## 1AC

**“Few stories** in our national history are more **familiar** to Americans than those of the under- ground railroad with its **legendary heroes.** Generations of youngsters have thrilled to the account of **Eliza Harris** eluding the ~~slave~~ **[enslaved] catchers** and their **bloodhounds** by leaping from **ice cake** to **ice cake** on the thawing Ohio River, and to her later adventures as a passenger on the underground line. Along with Paul Bunyan and Mike Fink, Eliza and some of the underground railroad conductors have become figures of American folklore. Much of **the underground railroad story has been handed down** by oral tradition with its inevitable mixture of **fact**, **fancy**, and **exaggeration.** Writers of popular accounts and local histories, journalists, antiquarians and scholars have all been influenced by the **legend** and have **repeated** some of its un- proved assertions in their **writings**.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

#### This is a story of escape. The recapture of power. The recapture of work, for those who are essential to the question of building entire universes.

#### The ontological distinction between labor and work is one that is used to subjugate and oppress those without power to control their own futures, best seen in the conceptual analysis of…

Postmodern philosophers, such as Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard, offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of power, knowledge, and work**. Foucault’s concept of ‘biopower’ delves into how modern societies exercise control and regulation over their populations through various mechanisms, including work. According to Foucault, work serves as a means of exerting power, as it enables the control and disciplining of bodies, forming habits of obedience that ultimately shape individuals into ‘docile’ subjects** (Foucault, Discipline and Punish). **[[2]](#footnote-2)**

#### This story is a story of space. As words have power to shape and construct ideologies and action, what we say definitely matters, and how we say it matters just as much as what we intended/intend to say.

#### Anti-blackness is the producer of racial capitalism and biopower, where black labor is used to build plantation economies through fungibility and mass alienation.

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Biocapitalism as Racial Capitalism

In advancing an argument about **the afterlife of reproductive slavery, I’ve found it necessary to bring the concept of biocapitalism into conversation with that of racial capitalism.** The latter was first developed by the political scientist Cedric Robinson in his groundbreaking study, Black Marxism (1983). According to Robinson, contemporary capitalism has constitutively racial origins and is powered by ongoing racial dynamics. Drawing on a range of thinkers whom he dubs “Black Marxist, ”Robinson demonstrates that there is a Black radical tradition that has continuously elaborated on ideas first proffered by Marx and Engels but never fully adumbrated by them. These include ideas about the role that processes of racialization play in the creation of the antagonisms that turn the wheels of capitalism and thus modern history. As Robinson explains through recourse to W.E B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James among others, complex processes of racial differentiation not only initially enabled dispossession, enclosure, colonization, genocide, settlement, and enslavement (in short, the combined processes that Marx and Engels include within their account of the birth of capitalism during what they incorrectly regard as a finite period of “so-called primitive accumulation”), complex processes of racialization continue to power ongoing capitalist expansion. **As Robinson famously observes, “the development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, [and] so too did social ideology. As a material force…it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism” (1983, 2). Capitalism, Robinson concludes, is always already racial capitalism.**

Robinson’s insights have transformed numerous academic fields including slavery studies. This is unsurprising given that the history of Atlantic slavery so clearly manifests the dynamics of racial capitalism. Within recent historical scholarship, **plantation economies in the Americas and the Caribbean are now regarded as key players in early racial capitalist expansion which finds its apotheosis in contemporary globalization. Relatedly, the concept of “blackness” is now treated as the principal ideological creation responsible for rationalizing and thus materializing the forms of dehumanization that subtend enslavement** (Baptist 2014; Johnson 1999, 2013; Smallwood 2007), **and subtend the capitalist world system** (Wallerstein 2004). **In some work, Atlantic slavery has simply been recast as “slave racial capitalism”** (Johnson 2013). This coinage represents more than **semantic innovation**. It signals wholescale reconceptualization of Atlantic slavery as one instantiation of **racial capitalism** among others, one that sits alongside **colonialism**, **settler colonialism**, and, I argue, **biocapitalism.** Put otherwise, the concept of slave racial capitalism invites awareness of racial capitalism’s continuous recalibration of complex processes of racial differentiation, and of slavery as an instantiation of racial capitalism that both precedes and shapes biocapitalism.6 And yet, to fully compass the relationship of historical reciprocity between slavery and biocapitalism it is necessary to go beyond Robinson by focusing in on the history of (re)production in slavery that is afforded by expressly feminist historians. Together with other **Black Feminist scholars** of racial capitalism, feminist historians of slavery foreground sex and reproduction (and thus **attune us to** the intersection of **gender and sexuality with race and class**), effectively **demonstrating that slavery was powered by** both productive and (re)productive **labor**.7

Three generations of feminist historians ground my thinking on Atlantic slavery as the world’s first modern (re)productive enterprise (Davis 1971; Hine 1979; White 1985; Beckles 1989; Bush 1990; Camp 2004; Morgan 2004; Fuentes 2016; Berry 2017; Turner 2017). Hilary McD. Beckles’s now classic history of enslaved women in Barbados is especially instructive for present purposes. As Beckles explains, earlier (non-feminist) scholars of the oldest and most lucrative of the sugar economies were unable to explain why it was that importation of African women outnumbered importation of African men beginning in the late seventeenth century because they simply could not recognize female slaves as the main source of capital accumulation within the plantation economy (1989, 2). The situation on Barbadian plantations was not exceptional, Beckles insists, but ought to be regarded as indexical of “the overall history of plantation America” (5) in that it attests to a long-neglected truth: All enslaved women experienced slavery as producers and reproducers, as all enslaved women were valued in both capacities throughout the Atlantic world. The task of writing the history of women in slavery is not, therefore, the “absurd” one of “adding women to history.” It is the challenging one of restoring history to those who constituted “the pivot”––as opposed to the tangent––around which the entire slave enterprise turned (Beckles 1989, 5).

Like most studies of Caribbean slavery, Beckles divides his into three distinct periods. During the first (1627–1730), planters preferred to import African men. However, once land was cleared, women were increasingly imported to perform agricultural work. In the second period (1730–1790), planters came to regard African women as more manageable and efficient than men because West and Central Africa women were already acculturated to heavy agricultural labor. Consequently, in the second period, import of African women dramatically increased. By the start of the third period (1790–1838) a new gender dynamic was set in place. Planters worked enslaved women in field gangs and invested in their (re)productive labor. Significantly, because this last period encompassed the imposition of the 1807 Slave Trade Act that banned further importation of captive Africans to the New World, it is the period of greatest interest here. Bracketed by the Slave Trade Act and British abolition of slavery, this last period was characterized by intensified "creolization” of the slave population (Beckles’s euphemism), by increase in the valuation of enslaved women, and, most importantly, by systematic “stimulation” of fertility (again, Beckles’s term). Specifically, enslaved women were offered concessions that were expressly targeted at amelioration of the harsh, often deadly conditions on Barbadian plantations that militated against conception, gestation, and care for pregnancies and offspring. Although Beckles finds little empirical evidence of what he calls “selective breeding” (by which he presumably means the application of the principals of animal husbandry to human beings), his analysis of management manuals detailing plantation organization and administration support his conclusion that slave (re)production was deliberately “orchestrated” (Beckles 1989, 92).

Planters were motivated to orchestrate (re)production by their growing¶ awareness that successful “increase” was fast becoming not only a useful means¶ by which labor power could be replenished, but after 1807 the only legal means by¶ which slave racial capitalism could be maintained. Due to implementation of¶ highly successful managerial strategies and use of incentives in the late¶ eighteenth century, by the start of the nineteenth century, slavery in Barbados¶ was no longer dependent on the importation of captive Africans. Whereas in the¶ 1730s and 1740s at least half the children born in Barbados died within their first¶ week of life, by the 1790s, improved diet, lessened workload during pregnancy,¶ fieldwork schedules more amenable to nursing, and monetary incentives for live¶ births together facilitated increased (re)production and a sharp decline in infant¶ mortality.8 Nothing evinces intensified planter investment in slave women’s¶ (re)productive lives more poignantly than changes in planter bookkeeping¶ practices. Alongside increase in cattle, horses, and other valuable nonhuman¶ livestock, beginning in the late eighteenth century planters began to routinely¶ record the birth of slaves as capital gains (Beckles 1989, 102).

Subsequent scholarship expands on Beckles’s signal contribution by accounting not only for the material conditions of enslaved (re)production but also for the importance of the ideological dimensions of (re)productive enslavement to a globalizing Euro-American empire. As Jennifer Morgan (2004) elaborates in her watershed study of the early English colonies in the West Indies and on the North American mainland, enslavers required both women’s physical labor and their “symbolic value” as “black,” fecund, animal beings. To this end, those invested in the slave trade created and disseminated ideas about the distinct “blackness” of African women through discourses that tethered African women’s reproductive bodies and capacities, actual and imagined, to their enslavability. These discourses, initiated by European travelers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, can be gleaned from both visual and discursive archives that together adumbrate the ideological construction of African women as (re)productive assets, living and breathing tools available for use. In etchings from the seventeenth century that portray African women at work in the fields, for instance, they are depicted nursing infants, affixed to their backs, with milk provided by elongated breasts that are slung over their shoulders (Morgan 2004, 12–49). In written accounts, African women are depicted as capable of “pain-free” and “disinterested” delivery; parturition is for them just another form of work. Indeed, for African women reproductive and productive toil were represented as entirely compatible activities. As travel diaries attest, African women were a breed apart, less-than-human beings descended from a bestial point of origin that was imagined to be “black” and therefore distinct from that of the Christian Eve and her white European descendants (Morgan 2004, 40–47).9

