## Case

### Overview

#### Trying to forbid words is politically useless – we should activate the contradictory meanings within even the most dangerous words to use them against their conventional meaning. This is the most effective opening for changing political discourse.

David **WOOD** Philosophy @ Vanderbilt **’99** in *Animal Others* ed. H. Peter Steeves p. 23-24

The relation between responsibility and language is an enduring theme for this tradition on many levels. It is a central issue, for example, in judging Heidegger's now infamous "Rectoral Address. Our first dismay is at what he is saying, our second at his saying it. But perhaps the lingering worry is about his willingness to use a language we had thought of as bound up with the project of reinterpreting the texts of the tradition for overtly political purposes. The Other Heading raises this question about Derrida. When he writes it is necessary to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe.. ." it is not difficult to feel a certain astonishment. But what Derrida has done is to enter the realm of public discourse by converting the old principle of writing under erasure into an insistence on bringing to the surface the aporetic structure of central philosophical concepts. Instead of new words, or old words with displaced meanings, Derrida works to develop the contradictory implications of concepts central to the tradition. Responsibility is one of these concepts, and like -justice- it is privileged in being able to guide our very reception of it. When Derrida writes 'Now, we must ourselves be responsible for this discourse of the modem tradition, he is of course putting a weight on a word that is part of the modern tradition. When he writes 'we bear the responsibility for this heritage,\* his words are inseparable from the tradition itself. Responsibility is obligation, burden, duty, etc. No words are forbidden, if ever they were. Indeed, if anything, Derrida is increasingly willing to draw the most traditional words within his embrace-because it is the disturbing embrace of ax-appropriation, of dislocation. For each word he chooses, deconstruction. will be its undoing and its restoration as a word with which to think. The word "responsibility" is a case in point; there could be no more potent entrance into ethical and political discourse.

## K

### AT: K – O/V

### \*\*Fiat – 2AC

### Top

#### Debtor identity results in racialized constructions of Black debtors. Finishing Zack from 1AC.

Naomi Zack 16, Professor of Philosophy at University of Oregon, PhD in Philosophy from Columbia University 1970, curator of Philosophical Installations website, "The Discourse of Political Activism," Applicative Justice: A Pragmatic Empirical Approach to Racial Injustice, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, pp. 145–174

\*\*\*Beginning of card sent out in 1AC\*\*\*

before philosophers and other theorists could formulate their own disciplinary interpretations. It may be simpler and more conclusive to approach this issue of permanent-status-through-change by starting fresh with present power and status differences.

When Alexander calls the present racially biased prison system “the new Jim Crow,” she adds that she does not mean to draw a literal comparison, but to write metaphorically.” This raises the question of why we need a metaphor that invokes the past to describe present conditions that are well studied by contemporary social scientists, with events reported by journalists and recorded on video, as they occur. What would happen if we simply stayed with our current best descriptions and attempted to theorize them? One result might be to shift the discourse from a somewhat rigid idea of types of events, a kind of essentializing of history, to the use of more recent tools involving the idea of social construction.

It’s already well accepted within the academy that biological human racial divisions, as well as their social meanings, were constructed in the past.24 We also know that biological foundations for human races are now repudiated in the same scientific fields that invented them. That knowledge supports recognition of racial construction within society, which was explicitly based on assumed biological determinism in the past. Indeed, one indication of a lack of biological foundation for racial taxonomies in society is the historical and geographic variation of the epistemology of social race. Thus, for example, before they were assimilated into the middle class, Europeans who were Irish, Italian, Jewish, Finnish, Polish, and even German, were not considered white; the ethnic category of Hispanic/Latino was created by the US census and has since been regarded as a race or at least an object of racism; Middle Eastern Americans came to be identified as a nonwhite racial group after 9/11; mixed black and white people are conventionally identified as black. Such social construction of race has always been closely associated with citizenship rights and social status and it has been maintained and changed for changing political and economic purposes.”

