosures, triads and binaries, rows and circles, in most social arrangements—ancient and modern, Western and non-Western. Bridges arise independently in many cultures, and so do wheels. We find narrative quests and repetitive song refrains in many places around the world too. As forms crop up across contexts, they carry their affordances with them, organizing materials in the same limited range of ways, with the same finite array of affordances. Let me offer a brief example. The protest chant “Un pueblo, unido, será jamás vencido” began as part of a 1970s Chilean working-class political movement, but it has since traveled across borders and generations with surprising effortlessness, taken up by protesters for many causes and translated into Persian, English, German, Tagalog, and Portuguese.39 I first chanted it myself in English as “A people, united, will never be defeated,” marching against the anti-labor governor of Wisconsin in 2011. This short form affords easy memorization and recitation. Brief and catchy, rousing and rhythmic, it can pass quickly from protest to protest without instruction or explanation. It affords an experience of embodied solidarity, a joining of bodies and voices through shared spoken and marching rhythms. There is no question that the affordances of the chant will always be limited: it is too short and simple a form, for example, to do justice to the historical specificity of each protest, much less the particular perspective of each protester. It does not afford scientific evidence or plotted narration. But the affordances it does have are powerful: there are few forms better suited to quickly engendering a feeling of mass collective embodiment and purpose. As each form moves from place to place, it will take its affordances with it, always able to do some things well and others badly or not at all. Borders will always enclose and contain, protect and exclude. A hierarchy of authority in one place and time will do some similar work to a similar hierarchy at another place and time. As Foucault says, “stones can make people docile and knowable,” arguing that the arrangements of material in space produce and reproduce certain versions of subjectivity. But forms are not only troubling: they can also empower and enable a range of action. A network of durable tunnels underground, for example, affords the passage of clean water into my home and wastewater out, and in the process it also affords me certain freedoms: I do not need to walk hours each day to fetch water for washing and cooking, like many other women around the world, and I am not wracked by deadly waterborne diseases. The tunnels are an organizing form; they restrict and constrain matter, but, crucially, they also capacitate. Drawing these claims together leads to a transhistorical and transcultural argument about politics and form. If collective life always depends on organizing forms, if similar forms can appear in multiple times and spaces, and if forms have general properties that they carry with them wherever they go, then it follows that we can make some predictions about how political forms will work wherever they take shape. We can then put that knowledge to use to design better forms for collective life. Both redlining and the food system of Belo Horizonte are portable models. Redlining began as a federal program, replicated across the United States. Private banks then took their cue from government policy, denying loans to prospective homeowners in redlined neighborhoods. What followed was a similar pattern of white flight, suburban sprawl, school segregation, underfunded city services, and increasingly entrenched racial inequality across U.S. cities. The same interlocking of material forms yielded similar patterns of injustice from Los Angeles to Detroit to Memphis, affording both a ready replicability and a terrifying endurance over time, helping to sustain racial injustice across generations. Belo Horizonte’s food security system is portable too, at least in theory. It has inspired the cities of Cape Town in South Africa and Windhoek in Namibia to consider instituting a set of interconnected food security programs on the Belo Horizonte design.40 It could also work in the United States, where redlined neighborhoods are typically food deserts and where cities are often ringed by struggling farmers trying to make ends meet. Critics sometimes argue that design serves neoliberal agendas,41 but it also has powerful revolutionary potential. As it crosses back and forth between aesthetic and social domains, between the imagination and the real, it draws attention to the artfulness and the artifices of our social worlds. Both sonnets and public transportation systems are designed and made, which means they can also be redesigned and remade. Design offers a field of practices that build on an understanding of formal affordances to reimagine and remake the shapes and arrangements of collective life. The goal here is not to determine, once and for all, what will work in all cases but to make sense of organizing forms that have worked in the past and to think about how and why certain constellations might support collective continuance. That is, to experiment with forms and to use them as equipment for social transformation.

[PARAGRAPH INTEGRITY RESUMES]

The Forms of Institutions

Formalism can give us the analytical tools we need to understand how forms of many different kinds work together, and design can help communities envision and craft better forms. But remaking the world for climate justice is obviously a tall order, and I have promised a determinedly pragmatic approach to this work. What does this mean in practice? It is my argument, here, that we should start by working to remake the forms of existing institutions.

An emphasis on institutions may sit uneasily with many thinkers in the aesthetic humanities. Influenced by Foucault, Althusser, and Bourdieu, our fields have worked hard to reveal the oppressive power of major modern institutions—the family, the school, the military, the hospital, the prison, and the state—as these produce, coerce, and manage subjects. Historical work across the aesthetic humanities has also shown how less obviously violent institutions, such as museums, archives, and novels, adopt techniques of imperial management and racial control.42 Afropessimists have made particularly powerful arguments that dominant institutions have sedimented an inexorable anti-Blackness at their core. For Frank Wilderson III, the “White family and the White state” write anti-Blackness into “the genetic material of this organism called the United States of America.”43 And according to Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, all institutions, including universities, do the work of prisons: “In the clear, critical light of day, illusory administrators whisper of our need for institutions, and all institutions are political, and all politics is correctional, so it seems we need correctional institutions in the common, settling it, correcting us. But we won’t stand corrected.”44 For Dylan Rodríguez, “the university (as a specific institutional site) and academy (as a shifting material network) themselves cannot be disentangled from the long historical apparatuses of genocidal and protogenocidal social organization.”45 And Nikki Sullivan has argued that queerness works against “the straitjacketing effects of institutionalization.”46 For thinkers like these, aesthetic anti-instrumentality is one of the few ways to emancipate ourselves from institutional coercions. And so, it has become commonplace to “measure artistic radicality by its degree of anti-institutionality.”47

But what if institutions like the university and the state are not as unrelentingly oppressive as the aesthetic humanities have so often claimed? Understanding institutions as combinations of different kinds of forms allows us to see both how institutionalization will be essential to sustainable justice and how even current, oppressive institutions afford some of the crucial materials for major structural transformation. I build here on a range of recent affirmative reassessments of institutions by Jodi Dean, Shannon Jackson, Benjamin Kohlmann, Lisi Schoenbach, and Robyn Wiegman, all of whom point to the power of institutions as the best or perhaps even the only way to congeal radical change into lasting structures—to take the energies unleashed by crowds and protests and convert them into ongoing formations to support collective life.48

What is an institution? According to social scientists James March and Johan Olsen, it is “any relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances.”49 Key concepts here are stability and organization—or, to translate these into my own terms, sustainability and form.

March and Olsen’s definition certainly captures the oppressive institutions of a Euro-American modernity, like the mental asylum and the assembly line. But it also captures a range of less oppressive practices, like satoyama, the regular labor of preserving village forests in Japan described by Elaine Gan and Anna Tsing. These forests are rich in species, including ants and mushrooms that cannot thrive elsewhere. They depend on human labor—regular raking and pruning of tree branches and trunks—for their ongoing survival. When small farmers moved to cities in the twentieth century and stopped this work, new species took over these areas, creating dense forests where the older species could not survive. Satoyama revitalization groups are now deliberately working to reinstate these old agricultural practices and patterns. According to March and Olsen’s definition, the mutually sustaining “multispecies collaborations” that make up satoyama forests are as much institutions as the modern factory or the prison.50 They are a collection of practices organized and regulated over time, but they are neither exploitative nor punitive. Indeed, since all human collectives impose norms and patterns for the provision of food, including practices of finding, growing, distributing, and preparing food, it is impossible to imagine a total freedom from organizations that remain relatively stable over time—that is, a freedom from institutions.

Or to put this another way: both major qualities of institutions—stability and organization—are essential to sustaining life over time, and both will therefore be necessary to collective continuance. And even rigid regulations can be powerfully capacitating. While many contemporary businesses are proud of giving their workers freedom from old forms of temporal and spatial discipline, offering flexible work hours, creativity, and autonomy, these institutions are no less coercive for that. Employers can expect workers to internalize responsibility for productivity at all hours of the day and night. “Nimble” institutions can maximize profits by hiring workers only when they need them. Gig workers are increasingly forced to stitch together multiple unpredictable jobs to make ends meet. From this perspective, a rigid institutional form—such as the forty-hour work week—may be enclosing and limiting, but it also belongs in the tool kit of forms for sustainable justice.

March and Olsen’s definition is deliberately loose and baggy: they call an institution “a collection of rules and organized practices.” Hardly rock-solid and immovable, the word “collection” puts an emphasis on gatherings of separable parts, on the heterogeneous assembly. And this seems right. That is, even the most oppressive and hierarchical institutions cannot work as perfectly coordinated systems, as monoliths. They are composed of multiple and sometimes discordant forms that work against one another as often as they consolidate or reinforce each other. While scholars across the aesthetic humanities have imagined institutions as coherent engines of rigid ideologies, the daily work of institutions suggests the opposite—that coordinating every moving part for the sake of shared ends often feels arduous or downright impossible.

The state provides one example. Composed of police departments and food inspectorates, elected legislatures and credentialed civil servants, health care systems and tax incentives, the state is not a single homogenizing force, and its various bodies sometimes sustain and at other times undermine one another. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for example, has been attacked by the presidency, sued in the courts, and sometimes even divided against itself. In one case, the air pollution department of the EPA pushed for “scrubbing,” which turns coal particles in the air into solid form—thereby undermining those in the same agency fighting for reductions in solid waste.51

For an example closer to home for many readers, we might consider the university, an institution that has been the focus of much anti-institutional critique. Rodríguez wonders whether the university “ought to be completely abolished.”52 It is true that universities around the world are built on stolen Indigenous lands and have responded to financial pressures and a culture of economic efficiency and privatization by adopting an increasingly neoliberal logic, including a dependence on precarious adjunct faculty.53 And yet, it is also true that universities have conserved a motley array of other institutional arrangements, many of them very old, including sabbatical leaves, which have their roots in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus; libraries, dining halls, and music ensembles, all of which have ancient and medieval roots; area studies programs, which date to the Cold War; and departments of gender studies and African American studies, which students and faculty fought to create in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Roderick Ferguson has argued, powerfully, that these fields have been incorporated into the institution in ways that co-opt them, converting them into servants of the state and capital seeking recognition and legitimation. New fields do not shift power, according to Ferguson, but allow power to “restyle” itself, “dreaming up ways to affirm difference and keep it in hand.”54 This claim rests on the assumption that different pieces of the institution work together, coherently, all serving the same fundamental order, whereas universities are in fact much messier and more plural constellations of forms, shot through with competing pressures and forms from different past moments that sometimes undermine and sometimes support each other. From general education requirements and core curricula, which require a broad exposure to a range of disciplines, to financial aid for students who cannot afford the full cost of a degree, which entails a limited redistribution of wealth, universities sustain a range of forms that do not exclusively serve genocidal or neoliberal agendas. And these “holdover forms” last in part because institutions preserve them.55 That is, institutions are conservative in a stranger sense than we usually mean: they are engines of conservation, and so they conserve all kinds of forms that are not parts of the dominant order.

But they are not entirely inert either. Institutional forms from different moments tend to exert contradictory pressures that send them in different ideological directions. Raymond Williams famously points to “residual” formations, which are structures from the past that continue to shape institutions long after they have ceased to be dominant. One of his examples is organized religion, with its values of “absolute brotherhood” and “service to others without reward.”56 These are very old values—dominant under feudalism—but they also provide a critical rejoinder to dominant capitalist ideology, which would have it that private accumulation is the only real human drive. And so perhaps it is not surprising that the Black Lives Matter movement has conserved these residual values for its radical ends: “Our continued commitment to liberation for all Black people means we are continuing the work of our ancestors and fighting for our collective freedom because it is our duty.”57 For this new generation of activists, the fight for the future rests on a collective duty to the struggles of the past, which includes a service to others without reward and a sense of solidarity—values that date back many centuries. Conservation of the past can itself provide a vigorous alternative to prevailing values.

Or take the college-level teaching of literary studies today. Textual analysis can be traced back to the ancient practice of biblical hermeneutics, and much of our classroom reading focuses on—and preserves—texts from the past. The credits and degrees students earn from these studies then serve the dominant capitalist order by providing them with quantifiable workplace credentials. But at the same time, the humanities classroom invites students to explore aesthetic anti-instrumentality as a rich site for ways of living and feeling that challenge dominant assumptions and make room for what Williams calls “emergent” alternatives to the status quo. Teaching literature in an undergraduate class is therefore residual, dominant, and emergent all at once. And if these are all at work in the same moment, then it is not right to understand even one discipline within the university as serving a single coherent ideology.

The case for the importance of turning to institutions, then, is twofold: first, institutions preserve elements from the past in ways that can help us understand how sustainability happens; and second, the multiple forms of institutions tend to be jumbled together in ways that are incoherent, and often preserve capacitating and just forms as well as oppressive ones, sometimes over very long periods. From this perspective, a resistance to institutionalization as such feels like a falsifying distortion and a misleading direction for politics. And if we pay a formalist’s attention to the ways that institutions are organized, we can see how specific institutional forms can be effectively mobilized for structural change.

Starting Here and Now, with Existing Institutions

We are surrounded by opportunities to reshape institutional forms. A household can organize its ordinary labors of maintenance around egalitarian routines, and a teacher can establish rules for inclusive participation. We might dismiss these as insignificant because they do not get at larger, what we often call “structural” forces, but even the smallest and most local reorderings are in fact precisely structural. That is, structure—understood as synonymous with form in this book58 — refers to the imposition of one order rather than another. Both structure and form are terms for the shaping and organization of materials. The difference between them is not a difference in kind but a difference in scale and stability. The equal division of tasks in a household cannot easily scale up to organize a nation, and a single decision to distribute labor equally can easily fall away without an ongoing effort to sustain it.

But it is just as important to note that the largest-scale and most enduring structures operate by way of smaller forms. That is, capitalism, racism, and patriarchy all exert and consolidate their power precisely through a variety of local orderings, patterns, and arrangements, from segregated neighborhoods to the daily work of childcare. One effective route for politics, then, is to change the smaller structures that work together to sustain the larger ones.