**In creating representations of African women’s “black” (re)productive difference, Europeans fueled an ideology** in which **“blackness” constituted a visible mark of the biological and social distance** separating **African** and **European** women. In **circulating representations of African women as “black”, Europeans naturalized the two forms of productive labor impressed upon female ~~slaves:~~ [enslaved persons] agricultural work and (re)production of human commodities. Over time, such representations** rationalized treatment of enslaved conception, gestation, parturition, and the products of “black” women’s wombs as fungible and alienable. **In so far as (re)production was deemed fungible, (re)productive labor and products were regarded as substitutable––one commodity (including labor power) could stand in for another so that a purely formal economic exchange could take place.**10 As in vivo labor took place within enslaved wombs, the children being gestated within were abstracted into the metrics of capital. Upon birth, all qualitative characteristics were erased or instrumentalized so that children could be viewed as commodities that could justifiably circulate in quantifiable form. **In so far as (re)productive labor was deemed alienable the “lively products” to which women gave birth were regarded as rightfully separable from those who (re)produced them, transferrable away from the (re)productive body through market exchange.** Like their mothers, children born to enslaved women were regarded as chattel. Because they existed as commodities within an exchange relationship, enslaved women who gave birth were forced to (re)produce the foreclosure of their own motherhood, the “natal alienation” of their children (Patterson 1982), their own and their children's status as dehumanized slaves, and their mutual loss of belonging to each other as recognized kin. As Hortense Spillers observes, in slavery the gendered maternal function was severed from (re)production effectively rendering ideas such as Senator Moynihan’s “black matriarch” a violent misnaming of “the captive female”—she whose gender was in fact negated in and through the abstracting calculations involved in filling the hold of the slave ship with “human-as-cargo” bound for the New World (1987, 72). **Taken together, the fungibility and alienability of (re)productive labor and its products distinguish commodified (re)production from non-commodified reproduction** (for instance unremunerated domestic work, child bearing, child rearing, care for the elderly, sick, and dying, etc.), **as non-commodified reproduction only indirectly enters into circuits of market exchange.** Put otherwise, although non-commodified reproduction is integral to the reproduction of capitalism, as Marxist feminists, Social Reproduction theorists, and historians of care work and intimate labor demonstrate (Mies 1986; Federici 2012; Bhattacharya 2017; Boris and Parreñas 2010), non-commodified reproduction is not expressly transacted in order to create surplus value in the ways that the (re)productive labor of enslaved women was once transacted in the context of Atlantic slavery, or the ways that it is today transacted in the global marketplace for (re)productive labor and products.

**The fungibility and alienability of enslaved (re)production is nowhere more visible than in the implementation**, beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century, **of the New World interpretation of the Ancient Roman doctrine of partus sequitur ventrem** (Berry 2017; Morgan 2004, 2018). This Latin phrase, roughly translated as “that which comes forth follows the womb,” was enshrined in English and Spanish slave codes to ensure that children born to enslaved women were enslaved. Significantly, partus made a child born to an enslaved woman enslaveable regardless of the race or status of the father. As a consequence, free white men’s rape of enslaved women functioned to augment their own (or other free men’s) property. By the late antebellum era, **advertisements and bills of sale frequently classified enslaved women as “breeders” or “breeding wenches,” indicating precisely how (re)productive labor and products were valued.**12 **Especially robust enslaved men were selected and taken on a “breeding circuit” and appraised for rent or sale as “studs”** (Roberts 1997, 28; Berry 2017, 19, 78–79). Although limited space requires me to omit a discussion of the sexual labor performed by male and female slaves, it is crucial to note that while the concept of (re)production does not encompass all forms of sexual labor, it includes, by necessity, procreative sex.In fact, the term “(re)production” instructively illustrates (precisely because it replicates) the enslaver’s enfolding of procreative sex, often in the form of rape, into (re)productive labor. My intention in using (re)production as a portmanteau is certainly not to minimize sexual violence in slavery, but rather to specify the manner in which (re)productive extraction and dispossession included extraction and dispossession of procreative sex.13 Put otherwise, from the vantage point of enslavers and thus from that of (re)production as an engine of surplus value, enslaved sex, conception, gestation, and parturition were inextricable. By contrast, from the vantage point of enslaved individuals and communities, conception, gestation, and parturition were experienced as sites of resistance, refusal, joy, hope, sadness, violation, and violence, as scholarship on intimacy in slavery attests (Berry and Harris 2018). Importantly, in biocapitalism (re)production rarely requires sexual violence in the form of rape or forced “breeding”— which is not to suggest that contemporary (re)productive laborers do not suffer a host of psychological and bodily violations that are both intimate and sexualized in nature.

**Over time, the circular ideological construction of African and African-descended women’s (re)production as “black” was called upon to justify the treatment of their wombs as engines of “future increase” and thus of surplus value.14 Histories that account for the racialization of enslaved (re)production and treat the role of “blackness” in the maintenance of slave racial capitalism resonate forcefully with the present argument.** **As in slave racial capitalism, in biocapitalism racialized (re)production makes the system go. As in slavery, in biocapitalism (re)productive labor and products are rendered fungible and alienable through a complex process of racialization.** The feminist histories of slavery that I have briefly limned above historically ground an argument about contemporary (re)productive extraction and dispossession. In this way, they constitute the foundation upon which unique insights into the continuous recalibration of racial capitalism may be built. For they allow us to see that (re)productive extraction and dispossession in slavery both precedes (re)productive extraction **and dispossession in biocapitalism, and, in so doing, links the evolution of racial capitalism to biocapitalism.**

And yet, even though slave racial capitalism and biocapitalism can be constellated, it should not be assumed that (re)production in biocapitalism is racialized in the same way as it was in the slave past. In the next and final section, I offer some preliminary ideas about how to think about the complex recalibration of racialized (re)production over time. While anti-blackness clearly characterizes a present moment saturated by racism, the attribution of “blackness” to (re)productive labor and its products is no longer the only modality through which (re)productive extraction and dispossession operate today. **Rather, in contemporary biocapitalism “blackness” is being sublated, by which, I mean it is being simultaneously negated and preserved in order to make biocapitalism go.**

#### Labor unions have always been anti-black. From white workers striking over black inclusion in 1862, to Irish longshoremen creating police unions to target black communities, from the Davis-Bacon Act to the NIRA of 1933, to the NLRA and the FLS, black workers have always been excluded from the conversation of labor rights in order to make unions all-white spaces.

#### Contrary to popular belief, labor unions are not as radical as many may think. Catch-22 uses stonewalling to exclude black workers, sending them out to jobs hundreds of miles away to fake jobs that never existed. [[3]](#footnote-3) The IBEW uses voter suppression to stop black political representation, referring to black people as “colored”, and constantly leave nooses at construction sites to signal their union is no place for black people, leaving white people in leadership.[[4]](#footnote-4) Unions are pro-Trump now, aligning itself with blue-collar workers, due to Democratic mystism and Republican fascism.

#### You may be inclined to think that this is a problem of a failing leftist front. But the truth is that the right and the left are two sides of the same coin of American imperialism, which no revolutionary reformist movement, labor or civil rights, can fiat out of existence.

#### Labor reform a reshuffling of power that encourages the worker to supercharge the strength of corporations, nation-states, and empire at the expense of black life and it’s geographies. Unions cannot be vehicles of radical potential because they are wedded to racial-capitalist influence.

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Global capital and its effects

Expressions of **violence** are often the result of **structural arrangements**. Much of the rou-¶ tinized violence of the present day is tied to localized manifestations of global capitalism.¶ These manifestations have resulted in new social and spatial relations, labor regimes, and¶ specific practices of organizing and managing built and “natural” environments, as well as¶ the populations therein. Regarding Afro-descendant populations, these changes result in¶ new manifestations of violence. Cowen and Lewis (2016) argue that **anti-Blackness takes on**¶ specific characteristics based on **“shifts in the social order.”** These shifts are part of emerging¶ global political economic trends. Phenomena like **white flight**, urban **renewal, and Black¶ spatial displacement**—which have affected the lived experiences of Black populations in the¶ United States—are examples of how urban spaces in the **United States** have shifted in their¶ social, economic, and material **makeup over the past five decades.**

**While capitalism has always had a global reach, the late 20th century saw capitalist power achieve unprecedented levels of influence. This consolidation of capitalist power occurred, in part, as a response to the struggles of racialized populations and workers’ unions which**, in the mid to late 20th century, **demanded dignified employment, livable wages, social pro- grams,** and land reform, among other things (Gilmore, 2007: 39–40; Harvey, 2007: 7; Kaufman, 2013; Woods, 2017: 188). **As a result of the organizing capabilities and political demands made by those in labor movements, the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, and land reform activists, new manifestations of capitalism emerged that worked to reverse and appropriate the gains made by these movements and reify the influence of capitalist actors.** Huey Newton diagnosed this phenomenon in 1971, noting that capital (specifically within the United States) has not only expanded its territorial boundaries but also shifted its forms of control such that there exists a global capitalist power that controls **“all the world’s lands and people”** (Newton, 2002: 186–187 emphasis in original).

According to Newton, one effect of the expanding reach of global capitalism is that the roles of nation-states fundamentally change. **While previously nation-states maintained greater control of the political and economic aspects of their territory, the increased power of capital now means that nation-states’ “self-determination, economic determination, and cultural determination have been transformed by the imperialists of the ruling circle”** (Newton, 2002: 170). More specifically, the governing role of the nation-state has become subordinated to the agenda of capital(ists), so that **corporations**’ actions “directly structure and articulate **territories** and **populations**. They tend to make **nation-states** merely instruments to record the flows of the **commodities**, **monies**, and **populations** that they set in motion” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 31). In addition, sovereign state actions such as policing, military interventions, state and municipal funding, and taxes (or lack thereof) are increasingly influenced by, and manipulated for, the propagation of global capital. In short, expressions of state sovereignty are co-opted to benefit capital. **As global purveyors of capital increasingly replace the nation-state as controllers of sovereign space, the various populations within these formerly bounded territories become subject to a number of shifts. In order to counter labor organizing, capital uses the “spatial fix” to find labor pools and regulations that it can more profitably exploit** (Harvey, 2001). **This manifests in phenomena like capital flight and “outsourcing,” in which production moves to new locations. It is, in part, through such arrangements that the deindustrialization of cities like Detroit, Milwaukee, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh occurred, as the owners of the means of production moved manufacturing facilities to areas with cheaper sources of labor and less stringent financial and environmental regulations** (Boggs, 1968). **A result of this geographic rearrangement of production is that labor practices which previously provided stable, long-term, unionized jobs are replaced by “flexible” arrangements defined by temporary, low-paid, insecure, and nonunionized employment. Simultaneously, precarious laborers, now under- and unemployed, occupy neighborhoods where land precipitously drops in value.** With time, these undervalued locations become sites of real estate speculation and urban renewal (Marable, 2000; Taylor, 2016). **These effects often take on both class and racial characteristics. Newton** (2002), for instance, **notes how globalized capital leads to increasing numbers of ~~Blacks~~ [Black people] falling into the category of the lumpen proletariat** (196; 210). **Class**ed subordination **is not the only (nor necessarily the most fundamental) form of oppression Black people face, however. Indeed, in the modern epoch, anti-Blackness does not simply “follow” global capitalism. Rather, through perpetual and multifaceted enactments of violence, anti-Blackness makes possible the accumulation necessary for capitalist reproduction.**