Race and racial divisions should be viewed as constantly “under construction.” Dominant groups may reiterate some general ideas based on their knowledge of history, but their present focus is always on their present goals for dominance. Race as it has been known, and as we continue to know it, is a dynamic process. Consider, for example, Richard Nixon’s reported intentions to appeal to white racists, with language that would not explicitly mention blacks or other nonwhites. The social construction of black men as criminals that has accompanied broad public acceptance of police racial profiling, as well as the racial imbalance in incarceration, has its origins in this early 1970s political rhetoric and policy. That is, our present form of the social construction of black men started as a relatively new, post-civil rights movement strategy for getting votes. This is not to say that the strategy had not been successfully used before then, for instance, as Alexander notes, in extinguishing the late nineteenth-century populist movement.2° But it was a new political strategy for the 1970s. And all that was required to sustain it from then on was a steady increase in the funding and construction of the infrastructure supporting it, and occasional ideological revitalization. For example, in the 1988 presidential campaign, George H. W. Bush used against Michael Dukakis, his Democratic opponent, the example of William “Willie” Horton, a convicted first-degree murderer. Horton committed rape and assault when released on furlough during Dukakis’s second term as governor of Massachusetts. In his first term as governor, Dukakis had vetoed a bill that would have stopped furloughs for first-degree murderers. Ergo, Dukakis was portrayed as “soft on crime,” and Bush won the election. 27

If we view the social construction of race as an ongoing dynamic process, we need to understand that Nixon and H. W. Bush were not merely manipulating existing public fears about black men, but fanning them, exacerbating them, and giving them new faces—faces from their time, not faces from the late nineteenth century—and in that process reconstructing race. They were not turning the clock back to the beginning of a new era of Jim Crow (no matter how metaphorically that may be understood) but moving forward with new ideas about black male identity. Of course, these ideas were not difficult to “sell” because the paradigm case of black manhood they held up was genuinely scary and the mass of economically insecure white voters was already predisposed to accept a racist ideology. But “predisposed” does not mean “predetermined.”

The construction of the idea of the late twentieth-century black male ghetto dweller as an inherently dangerous and later crack-crazed maniac was a newly constructed stereotype. It prompted a whole new generation of nonblack women to clutch their purses when a black man stepped onto elevators with them, and signaled everyone else to click their car doors into “locked” when they saw a black man advancing down the street.28 In turn, these attitudes can be viewed as antecedents to acceptance of the legality of recent high profile cases of police homicide following attempted stops and frisks of unarmed young African American men. Overall, such stereotypes support the criminalization of black male bodies in the public imaginary because those bodies have become icons—they both symbolize criminals and are perceived as physically dangerous.

That Willie Horton, who was a violent black male criminal, became the face of black male crime and not any one of hundreds of thousands other black men, who had already been incarcerated for possession of small amounts of marijuana or cocaine, meant and continues to mean, that the preoccupation with crime in America is a focus on physical crime. There is now a prevailing impression that “crime” means “physical violence,” so that “white-collar crime” (a term now out of date sartorially) is not viewed as truly dangerous. And physical crime is imagined to be mainly perpetrated by black men, an association so strong that being a criminal has become part of the casual identity of being a black male. The quotidian phenomenology of that new construction of race for all black men, especially poor black youth, is nothing less than the phenomenology of traumatic encounters with bullies against whom the victim cannot win—f the victim tries to win, he can be killed by police officers, with impunity. °

I suggest that we view the post—civil rights movement association of crime with African American men and boys as a new construction of race. Alexander names this construction “criminalblackman,”\*° but does not sufficiently treat it as a new racial construction. She is aware that something new has occurred, but she views it as an attribute of crime, rather than a reconstruction of black maleness: “For black men, the stigma of being a ‘criminal’ in the era of mass incarceration is fundamentally a racial stigma. ... Whiteness mitigates crime, whereas blackness defines the criminal.”3! Alexander does not tell us what she means by the preexisting “blackness” that defines the criminal. There is no preexisting blackness, except for dark skin and poverty. In this case, “criminal” defines and constructs blackness. And that is why the almost 70 percent of African Americans who are black, but not poor, also suffer from this new construction of “criminalblackman.”