For example, the massive and disproportionate incarceration of people of color in the United States helps swing elections toward white interests, since those with felony records in many states are not allowed to vote. But we could just as easily approach this from the opposite direction: the formal obstacles preventing African American voters from getting to the polls have meant that the people most affected by mass incarceration have a disproportionately small impact on political processes that might remake the justice system. Changes to either mass incarceration or voter suppression could have implications for the other. If racism is sustained by a cluster or constellation of mutually supportive forms, then reorganizing one form can also frustrate or hamper the others.

What this means is that effective political work involves keeping our eyes on mundane forms like congressional redistricting and school segregation—traditionally understood as “liberal” rather than “radical” approaches. But put another way, the work of revolutionary structural change can start with any number of organizing forms. Each structural shift may have implications for the strength and durability of other structures. To the most radical ends, then, I want to urge the formalist’s sharp attention to the nuts and bolts of institutional arrangements—boundaries, regulations, tempos, norms, and pathways.

**Democracy is an unfinished project – institutional battles are valuable, and defeatist attitudes ensure the world remains as it is.**

**Glaude 16** (Eddie S., Jr., Professor of African American Studies and Religion @Princeton and a PhD in Religion @Princeton, *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves*, p. 185-197, Print)

CHANGE HOW WE VIEW GOVERNMENT

For more than three decades, we have been bludgeoned with an idea of government that has little to no concern for the public good. Big government is bad, we are told. It is inefficient, and its bloated bureaucracies are prone to corruption. Even Democrats, especially since Bill Clinton, have taken up this view. For example, Obama says, "We don't need big government; we need smart government."

For some on the right, big government is bad because it aims to distribute wealth to those who are lazy and undeserving. "Big government" is just a shorthand for dreaded entitlement programs-all too often coded language for race. In this view, "big government" is the primary agent of enforcing racial equality, taking hard-earned stuff from white Americans and giving it to undeserving others. Government cannot do such a thing, they argue, without infringing on the rights of white Americans. And even government-mandated redistribution will not solve the problem. As Barry Goldwater put the point in 1964, "No matter how we try, we cannot pass a law that will make you like me or me like you. The key to racial and religious tolerance lies not in laws alone but, ultimately, in the hearts of men." From this perspective, government plays no role in changing our racial habits. Why would we want to make it bigger?

But Goldwater failed to realize that governmental indifference can harden hearts, and government action can create conditions that soften them. **People's attitudes aren't static or untouchable**. They are molded by the quality of interactions with others, and **one of the great powers of government involves shaping those interactions-not determining them in any concrete sense, but defining the parameters within which people come to know each other and live together**. Today, for example, most Americans don't believe women should be confined to the home raising children, or subjected to crude advances and sexist remarks by men. The women's-rights movement put pressure on the government, which in turn passed laws that helped change some of our beliefs about women. Similarly, the relative progress of the 1960s did not happen merely by using the blunt instruments of the law. **Change emerged from the ways those laws, with grassroots pressure, created new patterns of interactions, and ultimately new habits**. Neither Obama's election to the presidency nor my appointment as a Princeton professor would have happened were it not for these new patterns and habits.

None of this happens overnight. It takes time and increasing vigilance to protect and secure change. I was talking with a dose friend and he mentioned a basic fact: that we were only fifteen years removed from the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 when Ronald Reagan was elected president and Republicans began to dismantle the gains of the black freedom struggle. Civil rights legislation and the policies of the Great Society had just started to reshape our interactions when they started to be rolled back. We barely had a chance to imagine America anew-to pursue what full employment might look like, to let the abolition of the death penalty settle in, to question seriously the morality of putting people in prison cells, and to enact policies that would undo what the 1968 Kerner Commission described as "two Americas"­ before the attack on "big government" or, more precisely, the attack on racial equality was launched. The objective was to shrink the size of government ("to starve the beast") and to limit its domestic responsibilities to ensuring economic efficiency and national defense. Democrats eventually buckled, and this is the view of government, no matter who is in office, that we have today. It has become a kind of touchstone of faith among most Americans that government is wasteful and should be limited in its role-that it shouldn't intrude on our lives. Politicians aren't the only ones who hold this view. Many Americans do, too. **Now we can't even imagine serious talk of things like full employment or the abolition of prisons**.

**We have to change our view of government, especially when it comes to racial matters**. Government policy ensured the vote for African Americans and dismantled legal segregation. Policy established a social safety net for the poor and elderly; it put in place the conditions for the growth of our cities. **All of this didn't happen simply because of individual will** or thanks to some abstract idea of America. **It was tied up with our demands and expectations**. Goldwater was wrong. So was Reagan. And, in many ways, so is Obama. Our racial habits are shaped by the kind of society in which we live, and our government plays a big role in shaping that society. As young children, our community offers us a way of seeing the world; it lets us know what is valuable and sacred, and what stands as virtuous behavior and what does not. When Michael Brown's body was left in the street for more than four hours, it sent a dear message about the value of black lives. When everything in our society says that we should be less concerned about black folk, that they are dangerous, that no specific policies can address their misery, we say to our children and to everyone else that these people are "less than"-that they fall outside of our moral concern. We say, without using the word, that they are niggers.

**One way to change that view is to enact policies that suggest otherwise**. Or, to put it another way, to change our view of government, we must change our demands of government. For example, for the past fifty years African American unemployment has been twice that of white unemployment. The 2013 unemployment rate for African Americans stood at 13.1 percent, the highest annual black unemployment rate in more than seventy years. Social scientists do not generally agree on the causes of this trend. Some attribute it to the fact that African Americans are typically the "last hired and first fired." Others point to changes in the nature of the economy; still others point to overt racial discrimination in the labor market. No matter how we account for the numbers, the fact remains that most Americans see double-digit black unemployment as "normal." However, a large-scale, comprehensive jobs agenda with a living wage designed to put Americans, and explicitly African Americans, to work would go a long way toward uprooting the racial habits that inform such a view. It would counter the nonsense that currently stands as a reason for long-term black unemployment in public debate: black folk are lazy and don't want to work.

**If we hold the view that government plays a crucial role in ensuring the public good**-if we believe that all Americans, no matter their race or class, can be vital contributors to our beloved community-**then we reject the idea that some populations are disposable**, that some people can languish in the shadows while the rest of us dance in the light. The question ''Am I my brother's or my sister's keeper?" is not just a question for the individual or a mantra to motivate the private sector. It is a question answered in the social arrangements that aim to secure the goods and values we most cherish as a community. In other words, we need an idea of government that reflects the value of all Americans, not just white Americans or a few people with a lot of money.

We need government seriously committed to racial justice. As a nation, we can never pat ourselves on the back about racial matters. We have too much blood on our hands. Remembering that fact-our inheritance, as Wendell Berry said-does not amount to beating ourselves over the head, or wallowing in guilt, or trading in race cards. Remembering our national sins serves as a check and balance against national hubris. We're reminded of what we are capable of, and our eyes are trained to see that ugliness when it rears its head. But when we disremember-when we forget about the horrors of lynching, lose sight of how African Americans were locked into a dual labor market because of explicit racism, or ignore how we exported our racism around the world-we free ourselves from any sense of accountability. Concern for others and a sense of responsibility for the whole no longer matter. Cruelty and indifference become our calling cards.

We have to isolate those areas in which long-standing trends of racial inequality short-circuit the life chances of African Americans. In addition to a jobs agenda, **we need a comprehensive government response to the problems of public education and mass incarceration**. **And I do mean a government response**. Private interests have overrun both areas, as privatization drives school reform (and the education of our children is lost in the boisterous battles between teachers' unions and private interests) and as big business makes enormous profits from the warehousing of black and brown people in prisons. Let's be clear: private interests or market-based strategies will not solve the problems we face as a country or bring about the kind of society we need. We have to push for massive government investment in early childhood education and in shifting the center of gravity of our society from punishment to restorative justice. We can begin to enact the latter reform by putting an end to the practice of jailing children. Full stop. We didn't jail children in the past. We don't need to now.

In sum, government can help us go a long way toward uprooting racial habits with policies that support jobs with a living wage, which would help wipe out the historic double-digit gap between white and black unemployment; take an expansive approach to early childhood education, which social science research consistently says profoundly affects the life chances of black children; and dismantle the prison-industrial complex. We can no longer believe that disproportionately locking up black men and women constitutes an answer to social ills.

**This view of government cannot be dismissed as a naive pipe dream**, because political considerations relentlessly attack our political imaginations and limit us to the status quo. We are told before we even open our mouths that this particular view won't work or that it will never see the light of day. We've heard enough of that around single payer health care reform and other progressive policies over the Obama years. **Such defeatist attitudes conspire to limit our imaginations and make sure that the world stays as it is**. But those of us who don't give a damn about the rules of the current political game must courageously organize, advocate, and insist on the moral and political significance of a more robust role for government. We have to change the terms of political debate.

Something dramatic has to happen. American democracy has to be remade. John Dewey, the American philosopher, understood this:

The very idea of democracy, the meaning of democracy, must be continually explored afresh; it has to be constantly discovered and rediscovered, remade and reorganized; while the political and economic and social institutions in which it is embodied have to be remade and reorganized to meet the changes that are going on in the development of new needs on the part of human beings and new resources for satisfying these needs.

Dewey saw **American democracy as an unfinished project**. He knew that the aims and purposes of this country were not fixed forever in the founding documents, but the particular challenges of our moment required imaginative leaps on behalf of democracy itself. Otherwise, undemocratic forces might prevail; tyranny in the form of the almighty dollar and the relentless pursuit of it might overtake any commitment to the idea of the public good; and bad habits might diminish our moral imaginations.

The remaking of America will not happen inside the Beltway. Too many there have too much invested in the status quo. A more robust idea of government will not emerge from the current political parties. Both are beholden to big money. **Substantive change will have to come from us**. Or, as the great civil rights leader Ella Baker said, "we are the leaders we've been looking for"-a model of leadership that scares the hell out of the Reverena Sharpton. We will have to challenge the status quo in the streets and at the ballot box. In short, it will take a full-blown democratic awakening to enact this revolution.

### Law Key – 1NC

**Reshaping law is key to achieve racial justice. Race is a constructed concept shaped by law. Racial attitudes are activated by to fracture the working class.**

**Pope 16,** James Gray. Distinguished Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School. "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States: Law and the Racial Divide in the American Working Class, 1676-1964." Tex. L. Rev. 94 (2015): 1555. // judah

The gap between rich and poor in the United States yawns wider than in any other first-wave industrialized country. Why? One influential explanation points to the failure of American workers to build a class-wide movement for economic redistribution and social welfare protections. While European working classes were developing durable socialist movements during the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, the American working class fractured into craft unions that focused on collective bargaining for the immediate self-interest of their members. In his pathbreaking book, Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement, William Forbath suggested that law contributed crucially to this failure.1 American workers did launch struggles for broad objectives, but judges repeatedly and forcefully directed them toward more parochial concerns. For example, courts struck down hard-won reform legislation and selectively enjoined inclusive forms of labor organization like industrywide (as opposed to craft) unions.2

My contribution to the Symposium explores the involvement of law and courts in constructing another related barrier to class-wide political and economic action. As Forbath recognized, “ethnic and racial cleavages will surely remain central” to any full explanation for American working-class weakness.3 Herbert Hill, labor secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) during the contentious decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, traced the root of this problem to “the historical development of working-class identity as racial identity.”4 Beginning in the early 1800s, when wage labor first emerged as a major component of the economy, white workers defined what it meant to be a “working man” by contrasting their own condition (citizenship) and perceived character traits (strength and independence) with those of women and workers of color (servitude, weakness, and dependence).5 The earliest workingmen’s associations commenced a tradition of excluding nonwhites that continued in the overwhelming majority of unions until the 1930s and, in unions organized on craft lines, for decades more.6 Although unions have officially reversed these policies, the old racialized conception of class identity persists. During the 2008 primary campaign, for example, Hillary Clinton claimed that she would be a stronger nominee than Barack Obama because of her advantage among “working, hard-working Americans, white Americans . . . .”7 As Clinton’s claim suggests, the “white working class” has become a swing, if not the swing, constituency in electoral politics. “Their loyalties shift the most from election to election and, in so doing,” observed political scientists Ruy Texeira and Joel Rogers, “determine the winners in American politics.”8 In recent years, some legal scholars have suggested that white-working-class support will be essential to any successful effort to reduce inequalities of race, gender, and class in the United States.9

My broad thesis is that law played a central role in dividing white workers from workers of color—before, during, and after the formation of the American working class. In particular, law reinforced racial divisions during certain crucial periods when political, economic, and military shocks disrupted elite control, creating possibilities for cross-racial laboring-class cooperation.10 I further suggest that the Supreme Court contributed importantly to this result, especially during and immediately following Reconstruction, when the enactment of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments created the greatest opportunity for cross-racial laboring class cooperation since the colonial era.11

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have debated the relative importance of economic, cultural, and psychological factors in shaping and sustaining racism.12 I do not propose law as an alternative explanation. I suggest only that law has served as a tool for dividing workers along racial lines, and that it has been highly effective at certain historical junctures. To omit the role of law is to invite distortion. There is a marked tendency in present-day academic and political discourse, for example, to depict white workers as uniquely prone to racism, and to blame them for the racial divide in the working class.13 Whatever the potency of racist attitudes and norms, however, they have not always sufficed to block white workers from joining with workers of color in economic and political action. Far from welcoming such cooperation, elites have reacted fearfully and turned to law (or, in the case of Reconstruction, the judicial suspension of law in the face of paramilitary insurgency) to tip the balance in favor of white racial solidarity.