Violent forms of domination accompany (and make possible) the reproduction of global capitalism. This violence targets all manner of people, specifically those who do not exhibit a form of humanity normalized under Western modernity (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- gender, and queer (LGBTQ) and gender nonconforming folk, Muslims, Latinx, and undocumented immigrants) or a manner of spatiality that adheres to the tenets of capitalist notions of individual ownership (Mitchell, 2003). Under this new phase of **capitalism**, ever-expanding groups of people are subjected to precarious life (Mbembe, 2017). Still, experiences of **anti-Blackness remain unique**, as the openness of Black people to violence and the assumed a-spatial nature of Black populations remain constitutive factors of the modern world. The logics underpinning anti-Black violence are inheritances of chattel slavery. These logics cast **Black geographies** as **empty** and t**hreatening**, **open to occupation**, and **subject** to surveillance and assault. Indeed, **capitalism’s perpetuation** relies as much on **anti-Blackness** as it ever has. The following section seeks to clarify the ways in which anti- Blackness makes capital accumulation possible.

#### Those spatial-racial assemblages utilize black-space as no-space in order to fuel the capitalist agendas of dominant spatial actors, which turns black agency into a site of accumulation and appropriation.

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Colonial ethics reverberate in the present

**The increasing globalization of capital and spatial marginalization of “superfluous” populations is fundamentally tied to the negation of Black life and assumptions of Black non- being. The treatment of Black lives as the embodied absence of value, or, “the very condition of existence and the determination of value,”** underpins Black non-being and the assumed lack of Black cartographic capacity in the dominant spatial imaginary, making global capitalism possible (Ferreira da Silva, 2017: 1). The interconnected nature of capitalism and race is a well-worn topic. Scholars have theorized race as an ideological outgrowth of the economy (Hall, 1996); as an apparatus used to facilitate flows of **people** and **commodities** (Lowe, 2015); as a central component of capitalist maturation (James, 1989); and as a phenomenon necessary for the establishment of the world system (Robinson, 2000), among countless other approaches. Geographers, too, have unpacked the ways in which regimes of capitalism employ racialized concepts to reproduce. **Geographic interrogations** of racial capitalism have analyzed the role of **racist assumptions** in implementing **neoliberal reforms** in the wake of a natural disaster (Derickson, 2014); the manipulation of racial distinction to **prevent labor organizing** (Wilson, 2000); how resistance to Black landowner- ship underpinned early 20th-century industrial agriculture (Williams, 2017); the role of capitalism in perpetuating **environmental racism** (Pulido, 2017); and the centrality of plantation relations to numerous variations of capitalism (Woods, 1998).

Nonetheless, we must push further to explicate the ways in which capitalism is actually dependent on anti-Blackness to realize itself, instead of understanding anti-Black racism as a secondary effect of the economy or a phenomenon that emerges periodically. That is to say, reflections on the interlinked nature of **race and capitalism** must move **beyond** an assumption of **economic causality** and grapple with the ways in which **anti-Blackness** is actually an **always-present precondition** for capital accumulation. In explicating anti-Blackness, we draw on an Afro-Pessimist framework, as Afro-Pessimism makes distinct claims about the nature of Blackness in the modern world. An Afro-Pessimist analysis of anti-Blackness does not treat anti-Black racism as a contingent phenomenon (Wilderson, 2011: 3–4) but rather as a global, ever-present factor that exists as the basis “for expansion and unending space within the **symbolic economy of settlement”** (King, 2014). Such an approach forces us to recognize how **anti-Blackness punctuates the modern epoch by identifying the underlying logics that inform concrete manifestations of anti-Black racism around the world.** In this way, Afro-Pessimism adds new dimensions to already-existing work on the connections between anti-Blackness and political economy by recognizing that, while capitalism exploits all of the world’s populations, it does not dominate all of them in the same way. With regard to the question of space, **anti-Blackness helps us understand how the afterlife of slavery** (Hartman, 2007: 6) **leads to Black populations being conceptually unable to legitimately create space, thereby leaving locations associated with Blackness open to the presumably “rational” agendas of dominant spatial actors.** Black populations, then, serve as the guarantor of capitalism’s need to constantly find new **spaces of accumulation.** In this section, we offer an explanation of how capitalism relies on anti-Blackness by fore- grounding anti-Blackness as a phenomena with its own internal logics and concrete expressions.

**Capitalism is rooted in violent forms of captivity and murder unleashed on indigenous and Afro-descendant populations the world over** (Ferreira da Silva, 2004; James, 1989; Rodney, 1972; Williams, 2014; Wynter, 1995). At its origin and in its contemporary manifestations, then, capitalism is systemically related to slavery and its various global permutations (Robinson, 2000: 313–314). **The assumption that Black populations lack both humanity and “space, that is ethno- or politico-geography,” defines the treatment of enslaved Black peoples. Today, the assumed a-spatiality that defined conditions of chattel slavery continues to imprint the socio-spatial relations that reproduce global capital** (Robinson, 2000: 81, 200).

**Black populations** are **deemed a-spatial** as a result of the fact that modern notions of space and practices of spatial production are rooted in specific relations of power (Massey, 2005: 64, 100–101). These power relations are themselves organized around logics that have particular historical roots (Santos, 2008: 21). In the colonial epoch, chattel slavery—the social, legal, and political reduction of Africans to the status of nonhumans—produced the figure of the Black, which had a nullified spatial capacity (Wilderson, 2010: 279), was disavowed as a human being (Ferreira da Silva, 2015: 91), and was a priori structurally prevented from enacting “rational” spatial expressions (Santos, 2009: 24). Locations associated with Black populations became wholly **“unhallowed”** spaces, which would never receive recognition as legitimately occupied (Wynter, 1976: 81). This is not to suggest that Black peoples were or are understood as not physically present. Black bodies are certainly recognized as existing in exteriority (Raffestin, 2012: 129). Still, this recognition of **physical presence** does not signify that Black populations’ are understood as establishing **legible space**. Despite physical presence, Black populations nonetheless remain rendered “ungeographic” in dominant understandings of space (McKittrick, 2006: x). Hence, the geographic locations in which Black populations reside are treated as open to the varied agendas espoused by **dominant spatial actors.**

Capitalism’s new rounds of accumulation require access to spaces that previously had different relations to capitalist practices. The assumed a-spatiality of Black populations often leads to purveyors of capitalism treating locations inhabited by Black people as avail- able for emerging modes of accumulation. Put another way, **spaces that were once marginal or peripheral to the perpetuation of capital accumulation become sites of appropriation precisely because the (Black) populations occupying them receive no recognition as viable spatial actors.** The spaces necessary for new forms of accumulation are thus conceptually open because of this assumed a-spatiality and subsequently physically opened via the spatial removal and dispersal of Black residents. **This dispersal entails violent actions that are a priori legitimate because of the assumed lack of Black spatial agency. In other words, new spaces of “investment have been mapped onto previous racial and colonial (imperial) dis- courses and practices” evidencing an inextricable relationship between anti-Black notions of space, capitalism’s logic of perpetual expansion, and the acceptable subordination of Black physical presence** (Chakravartty and Silva, 2012: 368). This is what Frank Wilderson terms the “deterritorialisation of Black space” (2003: 238) that is necessary for accumulating capital vis-a ` -vis emerging political economic practices. Katherine McKittrick similarly notes that Black geographies are cast as “the lands of no one” and “emptied out of life” in order that “suitable capitalist life-support systems” be put into place and globally propagated (McKittrick, 2013: 7).

#### Anti-black spatial-terror is not solely intrinsic to the topic, but is apart of debate’s larger infrastructure. Anti-black logics of a-spatiality/spatial-fixes, racial appropriation, and lack of black presence spills into debate and spills outside of debate. From forcing black debaters to read 1ACs that affirm federal government action in order to receive legitimacy by opponents, judges, and debaters alike, from instrumentalism and hegemonic top-down politics that crowd out blackness, it all brings us to one central nexus statement:

#### Black people must always labor for someone else, while simultaneously giving up their own spatial agency to be accepted within whitened spaces.

#### What if we refused to do the topic’s laboring? I guess I’d have to find something else to fill the time with.

Building on Sun Ra’s words, **Black temporality** is a **refusal to labor** within the **limits** of **history**. It exists on the other side, not simply outside or excluded from time, but on the **B-side** of **time** and thus **history**. In spite of more than four centuries of racial exclusion and theft of the body, **Black time** does not demand **inclusion** within European colonial timelines. Instead, **Black time** continues to be **stolen away** by **Black people**, accumulating on the other side of history and the edges of the plantation as a resource for **Black futures**. Maroons across the hemisphere understood this intimately. The prehistory of **Afro-futurism** is evidence of the power of the speculative and how playing with time has been definitive of Black storytelling across the diaspora. I posit the way Black people have deployed the speculative then as a praxis of stealing away colonial time in order to unravel it. **Black speculation** claims time back from capitalist regimes of colonial extractivism that attempted to steal life itself through the mechanisms of racial slavery. [[5]](#footnote-5)

#### We affirm the Black Hole as a collective imagining of labor rights for workers in the United States.

#### That means affirmations of the topic should be grounded in a radical stasis point necessary for epistemological growth.

#### The 1AC’s performance and embodiment of the Underground Railroad is constitutive of a fugitive escape, where black people search for the cosmos and spaces without anti-blackness. No matter what planet we land on, it’s better than where we’re escaping from. It’s either “find the terminus or die on the tracks.”