Such slanderous characterizations of an entire group as dangerously criminal do not directly result from the financial and economic structures of a system of global capitalism, descending like the forefinger of God to shape the minds of the white populace. They are opportunistically discovered by politicians seeking votes, based on their assumptions that their highest good is getting elected, instead of getting elected for the right reasons. (It should go without saying that such politicians cannot be presumed to believe what they say in order to get people to vote for them.) If the politicians get elected, they try out a few new programs. If those on whom the programs are inflicted (e.g., the victims of Reagan’s War on Drugs that followed a general valorization of “law and order’) are already vulnerable to government power and the rest of the population is not vigilant about everyone's rights, the programs succeed and their growth accelerates in new times of crisis. Such programs will only work if they are able to intersect with existing or burgeoning corporate interests, in this case, private prison contractors. If the intersection “takes,” then soon enough, a criminal justice system such as the one in place is the historical result. It is a historical result because it developed over time and at many different stages its present state could not have been predicted with a high degree of probability. It may therefore be an unduly Manichean use of history to view such a system as a deliberate design by the ultimate architects of global corporate capitalism.

That is not to say that individuals, especially poor and nonwhite people, do not encounter the present criminal justice system as both real and unyielding. And it is not to overlook the jobs provided to law enforcement officers, prison personnel, and civilians who prosper from the economic stimulus of prisons in their locales.32 In addition, we should be concerned about Alexander’s account of the dire consequences for eligibility for government aid and prospective employment, as well as loss of personal and familial regard, suffered by contemporary felons. Once convicted, or sometimes, even only arrested for minor drug offenses, the poor and especially black victims of this system become branded as lifelong criminals. They are usually barred from both jury duty and voting and are precluded from ever fully rejoining respectable society. Their inability to vote in geographical areas with large poor black populations can tip the results of key elections. Most of the victims and fearful observers are now accustomed to this system, their habits settled within and outside it, as though it were completely natural, “just the way things are.”®’ These are terrible conditions of existence for millions of poor black people. However, the question is not whether or not they are related to larger historical trends, which they without question are, but whether the most effective way to address them via activist discourse is to take on the big global picture or focus on comparative ways in which American blacks and whites, poor and middle class, are treated by their—everyone’s—government.

### Alt Fails---2AC

#### The alternative fails:

#### 1. Revealing the social contingency of money is insufficient to rob money of its power. Debt cannot be escaped, only abolished collectively.

Hannah Appel 15, University of California, Los Angeles, "The idea life of money and poststructural realism," HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory, vol. 5, no. 2, 2015

Monetary realism is the idea that money is a thing, an “objective entity whose value is independent of social and political relations” (Dodd 2014: 386). Classic forms of monetary realism argue that money derives its value from an underlying referent, whether gold, state power, or supply and demand. Realism, as Dodd puts it, “seeks to capture value’s truth” (198). Monetary realism is constantly with us, not only in the gold bugs who bemoan the post–gold standard era, but also in mainstream rhetoric like “debt ceiling” and “fiscal cliff.” These phrases “sustain the illusion that money is a thing: an entity that can be acquired, accumulated, and stored up, ergo, something a country simply runs out of ” (386), rather than a wide variety of present possibilities. Money is something that banks, for instance, produce at will, or at the keystroke that confirms a loan. Money is arguably something that is made present by public debt, not absent (387). Money, in the form of Bitcoin, is something that can be mined by computers and verified through block chains.

The classical nineteenth century view of money “as a radical leveler that bleaches all color from the world and corrodes every distinction it encounters” (Dodd 2014: 270) is an adjacent kind of monetary realism. Both orthodox approaches from economics (Menger) or heterodox approaches from modernist critics (Marx, Simmel) (271), share a realist doxa—money as ontologically singular, homogenous and homogenizing, for good or for ill.

Dodd’s argument about sociality and multiplicity counters these forms of realism, drawing on two related strains of critical theory. The first strain, directed against the thingness and referentiality of monetary realism, includes thinkers like Derrida or Baudrillard, and ideas about counterfeit and simulacra, finance as the endless play of signifiers that have lost their signs, and circulation adrift from underlying value. In the second line of thought, directed against modernist claims that money corrodes everything it touches, we get literature from anthropology and sociology, “which advances the view that money is richly embedded in and shaped by its social and cultural context” (Dodd 2014: 271). Here Dodd draws on the work of Zelizer and Guyer, Hart, Maurer, and Peebles, among others, and this is clearly the line of thinking with which he feels the closest kinship. It is from these texts that we get ideas about money as process, culture as constitutive of money forms rather than merely an external influence, money as a repertoire of scales, asymmetrical exchanges, and as an instrument of collective memory. Insofar as these arguments emphasize money’s multiplicity and constitutive sociality, they “are crucial to our broader assessment of money’s capacity for reinvention” (272).