In the field of constitutional law, Derrick Bell stands out for his close attention to the racial divide in the laboring classes. Bell posited that African-Americans can advance on issues of race only when whites also benefit.14 One way to secure this “interest convergence” is to ally with lower class whites “who, except for the disadvantages imposed on blacks because of color, are in the same economic and political boat.”15 Unfortunately, however, white workers have rarely acted on these shared interests, instead choosing repeatedly to ally with white elites against black workers.16 They stood with white planters against slave revolts, for example, “even though the existence of slavery condemned white workers to a life of economic privation,” and excluded black workers from their unions, thereby “allow[ing] plant owners to break strikes with black scab labor.”17 Over time, whites came to embrace their race-based privileges as a constitutionally protected property right.18 To Bell, such choices reflect a form of racism so virulent and deeply rooted that it overrides economic rationality and blocks any hope of genuine racial equality.19 In apparent despair, Bell warns that black people face permanent and irrevocable subordination in the United States due, in “crucial” part, to “the unstated understanding by the mass of whites that they will accept large disparities in economic opportunity in respect to other whites as long as they have a priority over blacks and other people of color for access to the few opportunities available.”20

I take as my starting point Bell’s compelling account of white workers repeatedly choosing racial over class solidarity. It is possible, however, that racial attitudes and culture do not provide a sufficient explanation for those choices. “White workers,” as Martha Mahoney has observed, “formed concepts of self-interest in a landscape which was not a vacuum but a set of substantial obstacles to solidarity.”21 Given the demonstrated tendency of human beings to develop group antagonisms along even random lines of cleavage without any encouragement at all, it would seem that official law, linked to preexisting prejudices and backed by the armed power of the state, could erect formidable obstacles to cooperation and solidarity.22 By attaching serious consequences to racial categories, law could make them “real” in an experiential and practical sense. When the history of crossracial laboring-class cooperation is considered in light of the situational force of law, we may dissent from Bell’s conclusion that poor whites were “easily detoured into protecting their sense of entitlement vis-à-vis blacks for all things of value.”23

### AT: Liberalism K – Mills – 1NC

**Liberalism is not a monolith – retrieving it for a radical democratic agenda challenges unjust hierarchies of domination.**

Charles W. **MILLS** Professor of Philosophy @ CUNY **’12** “Occupy Liberalism,” Chapter 2 in *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism* [Language modified]

The “Occupy Wall Street!” movement stimulated a long listing of other candidates for radical “occupation.” This chapter proposes as a target for radical occupation the somewhat unusual candidate of liberalism itself. It argues for a constructive engagement of radicals with liberalism in order to retrieve it for a radical egalitarian agenda. The premise is that the foundational values of liberalism have a radical potential that has not historically been realized, given the way the dominant varieties of liberalism have developed. Ten reasons standardly given as to why such a retrieval cannot be carried out are examined and argued to be fallacious.

The “Occupy!” movement, which has made headlines around the country, has raised the hopes of young American radicals new to political engagement and revived the hopes of an older generation of radicals still clinging to nostalgic dreams of the glorious ’60s. If the original and still most salient target was Wall Street, a long list of other candidates for “occupation” has since been put forward. In this chapter, I want to propose as a target for radical occupation the somewhat unusual candidate of liberalism itself. But contrary to the conventional wisdom prevailing within radical circles, I am going to argue for the heretical thesis that liberalism should not be contemptuously rejected by radicals but retrieved for a radical agenda. Summarized in bullet-point form, my argument is as follows:

• The “Occupy Wall Street” movement provides an opportunity unprecedented in decades to build a broad democratic movement to challenge plutocracy, patriarchy, and white supremacy in the United States.

• Such a movement is more likely to be successful if it appeals to principles and values most Americans already endorse.

• Liberalism has always been the dominant ideology in the United States.

• Liberalism in the United States has historically been complicit with plutocracy, patriarchy, and white supremacy, but this complicity is a contingent function of dominant group interests rather than the result of an immanent conceptual logic.

• Therefore, progressives in philosophy (and elsewhere) should try to retrieve liberalism for a radical democratic agenda rather than rejecting it, thereby positioning themselves in the ideological mainstream of the country and seeking its transformation.

Let me now try to make this argument plausible for an audience likely to be aprioristically convinced of its obvious unsoundness.

Preliminary Clarification of Terms

First we need to clarify the key terms of “radicalism” and “liberalism.” While of course a radicalism of the right exists, here I refer to radicals who are progressives. But “progressive” cannot just denote the left of the political spectrum, since the whole point of the “new social movements” of the 1960s onward was that the traditional left-right political spectrum, predicated on varying positions on the question of public versus private ownership of the means of production, did not exhaust the topography of the political. Issues of gender and racial domination were to a significant extent “orthogonal” to this one-dimensional trope. So I will use “radicalism” broadly, though still in the zone of progressive politics, to refer generally to ideas/concepts/principles/values endorsing pro-egalitarian structural change to reduce or eliminate unjust hierarchies of domination.

“Liberalism” may denote both a political philosophy and the institutions and practices characteristically tied to that political philosophy. My focus will be on the former. The issue of how bureaucratic logics may prove refractory to reformist agendas is undeniably an important one, but it does not really fall into the purview of philosophy proper. My aim is to challenge the radical shibboleth that radical ideas/concepts/principles/values are incompatible with liberalism. Given the deep entrenchment of this assumption in the worldview of most radicals, refuting it would still be an accomplishment, even if working out practical details of operationalization are delegated to other hands.

In the United States, of course, “liberalism” in public parlance and everyday political discourse is used in such a way that it really denotes left-liberalism specifically (“left” by the standards of a country whose political center of gravity has shifted right in recent decades). In this vocabulary, right-liberals are then categorized as “conservatives”—in the market sense, as against the Burkean sense. On the other hand, some on the right would insist that only they, the heirs to the classic liberalism of John Locke and Adam Smith, are really entitled to the “liberal” designation. Later welfarist theorists are fraudulent pretenders to be exposed as socialist intruders unworthy of the title. Rejecting both of these usages, I will be employing “liberalism” in the expanded sense typical of political philosophy, which links both ends of this spectrum. “Liberalism” then refers broadly to the (p.12) anti-feudal ideology of individualism, equal rights, and moral egalitarianism that arises in Western Europe in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries to challenge the ideas and values inherited from the old medieval order, and which is subsequently taken up and developed by others elsewhere, including many who would have been explicitly excluded by the original conception of the ideology. Left-wing social democrats and right-wing market conservatives, fans of John Rawls on the one hand and Robert Nozick on the other, are thus both liberals.1

From this perspective, it will be appreciated that liberalism is not a monolith but an umbrella term for a variety of positions. Here are some examples—some familiar, some perhaps less so:

Varieties of Liberalism

Left-wing (social democratic) vs. Right-wing (market conservative)

Kantian vs. Lockean

Contractarian vs. Utilitarian

Corporate vs. Democratic

Social vs. Individualist

Comprehensive vs. Political

Ideal-theory vs. Non-ideal-theory

Patriarchal vs. Feminist

Imperial vs. Anti-imperial

Racial vs. Anti-racial

Color-blind vs. Color-conscious

Etc.2

It is not the case, of course, that these different species of liberalism have been equally represented in the ideational sphere or equally implemented in the institutional sphere. On the contrary, some have been dominant while others have been subordinate, and some have never, at least in the full sense, been implemented at all. But nonetheless, I suggest they all count as liberalisms and as such they are all supposed to have certain elements in common, even those characterized by gender and racial exclusions. (My motivation for making these last varieties of liberalism rather than deviations from liberalism is precisely to challenge liberalism’s self-congratulatory history, which holds an idealized liberalism aloft, untainted by its actual record of complicity with oppressive social systems.) So the initial question we should always ask people making generalizations about “liberalism” is this: What particular variety of liberalism do you mean? And are your generalizations really true about all the possible kinds of liberalism, or only a subset? (p.13)

Here is a characterization of liberalism from a very respectable source, the British political theorist, John Gray:

Common to all variants of the liberal tradition is a definite conception, distinctively modern in character, of man and society… . It is individualist, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity; egalitarian, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal or political order of differences in moral worth among human beings; universalist, affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and meliorist in its affirmation of the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements. It is this conception of man and society which gives liberalism a definite identity which transcends its vast internal variety and complexity.3

What generate the different varieties of liberalism are different concepts of individualism, different claims about how egalitarianism should be construed or realized, more or less inclusionary readings of universalism (Gray’s characterization sanitizes liberalism’s actual sexist and racist history), different views of what count as desirable improvements, conflicting normative balancings of liberal values (freedom, equality) and competing theoretical prognoses about how best they can be realized in the light of (contested) socio-historical facts. The huge potential for disagreement about all of these explains how a common liberal core can produce such a wide range of variants. Moreover, we need to take into account not merely the spectrum of actual liberalisms but also hypothetical liberalisms that could be generated through novel framings of some or all of the above. So one would need to differentiate dominant versions of liberalism from oppositional versions, and actual from possible variants.

Once the breadth of the range of liberalisms is appreciated—dominant and subordinate, actual and potential—the obvious question then raised is this: even if actual dominant liberalisms have been conservative in various ways (corporate, patriarchal, racist) why does this rule out the development of emancipatory, radical liberalisms?

One kind of answer is the following (call this the internalist answer): because there is an immanent conceptual/normative logic to liberalism as a political ideology that precludes any emancipatory development of it.

Another kind of answer is the following (call this the externalist answer): it doesn’t. The historic domination of conservative exclusionary liberalisms is the result of group interests, group power, and successful group political projects. Apparent internal conceptual/normative barriers to an emancipatory liberalism can be successfully negotiated by drawing (p.14) on the conceptual/normative resources of liberalism itself, in conjunction with a revisionist socio-historical picture of modernity.

Most self-described radicals would endorse—indeed, reflexively, as an obvious truth—the first answer. But as indicated from the beginning, I think the second answer is actually the correct one. The obstacles to developing a “radical liberalism” are, in my opinion, primarily externalist in nature: material group interests, and the way they have shaped hegemonic varieties of liberalism. So I think we need to try to justify a radical agenda with the normative resources of liberalism rather than writing off liberalism. Since liberalism has always been the dominant ideology in the United States and is now globally hegemonic, such a project would have the great ideological advantage of appealing to values and principles that most people already endorse. All projects of egalitarian social transformation are going to face a combination of material, political, and ideological obstacles, but this strategy would at least reduce somewhat the dimensions of the last. One would be trying to win mass support for policies that—and the challenge will, of course, be to demonstrate this—are justifiable by majoritarian norms, once reconceived and put in conjunction with facts not always familiar to the majority. Material barriers (vested group interests) and political barriers (organizational difficulties) will of course remain. But they will constitute a general obstacle for all egalitarian political programs, and as such cannot be claimed to be peculiar problems for an emancipatory liberalism.

But the contention will be that such a liberalism cannot be developed. Why? Here are ten familiar objections, variants of internalism, and my replies to them.

Ten Reasons Why Liberalism Cannot Be Radicalized (And My Replies)

1. Liberalism Has an Asocial, Atomic Individualist Ontology

This is one of the oldest radical critiques of liberalism; it can be found in Marx’s derisive comments—for example, in the Grundrisse—about the “Robinsonades” of the social contract theory whose “golden age” (1650–1800) had long passed by the time he began his intellectual and political career:

The individual and isolated hunter or fisher who forms the starting-point with Smith and Ricardo belongs to the insipid illusions of the eighteenth century. They are Robinson Crusoe stories … no more based on such a naturalism than is Rousseau’s contrat social which makes naturally independent individuals come in contact and have (p.15) mutual intercourse by contract… . Man is in the most literal sense of the word a zoon politikon, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. Production by individuals outside society … is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another.4

But several replies can be made to this indictment. To begin with, even if the accusation is true of contractarian liberalism, not all liberalisms are contractarian. Utilitarian liberalism rests on different theoretical foundations, as does the late nineteenth-century British liberalism of T. H. Green and his colleagues: a Hegelian, social liberalism.5 Closer to home, of course, we have John Dewey’s brand of liberalism. Moreover, even within the social contract tradition, resources exist for contesting the assumptions of the Hobbesian/Lockean version of the contract. Rousseau’s Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (1755) (nowhere cited by Marx) rethinks the “contract” to make it a contract entered into after the formation of society, and thus the creation of socialized human beings. So the ontology presupposed is explicitly a social one. In any case, the contemporary revival of contractarianism initiated by John Rawls’s 1971 A Theory of Justice makes the contract a thought-experiment, a “device of representation,” rather than a literal or even metaphorical anthropological account.6 The communitarian/contractarian debates of the 1980s onward recapitulated much of the “asocial” critique of contractarian liberalism (though usually without a radical edge). But as Rawls pointed out against Michael Sandel, for example, one needs to distinguish the figures in the thought-experiment from real human beings.7 And radicals should be wary about accepting a communitarian ontology and claims about the general good that deny or marginalize the dynamics of group domination in actual societies represented as “communities.” The great virtue of contractarian liberal individualism is the conceptual room it provides for hegemonic norms to be critically evaluated through the epistemic and moral distancing from Sittlichkeit that the contract, as an intellectual device, provides.

2. Liberalism Cannot Recognize Groups and Group Oppression in Its Ontology—I (Macro)

The second point needs to be logically distinguished from the first, since a theory could acknowledge the social shaping of individuals while denying that group oppression is central to that shaping. (So #1 is necessary, but not sufficient, for #2.) The Marxist critique, of course, was supposed to encapsulate both points: people were shaped by society and society (post-“primitive (p.16) communism”) was class dominated. The ontology was social and it was an ontology of class. Today radicals would demand a richer ontology that can accommodate the realities of gender and racial oppression also. But whatever candidates are put forward, the key claim is that a liberal framework cannot accommodate an ontology of groups in relations of domination and subordination. To the extent that liberalism recognizes social groups, these are basically conceived of as voluntary associations that one chooses to join or not join, which is obviously very different from, say, class, race, and gender memberships.

But this evasive ontology, which obfuscates the most central and obvious fact about all societies since humanity exited the hunting-and-gathering stage—that is, that they are characterized by oppressions of one kind or another—is not a definitional constituent of liberalism. Liberalism has certainly recognized some kinds of oppression: the absolutism it opposed from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the Nazism and Stalinism it opposed in the twentieth century. Liberalism’s failure to systematically address structural oppression in supposedly liberal-democratic societies is a contingent artifact of the group perspectives and group interests privileged by those structures, not an intrinsic feature of liberalism’s conceptual apparatus.

In the preface to her recent Analyzing Oppression, Ann Cudd makes a striking point: that hers is the first book-length treatment of the subject in the analytic tradition.8 Philosophy, the discipline whose special mandate it is to illuminate justice and injustice for us, has had very little to say about injustice and oppression because of the social background of the majority of its thinkers. In political theory and political philosophy, the theorists who developed the dominant varieties of liberalism have come overwhelmingly from the hegemonic groups of the liberal social order (bourgeois white males). So it is really not surprising that, given this background, their socio-political and epistemic standpoint has tended to reproduce rather than challenge group privilege.