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**The Outer Spaces of Slavery**

**For ~~Blacks~~ [Black people] in the American South any place without slavery must have sounded and felt like outer space** (White, Piper, Nelson, Kemp & Muhammad, 2001; Kilgore, 2003; Nama, 2008). They would willingly inhabit those places if given the opportunity—the American North, Canada, Africa, Europe, or elsewhere. “Slave holders sought to impress their slaves” **Frederick Douglass** explained “with a belief in the boundlessness of **slave territory** and their own **limitless power**” (Stauffer, 2008, 46). When Blacks in bondage grasped that there were spaces where they could live “free” or in the “safety” of a rival Empire, that became the new world they sought. **Slaveholders** also attempted to **brainwash** Blacks to think that places where **slavery** had been abolished were untrue, too far, post-apocalyptic, or just as bad as the American South. Some **fugitives** dreamed of **Canada**, others wanted to reach **Africa** or **Haiti**, and a number of Blacks wandered to several places seeking to find greater latitude in the **“outer spaces of slavery.”**

**Places without slavery were the cosmos, and fugitives had to some degree time-travelled when they abided within them. These spaces had “evolved” past the static slave-labor South. Blacks praised these regions and nations for their legal emancipation, despite them being racially coarse, segregated, and alienating.** **They navigated life in these newfound galaxies by avoiding the black holes and finding the stars. Although, the outright ownership of Black bodies was low to none in these spaces, the sense of its presence was there and equality was lacking; thus, destroying their utopian visions.** Blacks realized as Sun Ra explained: “Space is not only high, it’s low. It’s the bottomless. There’s no end to it” (Sun Ra, 1974; Bell 1992, Fawaz, 2012, 1103-1122). Likewise, the bigotry and segregation in the American North did not cease once fugitives arrived; racism was a transcending sentiment and having the right to vote was rare outside of New England. The racial and political tension in the North was overshadowed by the brutality of the South, yet that tension should not be understated. **For example, from 1834 to 1841 in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania alone some six race riots took place** (Kerber, 1967; Feldberg, 1980). The millions of German and Irish immigrants flooding into the urbanizing North fueled even more clashes as each “undesirable” European group competed with Blacks for low-paying jobs and often found themselves crammed into nearby slums. **Still, fugitives reasoned the “bottomlessness” of space or being as historian Steven Hahn explained “slaves at large” in the North was better than being Southern human “merchandise”** (Hahn, 2009, 1-54).

Fugitive Andrew Jackson, who left Kentucky after more than twenty years of bondage, was hotly pursued on his northward journey, but he settled in Illinois and then Wisconsin. Jackson explained, **“I am sometimes asked, how we learn the way to the free States?”** **“My answer” he expounded, “is that the slaves know much more about this matter than many persons are aware.** They have means of communication with each other, altogether unknown to their masters, or to the people of the free states--even the route of some who have escaped is familiarly known to the more intelligent ones.” **This underscored the “Negro grapevine” and silent sabotage that was happening just beneath the surface in the slave community.** They felt justified in reaching “outer space,” just as the Israelites who fled from captivity in Egypt. “If it was right for the revolutionary patriots to fight for liberty,” Jackson concluded, “it was right for me” (Jackson, 1847, 13-15). With Biblical and philosophical vindication as well as coded data, runaways were ready to blast off.

**Some Blacks ironically found the outer spaces of slavery right within the American South. After all, it was the goal of Blacks to reshape the boundaries of slavery, so it would be abolished in every space. Scores in the Deep South acquired freedom by losing themselves in the free Black communities of cities like New Orleans and Charleston.** Enslaved people found safety in the remote areas of the Great Dismal Swamp, which borders Virginia and North Carolina, as well as the Florida Everglades (Winsboro and Knetsch, 2013; Alexander, Newby-Alexander, and Ford, 2008, 85-112). Bands of **maroon societies** **congregated** in **these areas**, and in the Sea Islands of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Northern Florida. In addition, escaped **enslaved people** sometimes trusted **Native American groups**, such as the **Seminoles**, to provide **sanctuary** and **protection** (Hahn, 2009, 26; Diouf, 2014). Other enslaved people in the South used an “absentee” run off status, in which they left for a few days or weeks hiding out in the region, only to return later when the situation might be more favorable. A larger number of Blacks in the Deep South utilized **this runaway model** (Franklin & Schweninger, 2000, 98-101).

However, for the majority, entry to the “**outer spaces** of slavery” **required venturing out** of the South and **crossing** regional or national borders to change their circumstances. Black fugitives headed south to the border of Mexico or to the Caribbean islands via maritime routes (Kelley, 2004; Winsboro & Knetsch, 2013). In the Upper South, particularly in Maryland, Virginia, and Kentucky, Blacks fled to the American North and British Canada. **The majority of Black runaways did not stay in the first place they reached; they moved around in space. For instance, once William and Ellen Craft reached Philadelphia, they had to decide weather to stay in the American North or go to Canada or Europe.** Leading local abolitionists advised them to go to Boston, assuring the Crafts that it was nearly impossible to be taken back into slavery from there. **So they settled in Boston, and found employment in the city, but after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, their owner sent agents to capture them. With the help of the Boston Vigilance Committee, the Crafts eluded the catchers and made their way to Maine, then Canada, and eventually to England, where they remained until after the Civil War** (Craft, 1860, 81 & 89-92).

**Henry “Box” Brown** also left the **America**n North and elected to head to England. He lived there for some 25 years, working as a magician and “popular science” entertainer. He married an English woman, Jane Floyd, returned to the United States in 1875 with his family, and kept an active touring schedule as a showman. Brown spent the last decade of his life in Toronto, performing, speaking, and practicing magnetism. **Hailed as a “Black Jack-in-the-Box,”** and billed as the “African Biologist,” and “Professor Henry Box Brown,” he embodied the magic of the **outer spaces**, while dwelling and acting on what seemed like **different planets** from the state in which he was born (Britt, 2017, 141- 142). The culture and future shock of Europe must have been daunting and being the Atlantic Ocean away from the United States was reassuring, despite Southern cotton imports that helped to fuel the British industrial revolution (Brown, 2006). Brown was never simply a manual laborer during his time of enslavement, he was hired out by his master to work in a Richmond tobacco factory. It is a misconception the Blacks had little or no access to technology; they performed a variety of skilled and semi-skilled jobs from butchers and cooks to engineers, blacksmiths, and coachmen, which revealed only a touch of their capacity to achieve (Rusert, 2017, 134-148).

Scores of Blacks wanted to inhabit the Mother continent, Africa, where they hoped its reparative nurture, values, creativity, ethnic diversity, and tech potential would heal what Western society had damaged. Africa and the vast African cultures of the continent are a key element of Afrofuturism (Bould, 2013; Anderson & Jones, 2016, 207- 213). William Webb, born in Georgia and enslaved in Mississippi as a hired-hand to several owners, fled during the Civil War to Union lines. “I have a great idea about Africa,” Webb explained, “I think that it is the land the Bible speaks of as flowing with milk and honey.” He added, “I often think that before the end of time, the colored people will return again to their own country [continent], and I think there will be a great light shown to them in the future.” He maintained ties of affection with the homeland and in freedom he had a Back-to-Africa attitude. Webb also wanted Blacks “to learn the sciences of the earth,” and he spoke of “a ray of light streaming through the land….showing the colored people they have some true friends” (Webb, 1873, 74-77). This was not just small talk; it was a heightened realization of origins, lineage, and Afrofuturism. He was never able to reach Africa, but perhaps the most important thing he did was to contemplate it, others lived out his vision.

In 1824, Henry Highland Garnet of Maryland and eleven of his family members escaped via covered wagon when they got permission to travel to a funeral. On the trip, bondage died, and emancipation was born. Thereafter, Garnet in Afrofuturism-style, who was said to have been a descendant of African royalty, grew up in New York City, where he received a stellar education at the noted African Free School. Garnet made his name as an abolitionist, minister, and later diplomat. He once pastored a predominantly white church in Troy, New York, and he fought Jim Crow policies in railcars all over the American North. Once he was dragged off of a train in Utica for his insistence that it be desegregated. Garnet explained, “I have sufficient dignity to fill an entire car” (Pease & Pease, 1972, 165). He supported emigration to Mexico, Liberia, the Caribbean, and looked to establish a settlement in West Africa. Garnet became the first president of the African Civilization Society a group that grew out of the self-sufficient Weeksville, Brooklyn, neighborhood founded by Blacks, and supported the “civilization and Christianization of Africa,” emigration to Liberia, and “free-labor” cotton (Wellman, 2014)

By the 1850s, Weeksville had 500 inhabitants, churches, a newspaper, school, elderly home, orphan asylum, and cemetery. Weeksville provided a Wakanda-like atmosphere that evoked a Black counter narrative to society’s stereotype of Black inferiority. When Garnet grew tired of the United States in 1852, he moved to Jamaica, but returned before the Civil War to support the Union in victory. As a sickly senior, he was appointed the U.S. Consul-General of Liberia, believing in its “growing greatness.” His dying wish was to reach the African continent (New York Tribune, July 8, 1881; New York Times, April 4, 1880 and February, 25, 1876). In 1881, when he arrived in Monrovia, Liberia, aboard the steamer Egypt, he “was delighted with the country” (Hanes Walton, Jr., & Clark, Rosser, and Stevenson, 1985, 72, 74-81). Garnet months later perished in his sleep and was buried in Africa’s soil; a land he had deep affection for like Afrofuturists.

The long arc from slavery to **attempting to reverse** the Atlantic Slave Trade was difficult, but it became a **tangible reality** for scores of Blacks **[Black people].** The transition embodied the Afrofuturism pillar to recover the past and to cite the cultures of the African continent. Blacks who set out for Africa hoped to escape their status as “aliens,” however they had been detached from the mothership, and untangling the threads of the Middle Passage was technically impossible. Still, in the **“outer spaces of slavery,”** runaways searched in the midst of modernity for a sense of belonging--**no matter what planet they landed on**, be it Haiti, Mexico, England, the Caribbean, St. Catharines, Toronto, or Buxton, Canada West which were all key places for fugitives of the American South, but really anywhere outside the hands of bondage, a real **“house of horrors,”** was plausible. Cora, the main character in Colson Whitehead’s The Underground Railroad novel, captured the sentiment of the real fleeing fugitives best when she explained “anywhere, anywhere but where you are escaping from…**find the terminus** or **die on the tracks**” (304). Runaways understood that slavery did not have boundless horizons, and they simply wanted a new world order that was otherworldly (Sharpe, 2016).