I want to pause here to express a general anxiety about the work we imagine theory to be doing in the world. My anxiety does not take the form of a critique of Dodd, who I think might agree with me, but rather, “wary of critique, weary of it,” I seek to escape critique and retreat “into the external world” (Harney and Moten 2013: 38). Here’s my worry: In our deconstructive mood, anthropology and critical theory more broadly can seem to suggest that, in showing money to be multiple, flexible, and capacious, we have then somehow undone its power; that this mere theoretical assertion has actually undone the “real” power of money in the world. And yet, despite all that deconstructive work, we are all, differentially, still stuck with both humdrum and deeply compromised decisions about, and capitulations to, money’s hegemonic forms—minimum wage, no wage, 401ks, payday lenders, student debt, criminal justice debt. At issue here is a simultaneity. On the one hand we have an empirical insight: money is a protean process. (For the record, I agree.) On the other hand, we have the fact that money can and often does act as a brutal singularity. Analogies with deconstructive work on race or the state or gender come immediately to mind. To call race a social construction is, on the one hand true, and on the other hand, a tragically inadequate account of often-violently real experiences of racialization. Money, like race or the state, can still seem to act as an unassailable singularity. A thing.

For the great majority of people and certainly for my fledgling family, money does not feel playful or even like a repertoire. Laboring under $70K of student debt, a mere principal amount subject to the “miracle” of compound interest (Dodd 2014: 147), money is too real and too scarce, even with my (too rare) tenure-track job. Dodd acknowledges the particular form of postcrisis realism to which this gestures, noting that “it will be increasingly difficult for individuals to sever their links with mainstream finance, particularly when they are drawn into financial obligations as debtors from an increasingly early age, for example, as students” (393). With Ferguson, Missouri making twenty-one percent of its municipal budget off of criminal justice fines (and incarcerating those who cannot pay, Shapiro [2015]; ArchCity Defenders [2014]) one could add criminal justice debtors, or medical debtors (the primary contributing factor of bankruptcy in the United States) to Dodd’s insight.

Here, I am not only gesturing to a postcrisis “reversion” to realism (Dodd 2014: 198; Roitman 2013), but toward the ambivalence, the two-ness of money as a lived practice—its obduracy and its contingency, its inescapable thingness and its processual slipperiness. The real of money’s social life, indeed of social life at all, is made of both. Holding these analytic poles in tension, as equally empirically true in the world, asks us to account for their copresence. How is it that both can be true? It is in this sense that I gesture toward a poststructural realism in which structure, underlying referents (foreclosed home to mortgage backed security), morality—all associated with monetary-realism—are not mere theoretical choices (am I a monetary realist or not?) but lived experiences and political projects that constitute the social life of money.

Despite my own experience with money as singularly powerful, I also know it to be subject to experiment and rupture, both theoretically and practically. I have been involved with various forms of radical experiment in the space those convictions open up (Appel 2014), and Dodd cites one of these projects—The Rolling Jubilee (2014: 201–2). A too-simple reading of his argument (and one he explicitly anticipates, 272) might allow us to imagine the experiments enabled by money’s multiplicity as idyllic spaces of creativity, self-realization, solidarity, and potential. Of course there’s some of that, but the work of experiment and reimagining, especially when it takes place around something so central to the exercise of power as money, is beset with compromise, conflict, risk, uneven vulnerability, and even violence. Experiment and rupture often sound romantic in intellectual endeavor, but the projects with which I’m involved most often feel burdensome (so much work!) when they don’t feel downright frightening, coming as they do with serious, unequally distributed consequences. A quick ethnographic glimpse at the Rolling Jubilee, the Strike Debt project from which it came, and the Debt Collective/debtors union project toward which it is moving, gives a sense of the simultaneity at issue here—a new real in which money’s realist forms (indexed to state power, for instance) endure as political projects (not theoretical truths) alongside money’s capacious potential.