Consider Rawls, famously weak on gender and with next to nothing to say about race. Rawlsian “ideal theory,” which has dominated mainstream political philosophy for the last four decades, marginalizes such concerns not contingently but structurally. If your focus from the start is principles of distributive justice for a “well-ordered society,” then social oppression cannot be part of the picture, since by definition an oppressive society is not a well-ordered one. As Cudd points out, A Theory of Justice “leaves injustice virtually untheorized,” operating on the assumption “that injustice is merely the negation of justice.”9 But radically unjust societies—those characterized by major rather than minor deviations from ideality—will be different from just societies not merely morally but (p.17) also metaphysically. What Cudd calls “nonvoluntary social groups” will be central to their makeup.

Accordingly, Cudd contends that a conceptualization of “nonvoluntary social groups” must be central to any adequate account of social oppression: “without positing social groups as causally efficacious entities, we cannot explain oppression.” Contra the conventional wisdom in radical circles, however, she is insistent that the ontology of such groups can be explained “[using] current social science, in the form of cognitive psychology and modern economic theory, and situat[ing] itself in the Anglo-American tradition of liberal political philosophy.”10 Identifying “intentionalist” and “structuralist” approaches as the two broad categories of competing theorizations of social groups, she recommends as the best option a compatibilist position, holding that while all action is intentionally guided, many of the constraints within which we act are socially determined and beyond the control of the currently acting individual; to put a slogan on it, intentions dynamically interact within social structures… . My theory of nonvoluntary social groups fits the description of what Philip Pettit calls “holistic individualism,” which means that the social regularities associated with nonvoluntary social groups supervene on intentional states, and at the same time, group membership in these and voluntary social groups partly constitutes the intentional states of individuals.11

If Cudd is right, then, such a theorization can indeed be developed within a liberal framework, using the resources of analytic social and normative theory. But such a development of the theory is not merely permissible but should be seen as mandatory, given liberalism’s nominal commitment to individualism, egalitarianism, universalism, and meliorism. These values simply cannot be achieved unless the obstacles to their realization are identified and theorized. Social-democratic (left) liberalism, feminist liberalism, black liberalism all historically represent attempts to take these structural realities into account for the purposes of rethinking dominant liberalism.12 They are attempts to get right, to map accurately, the actual ontology of the societies for which liberalism is prescribing principles of justice. What Cudd’s book demonstrates is that it is the ignoring of this ontology of group domination that is the real betrayal of the liberal project. A well-ordered society will not have nonvoluntary social groups as part of its ontology. So the path to the “realistic utopia” Rawls is supposedly outlining would crucially require normative prescriptions for eliminating such groups. That no such guidelines are offered is undeniably an indictment of ideal-theory liberalism, which is thereby exposed as both epistemologically and ontologically inadequate. But that does not rule out a reconceptualized (p.18) liberalism, a non-ideal-theory liberalism that, starting from a different social metaphysic, requires a different normative strategy for theorizing justice.

3. Liberalism Cannot Recognize Groups and Group Oppression in Its Ontology—II (Micro)

But (it will be replied) liberalism suffers from a deeper theoretical inadequacy. Even if it may be conceded that liberal theory can recognize oppression at the macro-level, it will be argued that its individualism prevents it from recognizing how profoundly, at the micro-level, individuals are shaped by structures of social oppression. Class, race, and gender belongings penetrate deeply into the ontology of the individual in ways rendered opaque (it will be claimed) by liberalism’s foundational individualism.

But what those seeking to retrieve liberalism would point out is that we need to distinguish different senses of “individualism.” The individualism that is foundational to liberalism is a normative individualism (as in the Gray quote above), which makes individuals rather than social collectivities the locus of value. But that does not require any denial that individuals are shaped in their character (the “second nature” famously highlighted by left theory) by oppressive social forces and related group memberships. Once the first two criticisms have been refuted—that liberal individuals cannot be “social,” and that the involuntary group memberships central to the social in oppressive societies cannot be accommodated within a liberal framework—then this third criticism collapses also. One can without inconsistency affirm both the value of the individual and the importance of recognizing how the individual is socially molded, especially when the environing social structures are oppressive ones. As already noted, dominant liberalism tends to ignore or marginalize such constraints, assuming as its representative figures individuals not merely morally equal, but socially recognized as morally equal, and equi-powerful rather than group-differentiated into the privileged and the subordinated. But this misleading normative and descriptive picture is a function of a political agenda complicit with the status quo, not a necessary implication of liberalism’s core assumptions. A revisionist, radical liberalism would make the analysis of group oppression, the denial of equal standing to the majority of the population, and their impact on the individual’s ontology, a theoretical priority. Thus Cudd’s book, after explicating the ontology of involuntary groups, goes on to detail the various different ways—through violence, economic constraint, discrimination, group harassment, and the internalization of psychological oppression—that the subordinated are shaped by group domination.13 But nothing in her account is meant to imply either that they (p.19) thereby cease to be individuals or that their involuntary group memberships preclude a normative liberal condemnation of the injustice of their treatment.

4. Liberal Humanist Individualism Is Naïve about the Subject

A different kind of challenge is mounted by Foucault (though arguably originating in such earlier sources as the “anti-humanism” of Althusserian Marxism).14 Here, as John Christman points out, in contrast to the “thick” conception of the person advocated by communitarianism, in critique of liberalism, we get the theoretical recommendation that “the notion of a singular unified subject of any sort, however thin the conception, [must be] abandoned.”15 As Foucault writes:

How, under what conditions, and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules? In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse.16

The subject is not merely molded by power, but produced by power, and, in effect, vanishes.

I agree that liberalism cannot meet such a challenge, but I think the premise of the challenge should be rejected. Here I am in sympathy with Christman, who, reviewing various critiques of the classic liberal humanist conception of the self, argues for a socio-historical conception that concedes the absurdity of the notion of people springing from their own brow (“originators”) while nonetheless making a case for “degrees” of self-creation:

Selves should be seen as to a large extent formed by factors not under the control of those reflective agents themselves… . This will help accomplish two things: to provide grounds for the rejection of models of agency and citizenship that assume Herculean abilities to fashion ourselves out of whole cloth; and to force us to focus more carefully on what powers of self-shaping we therefore are left with… . The point must be that the role of the self’s control of the self (and the attendant social elements of both ‘selves’) will be circumscribed by the ways in which our lives are shaped for us and not by us.17

A commitment to humanism does not, as pointed out above, require the denial of the obvious fact that human beings—especially the (p.20) oppressed—are constrained by material structures and social restrictions in what they can accomplish, nor that, as products of particular epochs and group memberships, their consciousness will have been shaped by dominant concepts and norms. Marx emphasized long ago that though people make history, they do not make it under conditions of their own choosing, that agency is constrained by structure and circumstance. But, contra Althusser, this was never intended as a rejection of the claim that it is still people who ultimately assert their personhood in struggle.

And in my opinion, the retort applies to the Foucauldian version of the thesis also. To make the familiar left critiques: such an analysis not only deprives us of a normative basis for indicting structures of oppression, not only deprives the subject of agency, but is flagrantly inconsistent with the actual history of people’s resistance to the systems that have supposedly “produced” them as subjects. The anti-colonial struggle, the anti-Fascist and anti-Stalinist struggles, the civil rights struggles of white women, people of color, gays, the recent “Arab spring” all give the lie to such a diagnosis. Radical liberalism is capable of recognizing both the extent of our socialization by the existing oppressive social order and the ways in which, nonetheless, many people resist and struggle against this oppressive social order.

5. Liberalism’s Values (Independently of the Ontology Question) Are Themselves Problematic

Even if the ontological challenge can be beaten back, though, another front remains open. It will be argued that liberal humanist values are themselves problematic in nature and incapable of advancing a radical agenda. But the obvious reply is, Which values? And what exactly is the problem supposed to be: (a) that the values are intrinsically problematic? (b) that the values involved have historically been extended in an exclusionary discriminatory way? (c) that the values have been developed in a fashion that is predicated on the experience of the privileged? These are all different claims.

Start with the first. Admittedly, some values associated with the liberal tradition could be judged to be intrinsically problematic, such as the “possessive individualism” C. B. Macpherson famously attributed to Hobbes and Locke.18 But this is a value specific to right-wing liberalism, not liberalism in general (it does not appear on Gray’s list), and would be opposed by left-wing/social democratic liberalism. Such values as “freedom,” “equality” (moral egalitarianism), and “fraternity/sorority” classically emblematic of the liberal tradition have not usually been seen as problematic by radicals and have indeed been emblazoned on radical banners. Freedom from oppression, equal rights/equal pay/equal citizenship (“I AM A MAN”), (p.21) fraternity/sorority with the subordinated (“Am I not a man and a brother? Am I not a woman and a sister?”) have all served as values for progressive movements seeking social emancipation.

To be sure, it is a familiar point to radicals, if somewhat less so to the non-radical majority, that the population as a whole has not historically been recognized as deserving the protections of these norms, so that the opponents of emancipation have all too often themselves been liberals. Freedom has been construed as justifiably resting on the enslavement of some; equality has been restricted to those deemed worthy of it (i.e., those more equal than others); fraternity has been literal, an all-boys’ club. Domenico Losurdo’s recently translated Liberalism: A Counter-History provides a devastating exposé of “liberal thought [not] in its abstract purity, but liberalism, and hence the liberal movement and liberal society, in their concrete reality.” It is an illuminatingly sordid history of the ideology’s complicity with racial slavery, white working-class indentureship, colonialism and imperialism (“A ‘Master-Race Democracy’ on a Planetary Scale,” in one chapter’s title), and the conceptual connection between the Nazi “final solution” and Europe’s earlier extermination programs against indigenous peoples.19

Yet it is noteworthy that in his concluding pages, Losurdo still affirms the “merits and strong points of the intellectual tradition under examination.” His “counter-history” has been aimed at dispelling the “habitual hagiography” that surrounds liberalism, and the related “myth of the gradual, peaceful transition, on the basis of purely internal motivations and impulses, from liberalism to democracy, or from general enjoyment of negative liberty to an ever wider recognition of political rights.”20 In reality, he emphasizes, “the classics of the liberal tradition” were generally hostile to democracy; the “exclusion clauses” required “violent upheavals” to be overcome; progress was not linear but a matter of advances and retreats; external crisis often played a crucial role; and white working-class and black inclusion in the polity came at the cost of their participation in colonial wars against native peoples.21 Nonetheless, his final paragraph insists:

However difficult such an operation might be for those committed to overcoming liberalism’s exclusion clauses, to take up the legacy of this intellectual tradition is an absolutely unavoidable task… . [L]‌iberalism’s merits are too significant and too evident for it to be necessary to credit it with other, completely imaginary ones. Among the latter is the alleged spontaneous capacity for self-correction often attributed to it… . Only in opposition to [such] pervasive repressions and transfigurations is the book now ending presented as a “counter-history”: bidding farewell to hagiography is the precondition for landing on the firm ground of history.22

So for Losurdo one can accept the indictment of actual historic liberalism, and its failure to live up to its putative universalism, without going on to conclude either that liberalism must therefore be abandoned or that liberalism’s own internal dynamic will naturally correct itself. Rather, the appropriate conclusion is that liberalism can be retrieved, but that it will take political struggle to do so.

Finally, even when the “exclusion clauses” are formally overcome, their legacy may well remain in the form of values now nominally extended to everybody, but in reality articulated in such a fashion as to continue to reproduce group privilege—for example, a “freedom” that repudiates caste status but does not recognize illicit economic constraint as unfairly limiting liberty, or an “autonomy” that does not acknowledge the role of female caregiving in enabling human development, or a “justice” resolutely forward-looking that blocks issues of rectification of past injustices. But what such tendentious conceptual framings arguably call for is a critique and a rethinking of these values and principles in the light of these exclusions (as with left, feminist, and black liberalism). That does not refute their normative worth; it just underlines the necessity for taking the whole population into account in revising them and developing a blueprint of their internal architecture adequately sensitized to the differential social location and social history of such groups, particularly those traditionally oppressed.

6. Liberalism’s Enlightenment Origins Commit It to Seeing Moral Suasion and Rational Discourse as the Societal Prime Movers

Liberalism is often associated with a historical progressivism, but a belief in the possibility and desirability of meliorism (see Gray) certainly does not commit one to Whiggish teleologies. One can oppose conservative fatalism and pessimism in its different versions—Christian claims about original sin, Burkean distrust of abstract reason, biological determinism in its ever-changing and ever-renewed incarnations—without thinking that there is any inevitability about the triumph of progress and reason. A liberalism that is “radical” will necessarily need to draw on the left tradition’s demystified analysis of the centrality of group domination to the workings of the social order.23 As earlier noted (sections 2 and 3 above), a revisionist ontology that recognizes as key social players nonvoluntary social groups in structural relations of domination and subordination will perforce have a more realistic view of the (in)efficacy of moral suasion than an ontology of atomic individuals. (p.23)

Such a revisionist liberalism will acknowledge the role of hegemonic ideologies and vested group interests in the preservation of the status quo, and their refractoriness to appeals to reason and justice. Indeed, it will often be precisely in the names of a “reason” and “justice” shaped by the norms and perspectives of group privilege—of class, gender, and race—that egalitarian social change is resisted. As Losurdo makes clear, no immanent developmentalist moral dynamic drives liberalism’s evolution. It is not at all the case that an endorsement of democratized liberal norms implies any corollary belief that the democratic struggle for a more egalitarian social order is guaranteed to be successful. Progress is possible; defeat and rollback are also possible. In general, a radical liberalism should, in some sense, be “materialist,” recognizing the extent to which both people and the social dynamic are shaped by material forces and not over-estimating the causal role of rational argumentation and moral suasion on their own. Radical liberalism takes for granted that political and ideological struggle will be necessary to realize liberal values against the opposition of those who all too frequently think of themselves as the real liberals. Radical liberalism can be descriptively realist (realizing the centrality of interest-based politics) without being normatively realist (abandoning morality for realpolitik).

7. Liberalism Is Naïve in Assuming the Neutrality of the State and the Juridical System

Again, while such a claim may be true of dominant varieties of liberalism, it need not be true of all. (Note that nowhere in Gray’s characterization is any such assumption made.)