Outro

In all, equating **the Underground Railroad to Afrofuturism** is **boundary-pushing**, but it does not **overreach.** Is not the point of scholarship, as sociologist Alondra Nelson explained, to engage “speculation, experimentation, and abstraction”? (Rambsy II, 2013, 205-206; Nelson, 2000, 34-37). Both **the Underground Railroad** and **Afrofuturism** rescue ~~Blacks~~ **[Black people]** from the stereotype of being **technophobes** and asserts that they could keep pace with technoculture if they are not hi-tech hijacked (Penley & Ross, 1991; Shaw, 2008; Carrington, 2016). **Black techno-thrillers** solved the **ultimate algorithm**-- slavery, a calculated subtraction that did not figure them into the equation. **The Underground Railroad** has more **meaning** than the **metaphorical.** Enslaved people were not void of **tech**nology, or simply primitive, **unskilled laborers**, they were driven by the chronicles of progress. Contrary to the mainstream and stereotypical thought Blacks were curious. They looked to take advantage of technology as a tool to make their getaways less troublesome and quicker (Nelson, 2002, 1). By wearing **“low-tech” masks**, they were able to discreetly **decipher complex codes** and usher themselves to the “**outer spaces of slavery”** with the **latest technology** and **gadgetry.**

**By looking at the Underground Railroad as Afrofuturism, the understanding of the imaginative mind of the enslaved can be grasped. In the depths of slavery, Black fugitives recognized a free future was possible and that they could be “teleported” there through modern technology.** This makes them some of the most inventive, astute, and cutting-edge modernist of their time. Blacks had the least resources but were the most resourceful with the little information and tools they could muster up clandestinely. By maximizing steam and other man-made mechanisms they carried themselves away from the clutches of bondage. **Black runaways** considered uneducated, unskilled, backward, and shiftless, amongst many other things, out thought, maneuvered, and **managed to ride** modern **transportation to** transform and **invent** the **futures** their **slaveholding pursuers** wanted to **switch off.** However, Blacks were state-of-the- art and light-years ahead of what was expected but worked on a covert frequency as not to alarm owners of their exodus. The fugitive knew that the point of slavery was to technically unplug and power down their abilities to use technology. Just as it was in the past, the “digital divide” of today is designed to keep Blacks uninformed and as a technological underclass, which reduces their autonomy (James Stewart and Talmadge Anderson, 2007, 277-303; Chan, 2013). Black Panther’s, final fight between T'Challa and Killmonger, takes place on an underground railroad paying homage to Black fugitives a prototype of Afrofuturism.

#### Leap into the black hole. Traverse black space-time with us. Who knows what you’ll find?

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**There**

**is nowhere**

**like this place, and**

**no time**

**like the present.**

We work with the shards of Black life and death that called out to us because we knew and know that the critical, caring, and perilous work we need to do is bound up with destruction. **These fragments of Black life and death surrounding us affirm our sense of our own untimeliness against the neatness of time, and of our stankiness in the middle of nowhere.**

I have written elsewhere and at length about what I am calling “untime,” which describes the dereliction of Black temporality, and about “stankiness,”1 the defining characteristic of the nowhere of Black spatiality. **The untimeliness that signals our destructive relationship to human models and experiences of time and the stankiness that signals our destructive relationship to human spaces and spatiality** act as the Black prima materia, the Black and essential material, with which **we must work to create these impossible stories we imagine, witness, bear, conjure, and live in and against the antiblack cosmos where and when we cannot be. What we knew, and now know with excruciating intimacy, to be the violent, distorted fabric of spacetime shaping the field of fragments around us is the material we must bend to create Black pocket universes from streets to pages (and everywhere and when between).** We knew and know that in order to conjure **Black spacetimes** that might **upend** the **antiblack cosmos**, we would have to become avatars of destruction, able to bend the forces of **untimeliness** and **stankiness** and **love** toward the kinds of authentic upheaval that must be born if we are to **save the earth** and **conjure** the impossible story of **a wholly unimaginable world.**

**Wherever and whenever we’ve ended up, nowhere is better or more apropos, and we’ve got no time to celebrate.** We wordly wanderers wander wondering about the possibility of other worlds, word worlds that would warp and rend and other- wise radically reimagine the **fabric of spacetime**, especially since we understand the ways that our **pain, terror**, and **subjection stitch** that **fabric together.** **We traverse** the perilous folds in space and wrinkles in time in search of the fragments of a theory of **Black spacetime** because we recognized that understanding not only how **time and space tear Black life**, death, and creation absolutely asunder, but also how **Black life**, death, and creation unsettle and **upend time and space**, would be essential if we aimed to take **time and make space** for **Black folk**, in theory, in word, and in deed.

**Our many lingering questions about the actual possibilities of Black creation are the connective force arranging the field of these fragmented, impossible stories we sought out and that sought us out, that we write and we tell, around us.** For Jasmine, Shakara, Dajerria, Sandra, Kalief, Nephi, for my students across time and space, for my wife and my family, and for all the Black folk living and dying untimely lives and deaths in the middle of nowhere, these questions illuminate the path for- ward, propel and direct the vector of our imaginative journey, and shape our vision of a destination. **Asking how we have marshaled, do marshal, and might better marshal the violent energy of our spatiotemporal dereliction and transmute it into the creative, caring energy required to conjure moments and sites for Black folk to dis- turb the air with our breath opens us into a serious consideration of the stakes and potentiality of Black creation. Our visitations with Black words and worlds created and lived by Black folk allow us to advance this consideration and to move ourselves toward taking the leap into the wholly Black black hole of it all.**

Ultimately, **our leap** leads us to **recognize** that to make the **arrangements**, conjure **ways** out of **no way**, and **take** and **make time** when there is **none to spare** is to engage in dangerous work—and not in the least because the work tends to draw the fire, bullets, terror, and domination of the antiblack world, its institutions, and its agents; **we work with volatile material**, this stuff of untimely death and destruction, **and this stank of nowhere**, so we must negotiate how we **imperil** ourselves and the variously **dead** and **living Black folk** for **whom we care**. How we handle the forces that destroy us, that remove us from a subject position—that is, from a stable location relative to space and time—has significant import for us because our handling of these forces will impact those who encounter the creations **we destructively produce.**

How we alchemically transmute destruction determines the shape the product takes and the effects it might have on those for whom we endeavored to create it. How we treat this material across each step of the process of alchemical creation affects what form that material is able to take. Alchemy functions as a useful frame for this process because it requires the dissolution or destruction of our prima materia, our original material, as a necessary and first step toward the creation of something else. Nigredo, alchemy’s first step, signifies blackness and requires the dissolution of our source material, compelling us to think about how we break our material down to its volatile essential components. Albedo, alchemy’s second step, signifies whiteness and requires the distillation of the usable from what nigredo produces, compelling us to consider how we scrub clean or purify what we can or want to use of that material. And rubedo, alchemy’s final step,4 signifies redness and results in the synthesis of the fabled philosopher stone itself, compels us to consider how we alter and synthesize that destructive force into a radically different product. Alchemical transmutation is the process of radical breaking-apart/disordering, reorganization, and creation. **When we think of Black creation, especially when that creation is inherently a ‘working-with-fragments,’ we must think (and have thought) about the ways we handle these fragments throughout the complex process of transmutation under untimely, spatially dislocated conditions.** This is a good way of thinking about what has been the subject and the work of the kind of impossible invention Black folk (vie to) perform: on the one hand, we spend pages trying to think about how this process works (its mechanics) and to what ends (its stakes and possibilities); on the other, we spend pages performing this work by unraveling the entanglement of Blackness, spacetime, care, and creation, extracting what is essential to this entanglement, and producing a theory of Black untimely creation out of nowhere. Across genres, styles, disciplines, and paradigmatic divides marked by woefully inadequate names, written account of a difficult and dangerous transmutation. **Working with and through our destructive relationship with the fabric of the cosmos produces what we understand to be an essential contradiction of Black creative work: in this cosmos, our untimeliness and our displacement are constitutive to our capacities to make time or take a minute, and to make space or find our way; that which destroys our relationship to time, space, and each other remains inextricably bound up with our creative aspiration and imaginative aim. We knew this, and we know this, and we have created, and do and will continue to create under these conditions.**

#### An abolitionist fugitivity reclaims spaces and enables collective imaginations that make black insurgency both the “dreamer and doer” of their own futures. That turns black labor into a site of radical work, escape, and emancipation through communal practices based in solidarity amongst the most marginalized.