Strike Debt, Rolling Jubilee, and the Debt Collective have clear theoretical genealogies in the vast literature Dodd analyzes—somewhere between Norman Brown and Benjamin’s conviction that the debtor “eventually gathers the presence of mind, and sufficient courage, to default” (Dodd 2014: 158) and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s argument that, “in the age of global capital it is through finance … that the multitude could assume its economically most radical forms… . Finance is a vast realm in which we can track down the specters of the commons” (248–49). The Rolling Jubilee buys distressed medical debt and private student debt for pennies on the dollar on secondary markets (as debt collectors do) but rather than collecting on that portfolio, abolishes it. As of this writing (March 2015) Rolling Jubilee has abolished $31,982,455.76 (USD) of distressed debt, thanks to the shocking leverage ratios of secondary debt markets, and more recently, a small ethical earthquake in the for-profit college debt market.

So what does the Rolling Jubilee do? Certainly it provides relief to a handful of those struggling with medical debt and private student loan debt. But our end game is not to crowd-source away illegitimate debt, which would be both politically undesirable and impossible. Rather, the Rolling Jubilee is a spectacular tactic—literally a spectacle that begins to draw attention to the ways debt circulates in widening gyres of accumulation by dispossession. The project shows people that the market value of their debt fluctuates radically, and can plummet to two percent of its value on the assumption that debtors are unaware of distressed debt markets, and always imagine that they must pay the debt collector one hundred percent or more. Debtors often understand debts as a dyadic and indeed personal relationship between debtor and creditor: the creditor lent to me, and I am contractually and morally obligated to repay (Dodd 2014: 90–94). But this dyadic image is misleading. These forms of debt are not intimate relationships between debtor and creditor. As Dick Bryan and Michael Rafferty (2010), among others, remind us, debt is not only a liability but also a tradable asset, a potential piece of a larger security, even fodder for lobbying power, as failing US banks made all too clear. Thus the Rolling Jubilee also encourages debtors to question the sanctity of the contract. Following debt’s rhizomic paths, the project begins to pry open the creditor/debtor dyad, showing debts’ proliferative form that to date, only creditors have been able to exploit. Again, as a tactic for building collective power this project is limited, but insofar as it begins to destabilize the sedimented moralities around consumer debt—that contracts are sacred, that everyone is equally obligated to pay their debts—it begins to erode some of the enduring realisms of the money form.

I intentionally “come out” about my family’s debt in this piece because the effort to reframe debt into a platform for collective action is as much an affective and intersubjective process as it is a process of political economic analysis. Indeed, countless debtors contact Rolling Jubilee and the Debt Collective, and each narrates a story of seemingly exceptional exploitation and pathos: chemotherapy treatment made mortgage payments impossible and the house was foreclosed as I lay sick in bed; my student loan debt ballooned as I worked an unpaid internship and a parttime minimum wage job and I’m unable to pay off even the compounding interest. But of course these stories are not exceptional but ordinary. As Robert Meister argues (2013), today credit is as important a source of revenue for workers as wages and debt repayment is just as important to capital accumulation as taxation. “Just as the expansion of commodity production once required the global growth of labor force participation, so the expansion of financial asset production now requires the global growth of forms of indebtedness that are the social conditions of capital accumulation as we know it.” With this shift, Meister points out, the financial sector has come to intermediate access to our means of subsistence—food, shelter, medical care, education—through debt. We fail to realize the radical potential of this collective shift in part because debt remains private and shameful. Debt is afraid to pick up the phone or open the mail; debt is groceries on the credit card or the payday loan rolling over. Debt is not, Hi, I’m Hannah and my debt is potentially radical.

The political endgame then is in collectivizing and mobilizing the leverage debtors currently have over the financial system. As the old banking adage has it, if you owe the bank one thousand dollars, the bank owns you, but if you owe the bank one million dollars, you own the bank. Student debt alone now tops $1.3 trillion. We launched our first debt collective—the Corinthian 15—in February 2015. A group of deeply indebted former students of Corinthian Colleges Inc. (a fraudulent and predatory for-profit college that targeted veterans, single mothers, and the poor) made public their collective decision not to pay back federal student loans. “To the Department of Education and to the lenders, servicers, and guarantee agencies who have stolen our futures, we say: enough! Erase these loans” (https://www. debtcollective.org/studentstrike).