The neutrality of the juridico-political system is a liberal ideal, a norm to be striven for to reflect citizens’ equal moral status before the law and entitlement to equal protection of their legitimate interests. To represent it as a sociological generalization of liberal theory about actual political systems, including systems self-designated as liberal, would be to confuse the normative with the descriptive. Liberalism has certainly historically had no trouble in seeing the illicit influence of concentrated group power in the socio-political systems it opposed (see section #2). The original critique of “feudal” absolutism, the twentieth-century critique of “totalitarianism,” relied in part on the documentation and condemnation of the extent of legally backed state repression in curbing individual freedom. Liberalism’s blind spot has been its failure to document and condemn the enormity of the historic denial of equal rights to the majority of the population ruled by self-styled “liberal” states: the “absolutism” and “totalitarianism” directed against white women and white workers, and the nonwhite enslaved (p.24) and colonized. Patriarchal democracy, bourgeois democracy, Herrenvolk democracy have all been represented as “democracy” simpliciter, with no analysis of the mechanisms of structural subordination that have characterized such polities, or the ideological sleights-of-hand that have rationalized them. But to claim a necessary conceptual connection between such evasions and liberal assumptions is to confuse the contingent necessities of the discourse of hegemonic liberalism—aimed at preserving, whether by justifying or obfuscating, patriarchal, bourgeois, and racial power—with what is taken to be some kind of transworld essence of liberalism. In recent decades, a large body of literature has developed that investigates the impact of class, race, and gender dynamics in the actual functioning of the state and the legal system.24 Radical liberalism would draw on this body of literature in seeking to put in place the safeguards necessary for guaranteeing equal protection not merely on paper but in reality.

8. Liberalism Is Necessarily Anti-Socialist, So How “Radical” Could It Be?

“Socialism” is used in different senses. Assuming that a romanticized return to pre-industrial communal systems is not in the cards for a globalized world of seven-plus billion people, there are three main alternatives so far (two tried, one theorized about): state-commandist socialism, social democracy, market socialism. State-commandist socialism (a.k.a. “communism”) is indeed incompatible with liberalism but would seem to have been refuted as an attractive ideal by the history of the twentieth century.25 Social democracy is just left-liberalism, whether in Rawls’s version or in versions further left, like Brian Barry’s, more worried about the inequalities Rawls’s two principles of justice leave intact.26 Market socialism is yet to be implemented on a national level, but many of the hypothetical accounts of how it would work emphasize the importance of respecting liberal norms.27 In other words, market socialism’s putative superiority to capitalism is not defended by invoking distinctively socialist values but by showing how such uncontroversial and traditional liberal values as democracy, freedom, and self-realization are not going to be achievable for the majority under the present system (or through the appeal to more recent values like sustainability, generated by awareness of the impending ecological disaster, which the present order will make achievable for nobody!)28 Other possibilities are not ruled out, but their proponents would have to explain how their models have learned the lessons of the past in both (a) being economically viable and (b) respecting human rights, the common global moral currency of the postwar epoch, which is best developed in the liberal tradition. Criticism (p.25) of the existing order is not enough; one has to show how one’s proposed “socialist” alternative will be superior (and in more than a vague hand-waving kind of way).

9. The Discourse of Liberal Rights Cannot Accommodate Radical Redistribution and Structural Change

Marxism’s original critique of liberalism, apart from deriding its (imputed) social ontology, represented liberal rights—for example, in “On the Jewish Question”29—as a bourgeois concept. But that was more than a century and a half ago. Lockean rights-of-non-interference centered on private property, “negative” rights, are indeed deficient as an exclusivist characterization of people’s normative entitlements, but such a minimalist view has been contested by social democrats (some self-identifying as liberal) for more than a century. A significant literature now exists on “welfare” rights, “positive” rights, “social” rights, whose implementation would indeed require radical structural change. The legitimacy of these rights as “liberal” rights is, of course, denied by the political right. But that’s the whole point, with which I began—that liberalism is not a monolith but a set of competing interpretations and theorizations, fighting it out in a common arena.30 The US hostility to such rights is a manifestation of the historic success of conservatives in framing the normative agenda in this country, not a necessary corollary of liberalism as such. As earlier emphasized, liberalism must not be collapsed into neo-liberalism. Nor is it a refutation to point out that having such rights on paper does not guarantee their implementation, since this is just a variation of the already discussed imputation to liberalism of a necessarily idealist conception of the social dynamic (section #6), in which morality is a prime mover. But such a sociological claim is neither a foundational nor a derivative assumption of liberalism.

Moreover, in the specific case of the redress of racial injustice, one does not even need to appeal to such rights, since the situation of, for example, blacks [black people] in the United States is arguably the result of the historic and current violation of traditional negative rights (life, liberty, property), which are supposed to be the uncontroversial ones in the liberal tradition, as well as the legacy of such practices as manifest in illicitly accumulated wealth and opportunities. Here again the hegemony of Rawlsian “ideal theory” over the development of the mainstream political philosophy of the last forty years has had pernicious consequences, marginalizing such issues and putting the focus instead on principles of distributive justice for an ideal “well-ordered” society. But an emancipatory liberalism would be reoriented from (p.26) the start toward non-ideal theory and would correspondingly make rectificatory justice and the ending of social oppression its priority.31

10. American Liberalism in Particular Has Been so Shaped in Its Development by Race that Any Emancipatory Possibilities Have Been Foreclosed

Liberalism in general (both nationally and internationally) has been shaped by race, but that does not preclude reclaiming it.32 Moreover, it is precisely such shaping that motivates the imperative of recognizing the multiplicity of liberalisms, not merely for cataloging purposes but in order to frame them as theoretical objects whose dynamic requires investigation. The conflation of all liberalisms with their racialized versions obstructs seeing these ideologies as historically contingent varieties of liberalism, which could have developed otherwise. A Brechtian “defamiliarization” is necessary, a cognitive distancing that “denaturalizes” what is prone to appear as the essence of liberalism. Jennifer Pitts’s A Turn to Empire, for example, which is subtitled The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France, and Sankar Muthu’s Enlightenment against Empire, both seek to demarcate within liberalism the existence of anti- as well as pro-imperialist strains, thereby demonstrating that liberalism is not a monolith.33 Admittedly, other scholars have been more ambivalent about some of their supposed exemplars; see, for example, Losurdo, already cited, and John Hobson’s recent The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics, which develops a detailed and sophisticated taxonomy of varieties of Eurocentrism and imperialism that demonstrates the compatibility of racism, Eurocentrism, and anti-imperialism.34 (For instance, many European liberal theorists were anti-imperialist precisely because of their racism—their fears that the white race would degenerate as a result of miscegenation with inferior races and the deleterious consequences of prolonged residence in the unsuitable tropical climates of colonial outposts.) But the mere fact of such a range of positions illustrates that a liberalism neither Eurocentric nor imperialist is not a contradiction in terms.

In the United States in particular, as Rogers Smith has demonstrated, liberalism and racism have been intricately involved with one another from the nation’s inception, a relationship Smith conceptualizes in terms of conflicting “multiple traditions,” racism versus liberal universalism, and which I see as a conflict between “racial liberalism” and non-racial liberalism.35 My belief is that formally identifying “racial liberalism” as a particular evolutionary (and always evolving) ideological phenomenon better enables us to understand the role of race in writing and rewriting the most important political philosophy in the nation’s history, from the overtly racist liberalism (p.27) of the past to the nominally color-blind liberalism of the present. From the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century accommodation to racial slavery and aboriginal expropriation to the twentieth-century tainting of welfare and social democracy on this side of the Atlantic,36 race has refracted crucial terms, concepts, and values in liberal theory so as to remove any cognitive dissonance between the privileging of whites and the subordination of people of color. Correspondingly, the shaping of white moral psychology by race and the distinctive patterns of uptake of abstract liberal values (“equality,” “individualism”) in such a psychology then become legitimate objects of investigation for us.37 One begins from the assumption that these norms will be color-coded in their actual operationalization, so that any efficacious framing of an interracial political project will need to anticipate and correct for this differential understanding rather than being naively surprised by it. But such racialization (as popular interpretation and reception) is going to be a common problem for any American ideology with emancipatory pretensions. Liberalism is certainly not unique in that respect, as the history of the white American left and socialist movements illustrates. As Jack London famously put it at a meeting of the Socialist Party in San Francisco “when challenged by various members concerning his emphasis on the yellow peril”: “What the devil! I am first of all a white man and only then a Socialist!”38 Herrenvolk socialism existed no less than Herrenvolk liberalism.

### AT: Aesthetics – 1NC

#### Aesthetic expression does not produce sites of resistance. Commodification by fascism is inevitable.

Berger, 17—Kentucky-based activist and writer (Edmund, “Killing Art,” https://deterritorialinvestigations.wordpress.com/2017/04/12/killing-art/, dml)

Sadness at the commoditization of art runs through the center of leftist thought and theory. From Lefebvre to the Situationists to Baudrillard, anxiety over capitalism’s uncanny ability to seemingly recuperate any and all aesthetic tracing played an essential role in the development of the conceptual axis running from the critique of everyday life to the Spectacle to simulation and simulacrum. Such positions mirror the assault on the culture industry carried out by the Frankfurt School; Marcuse’s One Dimensional Society, his own diagnosis of the Society of the Spectacle, finds artistic creation being marshaled to affirm, as opposed to negate, existing society. Later, when the 1980s explosion of finance capital produced the contemporary art market, these fears were revived as the culture industry reached a higher stage of integration and diffusion, a collapse into its own shimmering surface.

As a key site of rec uperation and commoditization, art becomes positioned as a site of resistance to the present. In The Uprising, for example, Bifo Berardi makes much hay about the desire common amongst young people in austerity-wracked European countries to become ‘artists’ – the idealized figure of the artist, here, as that which is capable of standing outside the maw of the top-heavy state-capitalism nexus. Long presaging Berardi’s worldview (and obviously informing it) are scores of Situationists, Autonomists and post-Autonomists, as well as pop intelligentsia who claimed that art as an action produced a revolt against the world, that our centuries of fire could be exited through rapturous aesthetic strategies…

It’s clear that at the individual or even group level, certain artists and art scenes have blazed a trail to some form of exteriority, even if that exteriority is in fact an interiority. “’Poetry leads from the known to the unknown, writes Bataille…” The same cannot be said of the notion of “art” as a transcendental abstraction, be it the so-called art world and its corollary, the culture industry. Even if the creation of and/or engagement with art might lead to some encounter with a non-capitalist or even uncivilized and primal extreme alterity, art as a broad register unto itself remains firmly embedded in the ecology that surrounds it. For a spectrum of thinkers and actors ranging from Walter Benjamin to Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), art itself has a totalitarian end to it, fascistic states incapable of being untangled from their aestheticization of politics.

Outside of the sorts of societies being probed by Benjamin and NSK (Nazi Germany and Yugoslavia under Tito, respectively), among others, we could say that art has always had a direct relationship to both the commercialist processes of marketization and to the technological processes that drives them. It would not be a stretch, perhaps, to say that to view art’s recuperation in the contemporary marketplace is a byproduct of the spectacle is to wildly miss the mark, and that one perhaps should treat the becoming-image of spectacular relations as a higher stage of artistic development, of which recuperation is but just one part.

I.

In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari discuss the relationship between phases of artistic development and what they deem as the “three ages”: classical, romantic, and modern. While they urge us not to read these as “an evolution”, they nonetheless affirm that each stage is linked to a particular constellation of machines and social and economic relations, that “they are assemblages enveloping different machines, or different relations to the machine.” These three ages are themselves a reflection of Norbert Wiener’s tripartite schema of the history development of machine technology, with the classic age corresponding to the age of simple machines and clockwork, the romantic age with the era of thermodynamic machines, and the modern with cybernetic, computational machines. As each machinic substrate shifts the ground upon which all things are built, capitalism is forced to retool its own dynamics and adjust its axiomatics (usually by way of the state, to keep the molten core of the market itself maintained under some semblance of human control). So too does art transform the entire spirit of itself.

Classical art, for Deleuze and Guattari, begins with the organization of matter through hierarchy, heavy centralization, and compartmentalization; each element is separated from one another, a system unto itself. The artist puts these different elements into motion to another another, and in doing so gives form to what underneath is chaos. “[T]he task of the classical artist is God’s own, that of organizing chaos; and the artist’s only cry is Creation! Creation! The Tree of Creation!” In the era of the romantic, however, this role changed considerably: “The artist is no longer God but the Hero who defies God: Found, Found, instead of Create. Faust, especially the second Faust…” In keeping with the laws of thermodynamics, initially discovered because of the introduction of thermodynamic machines (and not vice-versa), matter is not treated as a succession of objects and substances, but movement flowing in continuous variation. In this phase, the artist operates in conjunction with the ground. “[t]he artist abandons the ambition of de jure universality and his or her status as creator: the artist territorializes, enters a territorial assemblage.” At the periphery of the romantic madness lies, the domain of avant-gardes, strange obsessions and schizophrenic experience, heralding the coming age of the modern…

If the romantic era concerned a generalized formation of new territories (emphasis on the plural), Deleuze and Guattari see the modern as following a generalized path of deterritorialization. As opposed to the ground of the earth, art “opens onto the forces of the Cosmos”. This is the era of both the synthetic and the synthesizer; previous forms become trash in the face of the ability to sculpt new creations from the howls of electrons. “We… enter the the Age of the Machine, the immense mechanosphere”, that is, the rhizosphere where points of connection proliferate amongst a great decoding. While still to come, Deleuze and Guattari regard the modern as potentially signaling a new people, the figure of the mutant people scattered about in their texts: the strong of the future coming in the wake of absolute deterritorialization. “it may be that the sound molecules of pop music are at this very moment implanting here and there a people of a new type, singularly indifferent to the orders of the radio, to computer safeguards, to the threat of an atomic bomb… the people and the earth must be like the vectors of of a cosmos that carries them off…”

While the role of deterritorialization is foregrounded in the age of the modern, the unfolding of these three ages should 1) not be treated as absolutes breaks with one another, but as shifting fields of interaction marked by the lingering effects of previous formations; and 2) as ‘machinic envelopes’ folded within the generalized arc of deterritorialization. From the full territory of the sovereign to the territories of modern nation-state creation to the penetrative molecularization under the machinic processes of the modern, art maintains a transforming, but consistent relation, itself becoming more deterritorialized, more hybridized, more open as it too undergoes the process of deterritorialization. Art is not outside of or connected to the side of these processes. It is wholly subsumed by them.