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**Ooh child**

**Things are gonna get easier**

**Ooh child**

**Things’ll get brighter**

**Some day, yeah**

**We’ll put it together and we’ll get it undone**

**Some day**

**When your head is much lighter**

**Some day, yeah**

**We’ll walk in the rays of a beautiful sun**

**Some day**

**When the world is much brighter** (Vincent, 1970, verses 2–3)

We enter this editorial thinking with **abolition**(ists) and **fugitivity** (and fugitives) as **necessary standpoints** we must embody to **build** what our current and future inhabitance of the **world** will be, that is, what our experiences in the global social milieu must look and feel like for individuals and communities that have been harmed by past and current iterations of living and being. Thinking about the global reach of **whiteness**, white supremacy, and ongoing legacies of **colonialism** by harmful iterations of living and being, we are specifically speaking to the structural and ideological systems bound up with white settler supremacy (e.g., **racism**, **anti-Blackness**, **heteropatriarchy**, **anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination**, **classism**, **ableism**, **anti-immigration efforts**) that create and sustain **marginalization**. As with the song recorded by the Black soul group the Five Stairsteps (Vincent, 1970) that open this editorial, **we carve out space** here to reject that **life** for the oppressed and those constructed as **disposable** (through **policy**, ideology, and entrenched systems) is the natural order of things or the only way for society to be **structured**. There is a way forward, an old-new way of being in and of the world, that is not—and does not have to be—predicated on relegating those strategically placed on the margins— “Black, poor, Latinx, Indigenous/First Nations, Arab, South Asian, undocumented, (dis) abled, queer/trans or any combination of these” (Stovall, 2020, p. 3)—as the problem(s) of humanity. When the Five Stairsteps released the song “O-o-h child” in 1970 in the wake of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, they were speaking to the inevitable demise of the world that existed in the past and during that present moment, whose death (of the old world) would allow room for people to erect different ways of living as a result of the struggles against oppression becoming “easier” and “brighter”. We interpret the promise of an existence with less despair not as a promise of the eradication or disappearance of white settler supremacy (and its reinforcements) but, rather, as a promise that the world will be brighter because people have done and will continue to do the work to create such change. Thinking of the lyric “**we’ll put it together** and **we’ll get it undone**,” we see an **embodiment** of the dual components of **fugitivity** and **abolition**: There is first **a collective imagining** as plan development and then **an execution of the plan**. To be for **fugitivity** and **abolition** is to be both **dreamer** and **doer.**

In this issue of Equity & Excellence in Education, we demonstrate what dreamers and doers, abolitionist- and fugitive-oriented researchers are doing to get oppressive schooling apparatuses “undone”. Being grounded in **abolition** and **fugitivity** is in the vein of emancipatory research approaches that see research as a **necessary praxis**, which is executed by engaging in research processes that enable “people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations” (Lather, 1986, p. 263). Thus, we see critically analyzing and confronting the conditions of oppression(s) that work to infringe upon the humanness of those deemed as marginal as a necessary component to dreaming of old-new ways of being in the world. Given the entrenched nature of violence against marginalized communities at the hands of schooling, we understand that **fugitivity** and **abolition** live within the souls of and **places/spaces** inhabited by those **legislated** as **disposable** or as **other**. To engage in emancipatory research guided by fugitive and abolitionist logics, then, “must be open-ended, nondogmatic, informing, and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life; and, moreover, it must be premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed” (Lather, 1986, p. 262). In prioritizing a dismantling of the world as is, by turning to the everyday lives of the dispossessed, we understand that iterations of fugitivity and abolition have always been at play in a world where peoples have been stripped of their land, victims of genocide, and commodified and treated as property and where they have experienced ongoing war as the result of foreign actors, navigated poverty and hunger, and fought for inclusion for a plethora of reasons (e.g., dis/ability status, race, gender, sexuality, religious freedom, and language differences). Despite being locked out of the rights and privileges reserved for dominant populations, communities who have been deemed marginal, or as more than their suffering, have leveraged strategies of **fugitivity** and **abolition** to **live** and **thrive.** In many ways, then, our offering on fugitivity and abolition here is not about educational researchers and practitioners unearthing never-utilized tactics or creating entirely new tactics, but rather looking to the ways people have lived life under subjection in ways that do not allow their life/lives/livelihood to be wholly, or even partially, **defined** by such s**ubjection**. Fugitivity and abolition exist within the souls of folks who need to get free. In many ways, there is an inherent response to live as humans, as connected to one’s own humanness. If one is presented with routine barriers to living in ways that affirm and uplift one’s humanity, there is no choice but to resist and create old-new pathways of life. Being fugitive and abolitionist in orientation or constructing **pathways** to **escape** from and **dismantle systems** that render one as less than is part and parcel to the survivance (Vizenor, 1998) of the minoritized. How might theorizations of equity and excellence in education operate through the historic and well-documented methods and practices of escape (from violent systems) that live within the communities that institutions of schooling in the United States and elsewhere were not designed to educate, let alone love? Across educational spaces, how do we engage the lifeworlds (e.g., voices, culture, politics, aesthetics, truth(s)) of individuals and communities who exist beyond the confines of dominant (characterized as grounded in whiteness) conceptions of humanness?

Theorizing fugitivity and abolition as educational equity imperatives

Through the scholarship and conversations shared in this issue, we invite readers to imagine and execute ways they might think outside the boundaries of educational containment in ways that acknowledge the entrenched nature of harm in those settings, while still creating new ways to resist and eradicate harm. Although we recognize discussions of fugitivity and abolition as two separate processes and standpoints, we note that the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, fugitivity and abolition are often employed in tandem in efforts to dismantle and free oneself from systems of negligence, here the system of schooling. As Zaino (2021) outlined, being an abolitionist in educational spaces is a stance that gives birth to “a vision for education that imagines its possibilities beyond its racist instantiations—and a daily practice of working in solidarity with communities of color” (p. 71). Visions of abolition, that is, untethering education from the carceral state grounded in punishment and confinement, can work as a catalyst for enacting methods of escape, becoming fugitive, in ways that allow one to do the actual work for constructing old-new educational ways of being. To dismantle and/or abandon harmful schooling processes is a pathway to justice, on the terms of the fugitive(s). Here, we think with and try to answer Best and Hartman’s (2005) question, “Why is justice fugitive?” (p. 3). To remain complicit in a world marked by injustice, a world that denies the humanness of a great deal of people, would be the opposite of fugitive and abolitionist work. On the contrary, developing an awareness of the wrongdoing of systems and then attaining (or even seeking) justice becomes a bold act of fugitivity, an action- oriented approach of refusing to live in the world as it currently exists. Justice is fugitive because there is an altering “of the normative discourses and vocabularies, the ways of thinking and being,” which inform carceral societies and nations (Brown & Schept, 2017, p. 444). In thinking about fugitivity and abolition as necessary to move toward more equitable educational existences, we know that existing in harm-free spaces may be impossible, but we understand that such “vulnerability is bound up with the human condition, that the pursuit of total security is a life-damaging pursuit, and that there are ways to better address, collectively, the harms we face and produce” (Brown & Schept, 2017, p. 449).

We broadly conceptualize f**ugitivity** as the act of **escaping the status quo** through various methods of **refusal** and **disengagement** to challenge **oppressive regimes** detrimental to the social and educational lives of historically and more contemporarily marginalized students to **create** and **imagine freedom** (Sojoyner, 2017). In particular, we are in direct conversation with Campt’s (2014) definition of fugitivity—a practice that “highlights the tension between the acts or flights of escape and creative practices of refusal, nimble and strategic practices that undermine the category of the dominant”—as well as decolonial discussions of borderlands and border crossing (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987), illustrating the multiple ways and embodied frameworks through which **youth** and **educators** of color **organize**, **strategize**, and enact **fugitive literacy practices** in their **daily work.** According to Brooks (2020), the power of fugitive methods is that communities that have the desire and will to escape harmful systems mean that colonizers and (settler) colonialism have failed to completely “destroy and deculture **Black** and **Indigenous** subjects” (p. 34); there is a refusal to be represented in the images thought of by those responsible for oppression. In the articles in this issue and within our own work, we leverage **fugitivity** as a **challenge** to the racial hierarchical **power structures** in operation within the **United States** and elsewhere.

We understand **abolition** as a disruption to the myriad violences experienced by those deemed marginal to society’s functioning, and it is directly **informed by** the histories of “**Black radical insurgency** against the continuities of containment and capture, from rebellions against chattel enslavement and the Jim Crow South to women of color feminist theorizations of violence, and queer critiques of the rise of the modern **carceral state**” (Chua, 2020, S-130). The disruption leading to abolition, we believe, stems “from experiences, practices, and movement-generated theories grounded in survivability” (Brown & Schept, 2017, p. 443). By survivability, Brown and Schept (2017) were referring to abolition being instinctual, an “urgent pursuit of liberation from the threat of captivity, torture, and social death, from generational histories in the continuous shadow of conquest, settler colonialism, slavery, Jim Crow, and the carceral state” (p. 443). Given that abolition is rooted within and in response to generational histories of negation, educational researchers and practitioners must allow the voices and actions of those directly impacted by such histories to lead the ways we all work for abolition, the ways we are abolition/ist. To be about the **work of abolition** is to be about **the work of disruption**, a disruption that seeks to stop the operations of all **systems** and **structures** that work to create and sustain violence, with the primary driving force being the desire to completely dismantle such violent institutions. Through the disruption of violence, the goal is not simply to eliminate the places and spaces serving as the conduits for education-based violence, but also a **radically imaginative**, **generative**, and **socially productive communal** (and community-building) practice...[and/as] a radical **reconfiguration** of **justice**, **subjectivity**, and **social formation** that does not depend on the existence of either the **carceral state** (a statecraft that institutionalizes various forms of targeted human capture) or **carceral power** as such (a totality of state-sanctioned and extrastate relations of gendered racial- colonial dominance). (Rodríguez, 2018, p. 1576)

In moving toward a radical reconfiguration of educational space (and the society/ies in which our institutions are located), we understand that such disruption and rebuilding will, at times, be an indirect journey. In other words, we embrace engaging **“**in **projects** of making **abolition** and **failing**¶ and **trying again**, producing **loops** that themselves **produce possibilities** for **interruption** and¶ **misdirection** and **reworking**” (Agid, 2014). The scholarship in this issue takes on the messiness¶ of abolition, embracing the working and reworking necessary to create possibility yet to be¶ discovered.

To move out of the oppressive confines of our realities, we look to Moten’s (2018) conception of fugitivity (and we would also say abolition) as “a desire for the outside, for a playing or being outside, an outlaw edge proper to the now always already improper voice or instrument” (as cited in Brooks, 2020, p. 35). If violent schooling practices that refuse to embrace the voices of the marginalized are considered on the inside, to work toward equity and excellence then must be sought after in outside spaces, where the voices of the aforementioned dictate how they are represented—not outside actors. To be a **fugitive** or an **abolitionist** means to seek out the **underground realm**. Unfortunately, these cultural inside or underground places—whether it is the **hood,** the **block**, the **barrios**, the **reservations**, the **favelas**, the **burbs**, the **wards**, or any rural/countryside **space** where those **deemed valueless reside**—are often seen as sites of decay. Particularly when one considers how these inside spaces interact with “race, class, gender, age, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation, we have developed excuses in schools as to why we should discard them” (Stovall, 2020, p. 2). However, **fugitive logic** informs us that **these spaces** and **the people** who live **beautiful lives** in them are markers of **emancipatory existences**. For that reason, educational researchers and practitioners must lean into such spaces, relish the justice making that resides there, and use that as a catalyst for change. Thus, **fugitivity** and **abolition**, as conceptualized here, are **action-oriented refusals** of the logics of white settler supremacy and are prompts to carve out educational **spaces** centered in the funds of **knowledge** of the **marginalized** (Moll et al., 1992) and the abundance of cultural wealth stemming from these communities (Yosso, 2005). Thus, the fight for equity via fugitivity and abolition that we engage in is a result of us living lives knowing the realities of inequity and what needs to take place in order to actualize equity.