The Corinthian 15 strike took off like wildfire. Everyone from the New Yorker to Black Agenda Report to Newsweek covered it; within a week nearly one thousand additional current and former Corinthian students contacted us to join the strike, while thousands more debtors got in touch with the Debt Collective to see how they too might organize around their debts. Creativity! Self-realization! Solidarity! Sure, there is some of that. But there are also the specters of wage garnishment, tax return garnishment, social security garnishment for cosigners, trashed credit scores, and with them, difficulty accessing public housing, utilities, let alone further loans down the road. All of the Debt Collective strikers go through an in-depth intake process to assess their specific situation and to talk through the potential ramifications of their decisions. We also offer a suite of tactics that don’t run the same risks of financial disobedience. But the risks of financial disobedience, the risks of experimentation, are real. (As are the countless and mostly tedious hours spent in meetings, on email, on phone calls, and in Google Docs hashing out details, reading inscrutable loan documentation, writing web or media copy.)

What is the relationship of the idea life of money to this particular account of the social life of money? Ideally of course, the former infuses, emboldens, destabilizes the latter, and vice versa, but in my own straddling of these worlds that relationship has felt more tenuous. In response to the endless letters and emails from debtors, more than anything, those of us who are “experimenting” are faced with our profound inability to address their problems. Having read (and intensely enjoyed) Dodd’s excellent book, having a PhD in economic anthropology, having sat in and organized countless seminars where people talk rigorously but somehow also idly about the perils of capitalism, I can’t help but fantasize about a different real, in which our intellectual work could both recognize monetary realism as an often-successful political project and incite lived senses of rupture and possibility for those who pour their lives (and debts) into our inboxes:

Dear [Deleuze],

After years of stress and anguish under the strain of outstanding student debt (171K, most of which is interest on 25K original debt), I have come to the realization that the only way my debt will ever be $0 is if I am dead. I am 55 years old and will never be able to repay it myself. I need to die to have the debt cancelled. Only then will my family be free of the unbearable and crushing debt we live with. I have two disabled adult children who depend heavily on me and I can’t support them and make the student loan payments both. Thank you for your efforts in helping people with student and medical debt, though it is too late for me. God Bless you greatly!

I am not asking theory to be practical, or to be applied. I am not asking Deleuze to return the letter. Rather, I am asking us to harbor no illusions about the work theory does in the world; the work it does and does not do when confronted with the world. The social life of money knows no distinction between political projects of money’s realness, and the empirical validity of arguments for multiplicity and potential. I am asking for theory that accounts for that.

#### 2. Refusal of solidarity condemns us to fascism by fracturing power and individualizing responsibility. Struggle in solidarity remakes subjects as contingent members of communities of common cause.

Naomi Klein 23, Associate Professor at University of British Columbia and Honorary Professor at Rutgers University, award-winning journalist, documentary filmmaker, New York Times bestselling author, founding codirector of UBC's Centre for Climate Justice, Sydney Peace Prize recipient, Emmy nominee, "Unselfing," Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World, pp. 301-324

That, I concede, is far too neat an ending to this story. If performing and partitioning and projecting are all techniques of avoiding the Shadow Lands, then neither Buddhist detachment nor Freudian integration of the unconscious is enough to help us confront that which we have been avoiding. Our crises are material and profoundly collective, and so, ultimately, we will be able to bear unbearable realities only if we also work to change them. That means we must take action (Action! Action!) to make the world different from the way it is now. We must attempt, with great urgency, to imagine a world that does not require Shadow Lands, that is not predicated on sacrificial people and sacrificial ecologies and sacrificial continents. More than imagine it, we must begin, at once, to build it.

This starts with naming, as bell hooks always did, the systems that have carved out the Shadow Lands, deemed them erasable, disposable: capitalism, imperialism, white supremacy, patriarchy. It requires teaching those words, and their true meanings, to the people in our lives, so that the next time someone tells them that their suffering and burdens are all the fault of child-stealing globalists, or job-stealing immigrants, or well- meaning teachers, or the Jews or the Chinese or the drag queens at the library, they will know better. And they will be able to fight better. “We can be hard and critical on structures, but soft on people,” says the civil rights scholar john a. powell. That is the opposite of the discourse that dominates today, the one that is so very hard on people and far too soft on structures.