Tellingly, Baudrillard drew on Wiener’s threefold diagram of machinic development as well, tracing through it a very different set of concerns. Here, the movement from simple machines and clockwork to thermodynamic machines to cybernetic machines leads not to the classical, romantic, and modern ages, but to the precession of the simulacra: first-order, second-order, and third-order simulacra. Each stage is not only a relation of machines to production and society, but a simultaneous deeper penetration of the capitalist market into society and a rise to higher levels of abstraction and detachment, culminating (for Baudrillard, at least) in the wholesale replacement of reality with hyperreality.

Baudrillard finds, in the movement from first-order to second-order, a passage from a situation in which concrete difference exists towards a situation which carries out the “absorption of appearances, or… the liquidation of the real, whichever you prefer.” This is capitalism proper, a society of the spectacle from its inception. It is here, where all that is holy is profaned (what better allegory for the turn from godly creation to the mechanical manipulation of found matter and substance?) that the figure of man stands in direct relation to the machine, no longer simply a matter of using tools, but as ‘conscious linkages’ operating in conjunction.

Third-order simulacra corresponds to the modern age of cybernetic machines. In this stage the forces that slowly filled the void of the liquidated real begin reproducing themselves, self-replicating codes that operate in a state detached from fixed points of reference. Computerized modeling systems, algorithms, automation, and rampant commodification – right down to the genetic level – reign freely in this realm:

Cybernetic control, generation through models, differential modulation, feedback, question/answer, etc. This is the new operational configuration (industrial simulacra being mere operations). Digitality is its metaphysical principle (Leibniz’s God) and DNA is its prophet… At the limit of an ever more forceful extermination of references and finalities, of a loss of semblances and designators, we find the digital, programmatic sign, which has a purely tactical value, at the intersection of other signals (‘bits’ of information/tests) and which has the structure of a micro-molecular code of command and control.

Through their shared deployment of the tri-stage schema for technoeconomic development, a conservation can be staged betweeen Deleuze and Guattari and Baudrillard – a feat quite difficult in other modes. What is to be gleamed from this encounter is clear: that the path of development is both is one of deterritorialization and deepening abstraction and artificialization, and that there is a relationship between the artificial and the deterritorialized. While there is much to say on the topic of this relationship, such questions must be deferred to another time; what is important here is to pursue the question of art.

While Deleuze and Guattari’s account of transhistorical deterritorialization is framed directly through the question of art, Baudrillard relegates much of the discussion of the artistic to the periphery. He does, however, cite Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” to discuss the internal logics of the second-order industrial simulacra: “reproduction absorbs the process of production, changes its goals, and alters the status of the product and the producer.” For Benjamin, the introduction of mass production techniques for reproducibility laid a blow across the aura – that is, the intangible ether that allows us to perceive an object’s substantial ‘authenticity’ – that suffused objects, artistic of otherwise. Unlike the output of the artists and artisans of old, the commoditized output of the industrial era was marked by a shattering of aura, a decline that occurred with shades of catastrophe. This loss of aura, in turn, precipitates the rise of the artificial. Such a thing is necessary for the object to enter into the mad circulations coursing through the world market: deterritorialization.

0.

Two propositions concerning the unity of deterritorialization and artificialization:

Reversing the process is impossible. The most visible aspects of the process are the secondary ice-berg tips of long-term autocatalytic primary processes that are beyond situational control.

Attempts to push back against these processes at any macro-scale register is unwise and incoherent at the levels of both theory and execution. At best they will fragmented, ephemeral creations tending towards meltdown; at worse they will be inhospitable catastrophe zones.

These propositions stem, of course, from the an unconditional accelerationist perspective, informed at it is by the cybernetic Nietzschean of Deleuze and Guattari, the CCRU, and others. From this ground the injunction is clear: to pursue the path of art’s demolition by way of the commodity form and the art market until the aura is nothing but wind-swept ash. The market, as Jon Roffe points out, is a “realized active nihilism”, a “machine for the problematization of values”; at the technotronic horizon, value as any sort of signal collapses into the maelstrom. This is what Kazimir Malevich had realized, at the dawning of the great Soviet attempt to accelerate this process, when he carried out the final word in all of art by debuting The Black Square at the (poignantly named) Last Futurist Exhibition of Paintings, 0,10.

[Modernity pulls itself towards the black box of the unknown, degree 0. “…a series of intensive states based on the intensity = 0 that designates the body without organs.” “…the real becomes volatile, it becomes an allegory for death, but it also draws strength from its own destruction… the ecstasy of denegation and its own ritual extermination…”]

Such an injunction robs the artist from playing any role in resisting the broadening mutations of market forces. Not only does the delusion of art-as-resistance collapse, but it is the very leveling of art as a valorized register that is to be celebrated. The uncanny resemblance between the day-to-day activities of art students and artists with their business-minded patrons is but the tip of the iceberg – following Nietzsche’s delirious premonitions concerning the Strong of the Future that will emerge from the great technoeconomic acceleration, the leveling of art through these very same processes poses the overcoming of art as a category until itself. Under the runaway processes of mounting complexity, sociocultural differentiation, unstoppable exit and virulent illegibility, the sideways step into the cold and static gallery, that chapel of the proto-hyperreal so feared by the unwitting postmodernists, will seem quaint (see the reports stretching back over the past five years marking declines in art gallery attendance and participation in the formal art market writ large). Strange configurations will arise instead in the widening cracks and blind spots of the megamachine as it proceeds deeper into its meltdown stage. “The tower bloc, condemned as a vertical slum by a Control that would rather update its architectural dimensions into forms more amenable to representation.. becomes an ‘incubator’.”

#### Poetics is exhausting and self-defeating. Organizing and shared goals key to sustain political pressure.

Dr. Caroline Levine 23. David and Kathleen Ryan Professor of Humanities, Cornell University; PhD, English, Birbeck College, University of London. “Political Forms That Work: Goal, Turning Point, Hinge.” Chapter 5 in The Activist Humanist: Form and Method in the Climate Crisis. Princeton University Press. 2023.

The Myth of Spontaneity and the Form of the Goal

Haunted by the traumas of over-centralized and totalitarian models of left politics in the twentieth century, theorists and activists in our own time have moved to the opposite extreme: a celebration of spontaneity, leaderlessness, and the refusal of all hierarchy and teleology. Influential thinkers in the aesthetic humanities warn us of the dangers of organization and administration—what Jacques Rancière calls “the police” and Alain Badiou “the state.” From this perspective, the only proper political strategy is a deliberate horizontalism, the spontaneous development of “small, multiple, and diffuse” local movements.7

I will turn to political theorist Rodrigo Nunes in this chapter to make the case that the anti-teleological impulse has in fact been an obstacle to success in political struggle. In the years after the financial crisis of 2008, a wave of deliberately horizontal political movements—Tahrir Square, the 15-M movement in Spain, Occupy Wall Street, Syriza in Greece, UK Uncut, student protests in Chile—promised an exciting new energy on the left. But as they unfolded, they also suffered from “fitfulness” and “an incapacity to sustain themselves over time,” an “inability to scale up in a viable way, and a tendency to fall apart when they tried to do so,” and a “propensity to demand large investments of time and energy from participants in return for little by way of clear strategy and decision-making.”8 Jodi Dean, like Nunes, argues for the importance of moving from “crowds”—“temporary collective beings” with affective intensities that transcend any individual feeling or experience—to more lasting and effective organizational forms. Her preferred form is the party, which “fits issues into a platform such that they are not so many contradictory and individual preferences but instead a broader vision for which it will fight.”9 The party is precisely not a spontaneous coming together but an institution that provides knowledge apart from what any single person can know and provides a lasting infrastructure for action. “Crowds amass,” Dean argues, “but they do not endure.”10

Spontaneity is itself illusion, according to Nunes: “However improvised and spur-of-the-moment a demonstration or a riot is, it never truly corresponds to the myth of a multitude of unconnected individuals joining together all at once, like a crowd in a musical magically breaking into song.”11 There is always some coordination of collective energies, a call to action, a time and space for gathering, a message passed through formal and informal networks. As with a musical performance, then, effective political change depends on development of skills through practice and coordination behind the scenes.12

I will build on Nunes’s analogy between protests and musicals to make the case that we aesthetic formalists have the tools to read political forms in some of the same ways we analyze a work of art. For example, the primary form Occupy Wall Street took—the occupation of a bounded public space—was spatial. There was no organizing temporal shape, no narrative arc or rhythm. Enough people must simply continue to occupy the space indefinitely, withstanding forces of deterioration—including activist exhaustion, a lack of sympathy from a broad public, dwindling media interest—with no opportunity to declare or negotiate a victory. The movement could not change location or adopt a different major tactic without losing its identity, becoming something other than Occupy Wall Street.13 For many, this freedom from linear temporality was the movement’s special strength. But its commitment to the proliferation of many equally valid goals meant that there was no shared purpose to keep the movement going.14 The fact that it did not have “a natural end point” meant that it had little option but to fizzle out without realizing any specific demands.15

As we have seen in this book, the aesthetic humanities—and activists and intellectuals of many stripes—have been, like the Occupy protestors, firmly resistant to teleological thinking. Working toward an end seems highly restrictive and normalizing, imposing too coherent an order on the contradictory stuff of reality. On these grounds we have fought for interruption, flux, and open-endedness. And yet, that means we have often missed the promising affordances of the form of the goal for leftist politics. After all, goals are forms that afford endurance, and the sheer length of a protest can contribute to its success.

Short demonstrations rarely work, as climate activist Daniel Hunter explains:

Imagine you’re a politician, and you’re the target of a campaign. People are outside your office urging you to do something. You had to sneak in the back door so you wouldn’t have to face them. You are feeling the pressure. But will they be around the next day? Will they keep the pressure on? If you can wait until the pressure is over, then you are unlikely to make the change. Government officials (and most targets) regularly just wait until people do their big action. If the activists are lucky, the official gets some bad press for a few days. But the pressure does not stay. They wait until the heat blows over. Then they keep doing the bad thing.16

Historical examples bear out this hypothesis. Take the famous example of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a thirteen-month-long nonviolent protest that ended in the desegregation of public buses. The boycott needed to draw large-scale participation and support, but it also needed to last long enough to shift sympathies and wear down the opposition. How best to keep this large group going through a lengthy campaign? “People must have something to look forward to,” explained civil rights lawyer Fred D. Gray.17 The form of the shared goal gave collective meaning and purpose to the arduous daily work of boycotting, inspiring people to persevere whenever they might be tempted to capitulate to the relative convenience of taking the bus. Winning the battle to desegregate the buses was far from a recipe for complacency, either: it helped to energize and empower other protests, marking the beginning of a series of crucial victories against Jim Crow laws across the South.

Another, more recent example comes from the small coastal community of Lamu, Kenya, where residents waged a long campaign of resistance against the building of a $2 billion coal-fired power plant.18 Coordinating protests in Lamu and Nairobi, letter-writing campaigns, a poetry competition, a lawsuit, and frequent invitations to the media over a span of three years, local groups worked together with national and global environmental and human rights organizations, all in the interests of the same shared goal: to prevent the building of the plant.19 In June 2019, they won: Kenya’s National Environment Tribunal revoked the power company’s license to build.20 In these and many other cases, “sustained disruptions” are more powerful than brief outbursts.21

The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Lamu coal plant protest both seemed hopeless when they began—battles against huge powers by relatively powerless people—and yet, they managed to pull of significant and enduring victories. As the Lamu organizers put it, they “stopped a giant in its tracks.”22 These successes make it clear, then, that goals do not only reinforce the status quo; they afford the realization of aspirations of all kinds.

### AT: Unions Racist – 1NC

#### \*Working class solidarity is key. Unions have historically taken steps to secure Black freedom. The aff reinforces capitalism’s divide-and-conquer tactics.

Cedric Johnson 16, PhD/Prof African American Studies, PhD And MA Gov/Politics, MA Black Studies, Prof @ UIC, Union Rep, https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/02/ta-nehisi-coates-case-for-reparations-bernie-sanders-racism/?utm\_campaign=shareaholic&utm\_medium=facebook&utm\_source=socialnetwork 2-3