#### Debates under their model is a form of hegemonic political engagement that configures black insurgency as an existential threat to reinforce racial-colonial statecraft and game-theory. That creates pacification and assimilation through instrumentalism to create a carceral containment of black insurgent argumentation.

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The rise of **Black insurgent argumentation** practice in competitive intercollegiate policy debate competition and the counter-insurgent reactions with which it **has been met** are revealing of the ways in which instrumental norms of argumentation and **hegemonic** forms of **political engagement and communication crowd out alter- native modes of socio-political formation. Antiblack rhetorics of fear and animus that characterize** debate’s current racial conflict condition the incommensurability of the political imaginaries characterizing the racial-liberalism of normative, **plan-focused policy debate** and the social aesthetics of Black insurgent argument practice. Several of competitive debate’s protocols—”fiat only” procedural arguments, emphasis on technocratic expertise, and **game theory-based evaluative frameworks— continue to reinforce a normative vision of argument as a technique of statecraft. Likewise, racial conflict in debate is a manifestation of the racial-colonial logics of statecraft** which debate normatively assumes and reiterates, constructing discursive sovereignty around plan-based debate practice **that figures Black insurgent argument as an existential threat to the debate community and its hegemonic vision of politics** (Greenstein 2009, 2014; Heidt 2003; O’Donnell 2004; Ritter 2016; Speice and Lyle¶ 2003). Because insurgent argument does not accede to the given terms, it is imag-¶ ined that no change must be possible and its practitioners must be irresponsible,¶ lazy, or nefarious. The grammar of the policy-making paradigm secures and enforces¶ a racial contract that facilitates “meaningful discussion” through continual reiteration¶ that takes on the appearance of the natural (Dillard-Knox 2014; Kelsie 2019; Peterson¶ 2014; Reid-Brinkley 2019, 2020, 2023b; Schatz 2019). Debate and argumentation¶ theorists must contend with normative argumentation’s commitment to liberal human-¶ ism, racial dialectics, and state-thought, which requires a recognition of the anti-¶ blackness deeply embedded in the very philosophies that grounds the study of¶ argument.

In this article, we delve further into the 2023 National Debate Tournament final round between the University of Michigan (Michigan) and Wake Forest University (Iyana Trotman and Tajaih Robinson).1 We draw on concepts from part 1 of this two-part essay, including racial dialectic, Black insurgency, and “oblique identification” (Vargas 2018) to further explicate the argumentative forms in contemporary competitive debate practice that crowd out alternative forms of argumentation, particularly Black insurgent argument. In this part 2, we analyze the racial logics of the instrumental form of debate through Michigan’s arguments as well as Wake Forest’s refusal of the racial liberal, instrumental argument form through the strategic deployment of insurgent argument practices. We first review Michigan’s use of the instrumentalist interpretation of competition that attempts to circumscribe acceptable debate practice to policy-based analysis as a rejection of Wake Forest’s Black insur- gent argumentation. Focusing on normative protocols of argument in policy debate, including the “burden of rejoinder,” “framework,” “fiat,” “line-by-line” debating and the “flow” we engage the contestations between the two teams to further demonstrate Black invention as a mode of Black insurgent argument. We lastly examine the judges’ written decisions as texts which reveal collective anxieties regarding the process and outcome of racial confrontation in debate generally and in the final round specifically.

The racial logic of debate’s instrumental reason Instrumental interpretation of the resolution requires the affirmative to role play as the government, using state-based definitional standards to interpret the meaning of the words in the resolution in relationship to one another. Under the policy-making paradigm, the resolutional statement is presumed to require plan instrumentalization, or the use of “fiat,” a technique of argument abstraction in which debate partici- pants imagine the hypothetical implementation of governmental policy absent con- cerns regarding the feasibility of the policy adoption in real-world political circumstances, so that teams may instead focus the debate on the desirability of policy effects. According to the policy-making frame, any Affirmative that refuses to offer a specific policy (a “plan”) implemented by the federal government to affirm the resolution is identified as violating the plan-based form and should be outright rejected with no consideration of the content of the arguments being made by the Affirmative (Greenstein 2009; Heidt 2003; O’Donnell 2004). Mimicking legal discourse, plan-based debate treats the resolution like a contract between competitors.

Rhetorician and legal scholar Marianne (Constable 2014) warns against the assumption of sociolegal positivism in the study of the law. Often understood as the study or practice of law in terms of the socio-empirical efficacy of policy, this “dominant scholarly account of law,” brackets out considerations of the performative nature of invocations of the law, the potential violence of rulemaking, and often disavows the law’s relationship to justice (Constable 2014, 10). A more robust rhe- torical account of law might, Constable argues, offer us “an alternative to grasping law as a system of rules, as policy making or problem solving, in terms of empirical impact, as state authority or power, or even as fundamentally violent” (10). The assumptive sociolegal positivism of debate’s policy-making paradigm not only secures stasis in debate by providing a supposedly common, default frame for contesting and evaluating constative propositions, it works like what Constable (2014) calls a “legal performative” that is disavowed as such. As we discussed in part 1, the many manifestations of sociolegal positivism in debate operate like the laying down of a civilizational imperative which must be continually reiterated, narrativized, and normativized as Law and as a bulwark against that which threatens its wor(l)d-order (Rodríguez 2021a). In this sense, even though there are no official rules that state one must **fiat** government action in the form of a plan text to be “topical” (a legit- imate example of the resolution), fiat takes on a **policing function** through the continual invocation of hegemonic, self-same, correspondent **argument techniques** including, but not limited to: **“fiat only”** procedural arguments against non-instrumentalist argument styles; “switch-sides debate” arguments that assume instrumentalism as the requirement for argumentative contestation; “topical versions of the affirmative” **(TVAs) where** so-called ‘traditional’ teams offer instrumental examples of **policy change** which promise to resolve proximate causes of antiblack harm to justify **assimilationist demands** and **exclusionary punishments** meted out to non-instrumentalist argument styles; hyper-privileging of technocratic definitions and analysis to border out alternative interpretations; and capitalistic, techno-strategic, and **game theory**-based evaluative frameworks and techniques, such as **“comparative advantage”** and standardized note-taking (‘flowing’). The continual invocation of socio-legal positivist heuristics, racial liberal dialectical frameworks, and critical-rational argumentation standards can together be understood as practices of law-making and law-enforcement that attempt to delimit the appropriate boundaries of debate’s civitas and attempt to subjectivize, discipline, and police the argumentative conduct of the activity’s participants.

**There is no language in any policy debate resolution which instructs participants on how to approach the resolutional statement. When participants assuming the policy-making paradigm treat the resolution like a contract, there is a slippage in what obligates argumentative assent to hegemonic norms**, as it is the conventional use of fiat (as practice and as rule) itself which authorizes the instrumentalist interpretation of the resolutional statement, which is then imagined as the originary site of a univocal meaning. In the context of competitive debate, the normative requirement for fiat is highly contested and racialized. **Black Debate participants regularly challenge the policy-making paradigm’s racial contract, arguing that its requirement for fiat narrows argument**ation **to statist, racist, classist, ableist, and/or cisheteropatriarchial considerations to the exclusion of more radical argumentative approaches.**

**Framework,** a popular Negative argumentative strategy in debate competition, **developed as a strategic response by plan-based/policy-making advocates to counter the ontological turn in debate. Framework generally argues that Affirmative teams must offer a plan that imagines** the hypothetical implementation of a **federal action consistent wit**h the terms of the resolution **(fiat). The repetitive nature of instrumentalism forms a carceral** logic of **containment, and its persistent use as a tactic of discipline and control over the parameters of acceptable argumentation mark it as a barrier to Black insurgent argumentation** (and all other alternative or radical thought, to varying degrees) (Peterson 2014; Reid-Brinkley 2020). Framework is a procedural issue, a juridical argument about whether the Affirmative should be adjudicated in the debate forum or whether the Affirmative argumentative approach is inappropriate or dangerous and should therefore not be adjudicated at all. As the conflict has grown between plan-based teams and those who refuse instrumentalism, framework arguments have also become useful to plan-based teams debating on the Affirmative as a means of avoiding Negative critiques grounded in structural analysis. 3 In other words, framework arguments that insist on policy-based analysis serve to block insurgent argumentation on both the Affirmative and Negative side of the debate. While generally the Negative side of the debate has at its disposal a diversity of argumentative strategies and methods because one is not bound by the prima facie burden of affirmation, the dialectical and iterative nature of instrumen- talism risks constraining critical argumentation even on the Negative. In the following section we analyze Michigan and Wake Forest’s contestations over argument burdens. Michigan uses framework argumentation to position Wake Forest as non-responsive to the Affirmative’s instrumentalist defense of the resolution, and therefore as failing to meet the Negative’s “burden of rejoinder,” or the Negative requirement to refute the desirability of the Affirmative case. Wake Forest challenges Michigan’s instru- mentalist standard for Affirmative and Negative burdens. Examining this excellent and exemplary debate elucidates the material and symbolic operations of racial liberalism masked behind conceits of argumentative neutrality, and the potential for Black insurgent argumentation and practice to forward alternative ways of being and knowing regularly pushed out of our rhetorical and argumentative frames.