The shift to confronting and reimagining structures requires something else: a recognition that this work is not something we can do on our own, as individuals, with a charity donation or an equity and diversity training, or a performance of virtue on social media. Indeed, a central reason why so many of us cannot bear to look at the Shadow Lands is that we live in a culture that tells us to fix massive crises on our own, through self improvement. Support labor rights by ordering from a different store. End racism by battling your personal white fragility—or by representing your marginalized identity group in elite spaces. Solve climate change with an electric car. Transcend your ego with a meditation app.

Some of it will help—a bit. But the truth is that nothing of much consequence in the face of our rigged systems can be accomplished on our own—whether by our own small selves or even by our own identity groups. Change requires collaboration and coalition, even (especially) uncomfortable coalition. Mariame Kaba, a longtime prison abolitionist who has done as much as anyone to imagine what it would take to live in a world that does not equate safety with police and cages, puts the lesson succinctly, one passed on to her by her father: “Everything worthwhile is done with other people.”

If our situation seems uniquely challenging (and on bad days, borderline hopeless), it likely has to do with how much we have come to expect from our individual selves combined with the brokenness of structures—trade unions, close-knit neighborhoods, functioning local media, and so on—that once made it easier to do things together. It’s our fragmentation that daunts us, as much as the challenges themselves.

And yet even in these unstable times, I do think it’s possible to overcome some of that fragmentation, and to weave ourselves together in new ways. The wave of unconventional union organizing at corporations like Amazon and Starbucks shows that many young workers are already figuring out those new ways. Same goes for the movements organizing debtors into quasi-unions, like the Debt Collective, as well as the unions for tenants and unhoused people that have formed in many gentrified cities that have allowed rents to soar to impossible heights. Elon Musk’s overnight transformation of Twitter into his personal vendetta machine did wonders to make the case for why we cannot leave our vital information ecology to the whims of billionaires and must, instead, invest in communal alternatives, ones that are not based on mining our data by encouraging our worst selves. These are all good signs. But none of these changes will happen fast enough until more of us figure out how to soften the borders around our individual selves and around our various identity groups to allow for a coming together in common cause.

Are we capable of it? Doppelgangers, by eliciting such contradictory emotions, warn us that it will be a struggle. On the one hand, there is the horror at a lack of uniqueness and singularity; on the other, the deep desire to connect, to merge into others, to feel the edges of the self dissolve. With or without doppelgangers, most of us experience the push and pull of these emotions, as individuals and as members of groups: we want separation and distinctness, and we want unity and community. The tension is fruitful and does not need to be resolved. The problem lies in the fact that our culture is so biased toward one tendency over the other. It’s the scramble for separateness that is richly rewarded and encouraged in our zero-sum economy, while the urge to act in solidarity and mutual aid with others is discounted and disappeared, when not being actively punished.

This bias against solidarity is particularly dangerous in our present moment, as our various fascist doppelgangers grow bolder by the day. The supremacist, annihilatory logic was never truly confronted, and now supermarkets and Walmarts and mosques and synagogues are being turned into slaughterhouses by young men with guns who are convinced that someone is trying to “replace” them. And it’s surging along the diagonal lines that connect the people with ideas about the supremacy of their race to the people with fixations about the supremacy of their immune systems and the perfection of their kids.

In the face of these very tangible threats, fiercely defending the borders of our identities, and the borders of our broader ethnic/racial/gender identity groups, is serving us all poorly. Indeed, if history is any guide, it will be our undoing. Because every story of triumph for the fascist right is also a story of fragmentation, sectarianism, and stubborn refusal to make strategic alliances on the anti-fascist left.

Conspiracy theories, as we have seen, are both symptoms of confusion and powerlessness and tools of division and distraction that benefit elites. But conspiracy theories are far from the only things that keep us divided; so, at times, are the ways we have learned to understand our own victimization, and the way it may or may not relate to the victimization of others. Arielle Angel, editor in chief of Jewish Currents and a descendent of Holocaust survivors, wrote powerfully about this recently:

These days, I feel the threat of fascism humming in my body like a once-broken bone before the rain. It is a bequest from the pain of my grandparents, for better or worse, and perhaps from further ancestors, who fled the fanatical Spanish monarchs and priests. In living rooms and pitch meetings, as the protest or party winds down, my comrades and I debate the relative merit of one strategy over another, while conceding that none look particularly promising. But what is clear is this: We are going to need each other. This means staying attuned to the possibility of a collective power, instead of attached to a proprietary pain.