The left-egalitarian horizon is informed by a rich historical record of impactful reforms and has the capacity to unify broad swaths of the American middle and working class around their shared concerns — desire for a livable wage, economic security, housing, and education — while the reparations demand does not. As it has evolved from the sixties, the reparations demand has never yielded one tangible improvement in the lives of the majority of African Americans. Though limited and historically uneven, the kinds of social-democratic reforms that are now being advanced by the Sanders campaign have had a discernible effect on the lives of the majority of African Americans at various points. Ultimately, the historical narrative that underpins the reparations claim, a view of history that emphasizes racial conflict as primary, white supremacy as hegemonic and immutable, and black politics as insular and unitary, can only leave us with a fatalistic view of political possibilities that neglects the rich, diverse history of interracial left political struggle. Contrary to the arguments offered by Coates and others, interracial social movements, universal social policy, and an expanded public sector created the contemporary black middle class as we know it. Even as the slogan of white supremacy united various reactionary Southern elements and restored the power of the merchant-landlord class, interracial organizations fought to secure black freedom and create greater equality for black and white workers. The Readjuster Party in Virginia worked to unite workers against landed interests, and pressed for debt relief, lowered property taxes on farmers, chartered unions, established a black college, expanded public services, and removed the poll tax. Other organizations at the end of the nineteenth century posed a different interracial, left vision of American society — organizations like the Populist Party of the 1890s, the Knights of Labor, and the Citizens Committee of New Orleans. Throughout the twentieth century, struggles to expand labor rights, universal suffrage, and civil rights, and to abolish inequality, drew together diverse publics, creating concrete forms of social justice (albeit sometimes short-lived and imperfect). Whites who realized that their fates were intimately connected to those of southern blacks supported struggles against racism. Jim Crow segregation — the historical system of racial apartheid that was legitimated at the federal level by Plessy v. Ferguson’s “separate but equal” doctrine in 1896, codified by the states, and strictly enforced through violence and intimidation — began a long but certain death after the Second World War. While contemporary forms of inequality in wealth, housing, schooling, and criminal justice may bear a strong resemblance to Jim Crow, these injustices are classed in ways that the ascriptive status of blacks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were not. Contemporary forms of oppression are not propelled by the need to subjugate black labor to the interests of Southern planters and industrialists, but as a means of managing a growing class of Americans who are not exclusively black but have been made obsolete by hyper-industrialization, the large-scale introduction of automation and cybernetic command, just-in-time production, and other strategies of flexible accumulation in US farms and factories. We continue to reach for old modes of analysis in the face of a changed world, one where blackness is still derogated but anti-black racism is not the principal determinant of material conditions and economic mobility for many African Americans. Social exclusion and labor exploitation are different problems, but they are never disconnected under capitalism. And both processes work to the advantage of capital. Segmented labor markets, ethnic rivalry, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and informalization all work against solidarity. Whether we are talking about antebellum slaves, immigrant strikebreakers, or undocumented migrant workers, it is clear that exclusion is often deployed to advance exploitation on terms that are most favorable to investor class interests. In other words, the most impoverished and dispossessed are hyper-exploited, placing downward pressure on wage floors, worsening conditions and undermining worker power in specific sectors and throughout society. Liberal antiracist discourse further isolates the conditions of the most excluded segments of workers, separating their experiences from those of other workers, and their labor from the broader processes at work, instead of emphasizing the empirical and potential political unity of the laboring classes. Respect for difference is valued in today’s multicultural milieu, but the mobilization of different sub-strata of the working class against one another has long been a cherished strategy of capital. In our own times, this has been a vaunted campaign strategy of the New Right since the presidential campaigns of Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Richard Nixon in the sixties. Throughout that decade and into the early seventies, each man contributed to an ever more expansive repertoire of anti–civil rights and anti–New Left rhetoric, tugging the exposed, fraying threads of the New Deal coalition. In his bid for the Republican presidential nomination, Donald Trump has reached for the same playbook the New Right has used for decades, speaking in vile tones about the alleged criminality of Latino immigrants, talking openly about building a fence along the Mexican border, and calling for a US travel ban on all Muslims. As it has in previous election cycles, such racist patter has resonated among some alienated white rural and suburban voters, and those in less populous states, who find it easier to bash minorities, the alleged liberal media, or left intellectuals than to contest the power that neoliberal politicians, multinational corporations, and the investor class wield over their lives. Only in those historical moments when working-class and popular movements organize against these differences and around common predicaments and interests has society lurched toward greater equality. Many contemporary antiracist liberals have lost sight of this historical truth. And we will continue to lose if we follow their lead.

#### Claims that unions are iredeemably racist reify neoliberal mystification.

Adolph Reed & Kenneth Warren 25 Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Politics at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts. Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of English at the University of Chicago. “BLACK STUDIES, CULTURAL POLITICS, AND THE EVASION OF INEQUALITY: The Farce this Time.” DOI: 10.4324/9781003569947.

Another feature of the cultural turn in black studies has been denial of the significance of that political sphere for black Americans. Thus Peniel Joseph’s “narrative history” of the Black Power movement and its legacy leaps from the last gasps of the Black Panthers’ performative militancy in the early 1970s to hip-hop culture in the late 1980s—with no discussion of the impact of the great civil rights legislative victories of the mid-1960s or the emergence and consolidation of the stratum of black elected officials and functionaries who, along with the investor class, have defined the content of the “black political agenda” ever since.23 In the claim to find politics everywhere, the cultural turn has eventuated in disregarding it where it is most explicit; in the name of voicing black Americans’ otherwise inscrutable beliefs and desires, it disparages as racially inauthentic the domain where they speak openly and directly. In fact, the argumentative trajectory of black cultural studies and the race-reductionist politics with which it is aligned has been to ignore or deny the significance of the specificities of black American historical and political development. Antiracist political criticism and the scholarship that supports it insist that “nothing has changed” regarding the circumstances of black Americans since the segregation era or even slavery, even though the “most superficial knowledge of the past and observation of the present should establish that black Americans do not live under the same restricted and perilous conditions now as in 1865, or for that matter 1965.”24 And the claims are ever more outlandish. Afropessimist literary scholar Saidiya Hartman dismisses emancipation as a “nonevent,” and fellow Afropessimist professor Frank Wilderson asserts that slavery never ended and that enslavement is the permanent condition of black people. (Indeed, the contention in the early 1990s that black people can express their authentic feelings only surreptitiously already in effect presumed that slavery and oppression are black Americans’ natural condition.) Basic historical facts no longer constrain these fanciful accounts at all. Journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, abetted and promoted heavily by the New York Times, charges that the point of the American Revolution was to preserve slavery; and filmmaker Ava DuVernay—in an Afrofuturist style of irrationalist narrative—alleges that the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, contained a poison pill in its exception permitting involuntary servitude as “punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted,” added by its framers, inexplicably, with intent to reinstate slavery in the form of twentieth- and twenty-first century mass incarceration.25 The class-skewed mystifications we had first identified in black studies— the “racecraft” on which the field rests—have failed ever more spectacularly as either interpretation or political practice. As our essays in this volume and our previous collection show, these failures become glaring in the light shed by analyses that locate the politics and thought of black Americans in the main currents of American political, social, and intellectual life. “To understand black history,” our late colleague Judith Stein, has written, one must examine the principal social forces affecting black people concretely and in historical time. Because blacks interacted with other workers and other social classes, the historian must analyze specific social and class relationships and not be satisfied with general statements about broad social changes as backdrops for Afro-American history.26 Yet, against sage admonitions like Stein’s, adherents have responded by persistently doubling down on the effort to salvage ahistorical, race-reductionist explanations of current and past inequalities. Hannah-Jones and DuVernay, as well as Ibram X. Kendi and Ta-Nehisi Coates, and only to a lesser extent Wilderson and Hartman, have brands to protect and products to sell, which can help explain their myopic commitment to race reductionism in the face of a mounting political threat. More than the possible cupidity or existential commitments of prominent ideologues sustains race-reductionist interpretation in its ever more frenzied flight from concreteness to avoid confrontation with its inadequacies. The cultural turn in African American studies, in its shift to seeking extramural legitimations of its intellectual practice, was an alignment with an increasingly self-conscious class politics, the black neoliberal politics consolidating programmatically and ideologically in society writ large. This politics traded on and benefited from the successes and limitations of the development of New Deal industrial democracy in which black Americans played a pivotal role. As historian Touré F. Reed has shown, “New Deal labor law had a profound impact on the scope of African American Activism during the 1930s and 1940s.” For example, in this context Reed states, “the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) became the first African American labor union to successfully negotiate a contract with a major employer.” Crucially, the union’s success was largely the result of the ability of its leadership to finesse “stiff opposition from a black elite dogmatically committed to clientage/petition politics.” Reed continues, by framing “the porters’ quest for recognition as a matter of African American Civil Rights,” the BSCP’s effort helped “legitimate African American protest politics” as a crossclass politics. And for a time, the “wide appeal of labor activism among African Americans during the 1930s and 1940s” did shift liberal advocacy organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League to the left. In the postwar period, however, the rise of “McCarthyism and the related assault on organized labor” across the board “lessened the sway of working-class militancy over African American civil rights.” And with labor militancy increasingly sidelined, the protest politics that had helped reinvigorate liberal racial advocacy organizations refocused its attention on discrimination, which it began to arraign on psychological terms for which culturalist remedies could be prescribed as precisely what the doctor had ordered. Although the civil rights movement benefited from the legal framework created by the New Deal which had “legitimated citizens’ demands on government for a more equitable and democratic society,”27 with labor militancy effectively out of the picture, organized race-group leaders who had accommodated themselves to the protest model were able to deploy it in service of their normative clientage/petition projects now largely unchecked by working-class opposition. By the end of the 1980s, as the cultural turn was gaining steam in the academy, a largely symbolic racial trickle-down in which representation substitutes for egalitarian redistribution had become normalized as the black political agenda. Underclass ideology, which posits a general black population mired in cultural pathologies that stymie individuals’ abilities to take advantage of such opportunities for upward mobility as do exist, was—and remains, though now thoroughly embedded as tacit, commonsense presumption—a crucial component of the ideological glue around which that politics cohered. Thus, black elites’ mission vis-à-vis the black Volk reduces to providing inspirational role models and tough-love scolding, from a unique foundation of insider-group understanding, and propagating inspirational stories that offer occasion to bask in vicarious identification with real or imagined black heroism/success and thereby help overcome self-defeating pathology and demoralization. Race Reductionism and Neoliberalism If in general “neoliberalism is best summarized as capitalism that has effectively eliminated working-class opposition,”28 a black politics appropriate to the neoliberal order should be expected to eschew downwardly redistributive social, labor, and economic policies and to concentrate instead on strictly racial redistribution within the regressive policy regime. That is what happened. The synecdochic racecraft that rejects the significance of class differentiation among blacks obscures the flimflam involved in characterizing a narrow class agenda as a generic racial one. This is the period when reduction of racial disparity displaced pursuit of economic equality as an egalitarian ideal in black politics,29 and when challenging a supposed “racial wealth gap” supplanted demands for full employment, a living wage, and decommodified healthcare and other public goods.30 Race-reductionist formulations asserting that all black people suffer equally and primarily from racism and that nothing has changed for black people since slavery and Jim Crow conveniently obscure the class character of the practical agendas of neoliberal black politics: for example, the fact that roughly three-quarters of so-called black wealth is held by the richest 10 percent of black people, and roughly the same proportion of so-called white wealth is held by the richest 10 percent of white people; and that, therefore, the “racial wealth gap” is a disparity almost entirely between rich blacks and rich whites. The currently dominant tendencies in African American studies, that is, function to undercut possible support for social-democratic initiatives that would disproportionately benefit black and Hispanic working people. It is telling in this regard that the performatively “progressive” antiracist commentariat lined up with black neoliberal Democrats without hesitation to denounce Bernie Sanders’s program, even to the point of leveling accusations of his or his supporters’ racism. It is worth noting as well that the McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility found that between May 2020 (following the murder of George Floyd) and October 2022, 1,369 Fortune 1000 companies pledged about $340 billion to organizations and initiatives purporting to fight racial injustice or “driv[e] equity.”31 And we can be certain also that race-reductionist antiracists notice funders’ priorities. Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, known for originating the intersectionality notion at the end of the 1980s, goaded the left during the flood of post-Floyd corporate money, declaring that “every corporation worth its salt” had done more to support antiracist causes than the Democrats or the left.32

### Organization Key – 1NC

**The process of organized labor produces the networks and relationships necessary to defeat the racial contract. Radical social transformation requires institutions that solidify geographies of solidarity.**

**Lichtenstein 22,** Nelson. Professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and director of the Center for the Study of Work, Labor and Democracy. "Black and White Workers and Communists Built a “Civil Rights Unionism” Under Jim Crow", Jacobin, https://jacobin.com/2022/10/winston-salem-tobacco-union-communists-new-deal

Civil Rights Unionism has three virtues that make it timeless and compelling. First, it is a labor history that transcends all the industrial-relations categories into which that subdiscipline has sometimes been confined. The subtitle of his book is “Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for the Democracy in the Mid-twentieth-Century South,” so Korstad makes clear that every fight inside the factory and at the bargaining table reflects or advances a corresponding struggle on the outside, whether that be in politics, gender norms, or the stability of the Jim Crow order.

Thus when their new union, Local 22 of the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers, sought plantwide seniority for those African-American women laid off by a new technological innovation, this was hardly a prosaic demand but an assault on an entire set of segregationist and hierarchical factory relationships — ones that mirrored the male-privileged, white-supremacist order foisted upon North Carolina and the rest of the South during the counterrevolution that ended Reconstruction in the late nineteenth century.

In creating this Jim Crow order, Korstad makes clear that the new, reactionary hegemony was “hard work,” to borrow a phrase from Stuart Hall. It takes time, effort, and brute power to naturalize inequality and subordination, whether that be of class, race, or gender. A pernicious process of indoctrination created and reinforced the new traditions and social norms that constituted a Jim Crow order barely half a century old.

“Each morning on which a black tobacco worker entered a factory through the ‘colored’ door,” writes the author, “the more segregation came to seem timeless and inevitable.”

Korstad offers a structural-cum-social portrait of the local white elite, which at one point he calls the “the Solidarity of the Solidly Fixed.” But city air can make one free, or at least provides the conditions for making industrial freedom something of tangible value. Like so many other capitalists of the Second Industrial Revolution, Reynolds and the other tobacco companies recruited and concentrated thousands of rural folk, transforming them into a proletariat that was increasingly conscious of its own oppression.

Social dynamite was being stockpiled. But nothing was spontaneous here, even when those outside the stemmeries and African-American neighborhoods — and this included some unionists as well as local elites — could not explain the upheaval of June 17, 1943, when thousands of black tobacco workers walked off the job, in any other way.

I think Korstad would agree with me that the word “spontaneity” should be banned from the pages of all books of labor history, because the networks and friendships, the workplace singing and Sunday churchgoing, created a networked world that would soon make itself visible and powerful. Indeed, when we think about history of US capitalism, the existence of an urban working class that lived in close proximity to each other and the factories and mills in which they worked has been a fleeting social phenomenon, characteristic of just a few decades at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

What has come to replace it? Twitter feeds? A shopping mall or university quad? Zoom meetings? I’m not sure, but in the present as in the past, historians, as well as contemporary organizers, must explore the geographies of solidarity.

We Need a New Communist Party

This may be a stretch, but just as Korstad describes the counterrevolution that transformed the South in the early twentieth century, we have had a different but parallel transformation of working-class institutions and consciousness since the 1970s when the New Deal order was crippled. As in New South Winston-Salem, the transformations in business organization and the technology corporations deploy, the evisceration of trade unionism and the rise of a new precariat have been “naturalized.” Upward of 50 million service workers in retail, hospitality, food service, and health care have been thrust into a world of dead-end, low-wage, insecure work — not unlike the employment offered to African Americans, Latinos, and an increasingly large cohort of white youth in recent decades.

And just as World War II and the radicalization of a stratum of black workers made the natural order seem unnatural and unjust, so too during our years of Donald Trump and the pandemic has a half-century reordering of labor norms finally taken on an unjust and unnatural character in workers’ minds — not just among a few scattered unionists and academics but of the millions participating in the “Great Resignation.”