Michigan, instrumentalism, and the burden of rejoinder

**Michigan** (2023) **opens the debate with a ‘traditional’ Affirmative plan: “The United States should vest legal duties in artificial intelligence that restrict its integration with nuclear systems, including automated launch capabilities.”** 4 **Michigan argues that the discussion should center around whether the U.S. should adopt the specific policy they have proposed, which they argue is necessary to avoid the likely pos- sibility of nuclear war, an extinction level event.** Michigan (2023) **further argues that the Negative’s advocacy for the Black Chorus is undesirable as decentering the Affirmative plan is “unpredictable because it’s not resolutionally based,” and it would be “unfair** [of the judges] to vote Negative without assessing” it.5 According to Michigan, the Negative’s failure to engage in policy-based analysis and refutation should be grounds for losing the debate. A failure to require the Negative to meet the normative burden of rejoinder would mean there is “no reason to debate” **because it “destroys clash” between clearly defined argumentative positions and “disincentivizes engagement”** (Michigan 2023). **Focusing on the Affirmative plan is therefore the best starting point for discussion and results in a fair exchange of ideas that “informs scholarship” and “motivates research”** (Michigan 2023). **For Michigan (2023), fairness (as they have defined it in relationship to the procedures for dialectical exchange under the policy-making paradigm) “is a prerequisite to introducing scholarship” in a competitive setting.**

It is common for Negative teams running critical arguments that problematize the representational, ideological, or philosophical investments of a plan-based Affirmative to also argue against privileging instrumentalist interpretations of debate. In such debates, plan-based Affirmative teams are likely to respond with accusations that the Negative has not sufficiently rejoined the Affirmative in order to shift the burden of explication back to the Negative. In this debate however, Michigan failed to accomplish this goal, at least according to the majority of the judges. We offer one possible explanation for why: that rather than “moot[ing] the case” (rendering the Affirmative arguments irrelevant in the debate) by failing to meet their burden of rejoinder as Michigan (2023) argues, Wake Forest instead engaged in an insurgent form of argumentative refusal. By shifting the locus of enunciation from the Affirmative’s political imaginary of racial liberalism to one of Black radicalism, Wake Forest deployed an innovative strategy of Black insurgent argument in their refusal of debate’s disavowed racial dialectic that opened the thoroughly sedimented and assumed protocols governing argument interaction up to contestation themselves. This more expansive refusal cut the grounding wire, so to speak, that secures the Affirmative’s presumptive “place” (and the Negative’s, and the judges’) in the (racial) dialectical movement toward resolution that is humanist agonistic debate (Kelsie 2019).

In both of Robinson’s speeches, he notes that plan-based debaters, particularly Michigan, often argue that they are not attempting to exclude antiblackness from being discussed. They just believe such discussions should occur only on the Negative side of the debate. **Yet, Robinson (2023) further contends that even when Black Debate reads critical arguments on the Negative, plan-based teams continue to reject engagement: “You told us to switch sides** [debate non-instrumentalism on the Negative] **and we fucking did! Yet, you still make arguments that you should not have to answer any of our arguments.”** The “you told us to **do it on the Neg**ative” argument raises a meta-question, not just for Michigan, but one posed to the broader community about its **unwillingness to engage Black Debate and the arguments and performances used to counter antiblack rhetorical violence within the community. If blackness cannot be affirmed on the Affirmative position on its own terms—that is, without being subject to the constraint of the policy-making paradigm which misrecognizes blackness—then where and when is the appropriate place and time to affirm blackness?** **The common refrain, “Do it on the Neg**ative**,” is a form of conditional inclusion that disavows the way dialectical engagement constrains and adjusts the parameters of how Black existence can be discussed through the terms and orders provided by the policy-based Affirmative.** While, according to the received norm of dialectical exchange under the policy-making paradigm, the Negative can marshal arguments about how aspects of the Affirmative plan lead to antiblack outcomes, that norm of dialectical exchange is revealed to be a racial dialectic of containment that narrows discussions of Black existence to recognition of Black suffering and the legible Black political subject, the acceptable terms of **Black existence** under the **racial liberal political imaginary.**

Though Michigan argues Wake Forest rejects the burden of **rejoinder**, Trotman and Robinson do respond to the Affirmative plan; however, they refuse to do so according to the terms and orders of instrumentalism and liberal racial dialectics. Wake Forest refuses to contest the Affirmative within the terms of policy-making instrumentalism. Instead, they critique it, by applying the resolution (the “rights and duties” which constitute legal personhood) to the debate community itself. Referring to Saidiya Hartman’s term “burdened individuality” (Hartman 1997, 314), Robinson (2023) argues that “Black people in the activity are doubly burdened before the **1AC** [first Affirmative speech] even starts” (Robinson 2023). Hartman’s (1997) analysis of the contradictions of Black citizenship in Reconstruction forwards a critique of formal equality and **procedural fairness** as techniques which **render Black personhood oxymoronic** to the present day. Wake Forest applies Hartman’s analysis to the context of debate to further argue that legal personhood is a racial technology which is not only endorsed by Michigan’s Affirmative case and reiterated in their contractual framing of debate burdens, but which also is present in the debate round and in the activity’s community. Wake Forest’s accusation that the **policy-making** paradigm and those deputized to secure its presumptive and normative status are implicated in its **violent effects**, produces an affect of emergency that “overrides the question” of whether they have sufficiently engaged in the “proper,” instrumental form of refutation (Rodríguez 2021b, 152). Robinson (2023) argues, “Michigan’s model of debate assumes that instrumentality is the only way and rejects the ability for us to constitutively analyze the way antiblackness enacted through the law is embodied as well in debate because Black personhood experiences the materiality of extralegal violence.” Wake Forest argues that the law is not an abstraction far away in courtrooms and legislative chambers but is rather present in everyday life, affecting who can participate and how, despite claims of formal equality and fairness in the activity. **Antiblack micro**- and **macro-aggressions** in the activity are not merely the result of bad actors. The prevalence with which **Black debaters** are targeted, by the police or with their aid, are accused of cheating or bullying or harassment, are neglected or under-coached, are surveilled, and so on, indicates a **racialized difference** in debate participants’ relationships to and comfortability with law, formal and informal. The **instrumentalist** frame is likewise not merely a heuristic for situating and evaluating argument but is a technology for distributing and enforcing the sensible. As Wake Forest argues, **instrumentalism frames out the tactics of Black insurgent argument, creating argumentative and community barriers to participation** (Peterson 2014).

Under the constraint of this enclosure that burdens Black debaters “before the 1AC even starts” (Robinson 2023), Wake Forest subverts the racial dialectic through a Black performance of “affirmation in and through negation” (Moten 2018, v) found in the Black radical tradition. Wake Forest debates from a relation of exteriority to the racial dialectic rather than from within the racial dialectic—which is to say that rather than assume the normative Negative position in the debate, Wake Forest assumes the Negative apposition in this debate. Disrupting the racial dialectic, Wake Forest calls for an affirmation of blackness, forwarding what seems to be a propo- sitional statement that shifts the competitive burden of the debate: “Instead of the [Affirmative’s] instrumentalization of duties and rights, we should affirm a duty that this activity has to the Black Chorus” (Trotman 2023). Who is the “we” that should affirm this duty to the Black Chorus? Wake Forest’s proposition cuts itself, or maybe we could say that the Black Chorus cuts the proposition, disarticulating the presumed correspondence between “we” and “this activity” as univocal (even if plural) entities. As a normative proposition, the counter-advocacy is addressed to the judges, put forward as a proposed plan of action to be endorsed. As proposition, the counter-advocacy is also a petition to “the activity,” to the community that has not granted full membership to Black Debate. In the register of the call however, “we” and “this activity” draw a relation to the constitutive outside of the racial dialectic of inclusion/exclusion, becoming unsettled multivocal socialites made fugitive. In the form of the call, Wake Forest announces the Black Chorus’ (already existing) open invitation to Michigan, the judges, and the settled members of a settled, uni- vocal activity, to reconsider their repetition of the antiblack practices associated with instrumentalism. We must keep in mind however that the call (always) already has a response which preceded it. In that sense, the “we” is also Wake Forest, the par- ticipatory audience, and all those (present and not present) who precede and respond to the call, whose cacophonous movement in this round rehearses the affirmation of the Black Chorus anew. Wake Forest does not need the judges nor Michigan to “endorse” the Black Chorus for it to be affirmed. It is already being affirmed, in a modality that is unregistered within the constraints of normative argumentation, right in front of everyone’s eyes. It is affirmed in the doing of it, in the becoming undone by the mode of relationality to which it calls us. Thus, Wake Forest argues that their mode of **debating** cannot be **constrained** to **competitive incentive**. With little faith that the judges can (or will) fully and fairly adjudicate the modes of argumentation set before them, Wake Forest locates in the debate higher stakes than what the ballot (which represents the judges’ decisions) can normatively signify. Regardless of the judges’ decisions, the ballot will not resolve Wake Forest’s argu- mentative movement as it will for Michigan. Wake Forest’s demand that we affirm a duty to the Black Chorus “do[es] not pivot on the juridical feasibility of the accusation and charge, nor [does it] rely on the… (incomplete) capacity to bring definitive legibility to the suffering and casualties of populations and bodies targeted for systemic vulnerability” (Rodríguez 2021b, 152). The ballot may signal the end of this particular debate, but the Chorus that is enacted will go on regardless. For Wake Forest, the real production of this **debate** is not the ballot, but the **performance** itself: **the guerilla enactment of insurgent being and knowing that is Black radical praxis.**

1. **Gara 61** [Larry. "The Underground Railroad: Legend or Reality?." Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 105.3 (1961): 334-339] cmeow [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **Colarossi 24** [Alessandro Colarossi is a Technical Consultant from Toronto. He has a BA in Philosophy from York University, and an Advanced Diploma in Systems Analysis from Sheridan College, Toronto. “The Philosophy of Work”, <https://philosophynow.org/issues/160/The_Philosophy_of_Work>] cmeow [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **Watson 21** (Travis Watson is the creator of ADOSConstruction.org and chair of the Boston Employment Commission (BEC). Appointed by former Boston mayor and current US Department of Labor Secretary Martin J. Walsh, the BEC oversees the Boston Residents Jobs Policy, which sets employment standards on city-assisted construction projects) “Union Construction’s Racial Equity and Inclusion Charade”, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/union\_constructions\_racial\_equity\_and\_inclusion\_charade#, Jun 14, 2021, DM [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **Goffe 22** [Goffe, Tao Leigh. "Stolen life, stolen time: Black temporality, speculation, and racial capitalism." South Atlantic Quarterly121.1 (2022): 109-130.] cmeow [↑](#footnote-ref-5)