So the demand for something as prosaic as a defined and predictable shift in a coffee house or warehouse now takes on a profoundly radical thrust, resisted by a whole cohort of billion-dollar corporations as a threat to their business model and the larger prerogatives of capital. The African-American women in the Reynolds stemmeries would have understood.

There are two other features of Korstad’s book that strike me as very relevant today. The first is the robust labor market that workers enjoyed in 1943 as well as 2022. Labor economists used to think that if you plugged in a demand for labor, wages went up and unions increased their membership and clout. It is clear that such a connection is far too formulaic.

Then and now, neither workers nor managers are automatons, responding in a mechanical fashion to outside economic stimuli. Indeed, one of the big differences between 1943 and 2022 is the role of two forces “outside” the workplace. The first is the federal government, the second the Communist Party.

During the war, the New Deal’s regulatory and war-mobilization apparatus played a huge role, especially in the South. Some historians, including myself, once argued that the warfare state constrained working-class militancy. But over the decades I’ve been persuaded that in World War II as well as at various points since, the legitimacy that the federal government fosters on working-class organizations and their demands has been far more important and progressive.

We’ve had a pale replication of that regulatory intervention during these last eighteen months of Joe Biden’s administration. But there is no doubt that the nationalization and politicization of labor relations during the war had a powerful impact, even among workers whose horizons had for so long been sharply delimited.

Korstad captured this legitimizing impact when he recorded a 1943 exchange between Theodosia Simpson, one of the organic leaders who arose from the Reynolds ranks and a top company executive.

Simpson: “Mr. Whitaker, according to the Little Steel formula you can give us a wage increase.”

“Who told you about the Little Steel formula?” Whitaker replied.

“Whether you know it or not, I can read and I can think. It’s been in all the newspapers.”

“I don’t know anything about the Little Steel formula, but I’ll have the company attorneys look into it.”

“Well, you start talking to them about that wage increase.”

It’s all here: first Whitaker is surprised that workers are following labor developments out of Washington. Ignorance would be bliss. But then, like so many Southern managers and politicians, he claims distance and his own ignorance when it comes to federal government edicts that might impact his control of the workforce and the remuneration they deserve once pay structures have been nationalized and rationalized.

But the federal government is not enough, nor even militant trade unionists. We need a new Communist Party — not a Stalinist replica of the 1930s party, of course, but a party of committed individuals, of cadre, who see unionism not as an end in itself but as a step forward toward a revolutionized society. Contra Daniel Bell, we need leftists whose politics really are those of a secular religion.

That was certainly true of the few dozen Communists who devoted themselves to building Local 22, a ten-thousand-member organization that had the potential to revolutionize politics and social norms in the Jim Crow South. Korstad shows the crucial role played by Communists, from the South and elsewhere, in providing a kind of backbone to the union impulse, driving it forward and linking it, even if sometimes mistakenly, to a much larger political agenda stretching from New York to Moscow.

Can the Democratic Socialists of America, now nearing 100,000 members — not far below that of the CP in its heyday — fit this bill? That seems unlikely at this moment, but such parties come in all shapes and sizes. In the 1960s, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were cadre organizations that pushed the civil rights movement forward in decisive fashion. We need these vanguard formations once again. Those who founded the Occupy movement were of this sort; likewise those who spread the Black Lives Matter movement to virtually every city and state also reflect that organizational and moral impulse. But it has to be more than ad hoc. It needs to see itself as a maker of history for the long haul.

Institutions Anchor Consciousness

Any labor initiative will always face opposition: red-baiting and race-baiting in the 1940s; accusations of corruption, self-interest, Luddism, and divisiveness today. What’s ironic, of course, is how and why the rhetoric of anti-unionism changes with the times.

In the 1940s Reynolds management and other Winston-Salem conservatives sought to label Local 22 a race organization first and foremost, to persuade white workers to stay away and also to mobilize community whites against the local. While Reynolds was anti-union, of course, it found that in an era when federal law and national sentiment was ideologically and administratively far more favorable to unionism than today, a denunciation of unionism per se did not carry the weight it would later sustain.

Today, on the other hand, employers like Starbucks and Amazon advertise their support of Black Lives Matter as well as their commitment to abortion and LGBTQ rights. But all that coexists with a managerial rejection of trade unionism as an alien “third party,” ineffective and divisive, even in an era when the polls tell us that trade unionism is enjoying levels of public support not seen since the 1960s.

One reason for this has to do with the relationship between consciousness, social norms, and institutions. On the Left today, perhaps especially the academic left, the transformation and exhibition of consciousness, certainly when it comes to our identities, has become a highly refined art and often a flash point for controversy. But leftists seeking to transform the way we think about gender, race, status, or class can’t forget that institutions — laws, unions, political parties, social movements enrolling large numbers of people — are necessary to anchor an evolving progressive consciousness. A transformation of language or identity, no matter how radical, cannot stand alone.

This was not a mistake the Local 22 militants ever made. As Korstad makes clear with example after example, they understood the imbricated relationship between institution building and the transformed consciousness and social norms of thousands of workers — and of their erstwhile betters.

“We made the superintendent call the black Man mister,” reported union militant Velma Hopkins.

Thus Korstad offers a nuanced corrective to my New Left argument that the grievance procedure and the contracts that structured it were an obstacle to shop-floor militancy and the liberatory consciousness that stood behind it.

This is why the destruction of Local 22 during the McCarthy era was such a tragedy. As Korstad and I argued in our 1988 essay, “Opportunities Found and Lost: Blacks, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement,” that destruction of a labor-based black liberation movement, South and North, would have a profound impact on the character and course of the civil rights movement in its classic phase and afterward. Today a new set of militants are linking their sense of identity, highly variegated as it might be, to the union impulse and the construction of a set of institutions that can safeguard those identities in a far more authentic fashion than any corporate diversity office.

### Solidarity Key – 1NC

**Labor solidarity includes the impossible workers that persist in the afterlife of slavery. Labor organizing nurtures the collective consciousness necessary to break the path-dependent power of racial capitalism.**

**Harris 25,** Christopher Paul, Assistant Professor in the Department of Global and International Studies at University of California, Irvine. 'Abolition and the Substance of Global South Solidarities' (21 Aug. 2025), in Anne Garland Mahler, Christopher J. Lee, and Monica Popescu (eds), The Oxford Handbook of the History of the Global South (online edn, Oxford Academic, 23 Jan. 2025 - ), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197691625.013.0013, accessed 28 Aug. 2025. // judah

The cultural configurations of the capitalist world system arrived courtesy of the Americas, and the Americas, as a “geosocial construct,” were constituted through the deadly coalescence of conquest and slave labor.13 On this account, capitalism, along with the global arrangement of nation-states that developed around it, did not precede the conquest of the Americas, or the gradual and parallel construction of the center-periphery paradigm that shapes pervasive understandings of the Global South. Put another way, our historical index must begin from the premise that contingency reigns and power is path-dependent. “There could not have been a capitalist world-economy without the Americas,” as Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein have noted, and New World slavery stimulated its expansion.14 Of course, enclosed inside the matrix of the nascent world economy is where the contradictions reside and make themselves clear. Because if capitalism required the Americas to enlarge the spatial bounds of the burgeoning world system in the European imaginary, and if, within this “newly discovered” terrain, it also required the establishment of geographically specific techniques of captive labor like the plantation for its advance—then abolition, a theory and practice sourced from the richly textured scripts of slave resistance and rebellion, is a revolutionary tradition against both slavery and the capitalist world system, a war waged by property against property.

The axiomatic thrust of this assertion is not only simple but necessary for advancing abolitionist struggle to the ends of empire. Before scientific socialism, before anarchism, before the industrial worker, there was the Black slave, an actual “class with radical chains” as opposed to merely a figurative one. And the slave’s cause—the want of the bonded Black “workers” whose field, domestic, and reproductive labor set to task the “founding stone of a new economic system”—was and remains “the dissolution of the existing world order.” To transform and transcend slavery’s strictures, abolition required nothing less than a “general strike” that “aimed from the first at regimes of racial capitalist control and accumulation,” regimes that Black feminist scholars have shown were as gendered as they were racialized.15 In other words, the revolt of the enslaved demanded a strike against the triptych of race, class, and gendered-based subjection, an enduring admix of manufactured hostilities that brought the modern world into being through the geosocial construction of the Americas, the concomitant colonial state, and the subsequent underdevelopment of Africa and Asia.

To refer to the general strike in relation to abolition and the war against slavery’s triptych of race, class, and gender-based subjection does more than just disrupt the typical delimitation of who the worker is (a white male) and what it means to labor, as W. E. B Du Bois and C. L. R James sought to do in Black Reconstruction and The Black Jacobins, respectively. It also attends to the Black feminist critique forwarded by Saidiya Hartman and others concerning the way “women’s sexual and reproductive labor” falls completely “outside of the heroic account of the black worker and the general strike.” As Hartman notes, in the annals of the Black radical tradition, “the agency of the enslaved becomes legible as politics, rather than crime or destruction, at the moment slaves are transformed into … revolutionary masses fashioned along the lines of the insurgent proletariat.” But representing Black political agency in this way makes it nearly impossible to “assimilate Black women’s domestic labors and reproductive capacities within narratives of the black worker, slave rebellion, maroonage, or Black radicalism.”16 Consequently, the narratives offered by canonical thinkers like Du Bois and James produce an essentialized version of radical politics, freedom, and liberation, effectively erasing the many sides and shapes of Black women’s contributions to “the community of slaves.”17

Some of the “emancipation acts” taken up by enslaved Black women were spectacular assaults against law and order as the purveyor of “Black unfreedom,” no less militant than the paradigmatic image of her male counterparts. They were acts of refusal and self-assertion to eliminate, once and for all, the towering edifice of captivity. Others were more quotidian and arose in the form of “daily labors” to dismantle the plantation, efforts that were just as central to undermining slavery even though freedom was not their immediate goal or result.18 Angela Davis, for example, has persuasively argued that enslaved Black women’s labor was “the only meaningful labor for the slave community as a whole.” Away from the “arena of domination” and extraction, the social reproduction performed by Black women in the living quarters helped cultivate one of the sole domains where the enslaved could muster something of their own, creating a semblance of autonomy for everyone within its reach, and carving out a place to begin to practice freedom while still held captive. The community that developed around this labor was where “the consciousness of their oppression, the conscious thrust towards its abolition” could be nurtured and sustained, without which other forms of overt rebellion might not have been possible. By “ministering to the needs of the men and children around her (who were not necessarily members of her immediate family),” Black women reformulated dominant conceptions of kindship, collectivity, and care that would become a heartbeat and lifeline vital to Black collective survival, and the elaboration of an abolitionist praxis19

Just as importantly, an essentialized narrative of Black agency and radical politics also masks a full apprehension of how the reproductive function of enslaved Black women’s labor and the multiple uses of their bodies constitute central nodes in the “fashioning of gender and sexuality in the context of slavery’s aftermath,” helping propel racial capitalism’s development.20 In the post-emancipation landscape, Black women’s domestic labor became another form of bondage. The white household, Hartman reminds us, created “forms of intimate violence as well as exploitation as low-wage workers” that were structurally difficult to escape, deepening the tryptic of race, class, and gender-based subjection inaugurated by slavery and the imperatives of empire. Paradoxically, as new relations of property and racialized violence took hold, Black women’s domestic labor remained “essential to the endurance of black social life,” just as it had been in the living quarters of the plantation. Still, because her care was forcibly diverted from her family to that of the white household, she was also targeted and “blamed” for her family’s “destruction.”21 For Hartman, then, Black domestic labor marks and underwrites the “continuities between slavery and freedom” and forms the genealogical outline of the cast of Black woman laborers—“the sex drudge, recalcitrant domestic, broken mother, or sullen wet-nurse”—whose experiences have been chastised overlooked or erased from view. Following the interventions of Black feminist thought and theory, the mere existence of the “impossible domestic,” the “sex worker,” and the “welfare mother,” as just a few manifestations of the violent character of slavery’s afterlife, demonstrates the necessity of abolition’s ongoing struggle, a reconfiguration of the slave’s cause. To put it another way, the “forms of care, intimacy, and sustenance” given by and stolen from the impossible domestic, what Harman calls the “black heart of our social poesis,” brings clarity to what abolition and the “general” in the general strike mean.22

Embracing the impossible domestic and sex worker, or, for that matter, the migrant, the refugee, and the incarcerated, those who today we might call members of the historically marginalized, exemplify abolition’s unity of purpose, a general strike against the violence of the capitalist world system in its totality. Abolition represents the convergence of struggle against (the afterlives of) slavery, private property, the wage, and the logic of value; against empire, imperialism, and the dictates of capital; against heteropatriarchy, sexual domination, and gendered violence. In other words, abolition offers a “generality” that “moves (along the) outside of the modern world and its fundamental categories” in pursuit of their undoing.23 This unity of purpose, sketched here as a conceptual reorientation to revolutionary abolitionism and the role of the Global South within it, was an explicit point of contention in the early nineteenth century when the violence of slavery and the cruelty of the trade still cast a dark cloud over the Western hemisphere.

Born from the forced union of slave and slaveowner, Robert Wedderburn, a Black abolitionist from Jamaica, offered one of the first articulations of the general strike within the volumes of his 1817 antislavery newspaper, The Axe Laid to the Root or a Fatal Blow to the Oppressors. Staged as an address to slavers and slaves alike, The Axe Laid to the Root “[theorized] a global revolution against empire” that brought together Slave rebellion and working-class revolt.24 For Wedderburn, the general strike was meant to precipitate immediate rather than gradual emancipation and usher in the end of slavery altogether. But the radical flight and resettlement of the slaves on the provisions ground of the former plantation was also intended to beckon a broader revolutionary movement of the oppressed classes across the globe. Guided by his personal “intimacy with maternal captivity and defiance” drawn from the bonds he shared with his “enslaved mother and grandmother,” Wedderburn’s political analysis drew connections between the “oppressions of enclosure, dispossession, and the criminalization of subsistence,” taking place in England with racialized and gendered colonial domination and bondage throughout the Americas—in effect, binding the fate of the working poor in the Old World to the emancipation of the slaves in the New.25 Through these “linked causes,” each rooted in the deprivations of racial capitalism, Wedderburn believed that abolition, the cause and consequence of the general strike, would occasion “the common ‘social harvest’” of rebellion across the North and South toward a communist future in a post-emancipation social order.26