That is one overarching message I choose to take at the end of my doppelganger journey: time to loosen the grip on various forms of proprietary pain and selfhood, and reach toward many different forms of possible connection and kin, toward anyone who shares a desire to confront the forces of annihilation and extermination and their mindsets of purity and perfection. Faced with the ultimate doppelganger threat—the flip into fascism that is already well underway in many parts of the world—this ability to melt some of the hard, icy edges of identity, however well earned those defenses may be, will be important to any hope we have of success. It will not be enough to protect “our” people; we will need to have the stamina of true solidarity, which defines “our people” as “all people.”

This kind of universalism is hard. There are so many perfectly good reasons for people on the broadly defined left to be fed up, angry, and disappointed with one another, and to latch onto those disappointments to rationalize splintering into smaller and smaller groups. But when power and wealth and weaponry and information technology are concentrated in so few hands, and those hands are willing to deploy them for the most venal and reckless of ends, splintering is tantamount to surrender. Up against oligarchy, all we have is the power latent in our capacity to unite. Race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and nationality shape our distinct needs, experiences, and historical debts. We must hold on to those realities and build on a shared interest in challenging concentrated power and wealth, while constructing new structures that are infinitely more fair, and more fun.

Most tasks are easier said than done. In the case of coming together across seemingly intractable barriers, however, the reverse may be true: this one is easier done than said. Stuck in the realm of words, we will never run out of reasons to fracture. But when we take action to change material circumstances—whether trying to unionize our workplaces, or halt evictions, or free political prisoners, or build alternatives to policing, or stop a pipeline, or get an insurgent candidate elected—those tensions do not disappear, but they are often balanced by the recognition of shared interests, the pleasures of camaraderie, and, occasionally, the thrill of victory.

It’s more than that, too, as Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor said to me recently. Drawing on her research as a historian, as well her own experiences as an activist, she pointed out that movements change the people who participate in them. “Struggle helps us see each other,” she said. “It helps us break from our individualism and the particularities of our identities.” When individuals organize toward a goal, they discover not only that they share interests with people who might look (and vote) very differently from them but also that a new sense of power flows from this alliance. “The struggles we engage in create the potential and possibilities of uniting because it clarifies what’s at stake and how we might overcome it,” Taylor explained.

This echoes a point made by John Berger in a 1968 essay about the alchemy of large protests, strikes, rallies, and sit-ins. These demonstrations, Berger wrote, don’t just demonstrate something to those in power (that people are angry, say, and have the power to disrupt the smooth flow of business). They also demonstrate something to the people gathered on the streets. Those people come to realize that they are not merely individuals, with the limited power of their individual selves, but that “they belong to a class. Belonging to that class ceases to imply a common fate, and implies a common opportunity.” Those opportunities manifest in different ways: when individual renters or debtors or workers can’t pay the bills, it’s a crisis for them and their families. When groups of renters or debtors or workers refuse to pay the bills, or decide to jointly withhold their labor, it’s a crisis for their creditors, their landlords, and their bosses.

This is the power of collective organizing: it expands the sense of the possible by expanding the possible “we.” It persuades participants that, contrary to what they have been told, their pain is not the result of a failure of character or insufficient hard work. Rather, it is the consequence of economic and social systems precisely designed to produce cruel outcomes, systems that can be changed only if people drop the shame and unite toward a shared goal. When enough people start believing that, it is an awakening in the truest sense of the word—a new group identity is constructed in real time, one wider and more spacious than what existed before.

Freud observed that when a person is confronted by their doppelganger, they become unfamiliar to themselves. On an individual level, that is deeply destabilizing, as I have learned. But I also know, as an activist who has lost herself in causes and crowds, that becoming unfamiliar to oneself need not be a horrifying experience; I have felt it to be transcendent. When we come together in movements working for the scale of change demanded by our times (which is less green juice than Global Green New Deal), it changes us, and we become people who are, if not unfamiliar, then certainly unexpected. Braver. More hopeful. More connected. More able to feel love toward people we barely know.

Something else changes, too: when our actions begin to integrate with our beliefs, when we are doing some of the work that we know needs to be done, we have less need for the various doubles our culture offers up disguised as a good life. The allure of disappearing into our digital avatars wanes—whether Bannon’s idea of Ajax embodying himself in real life or the various glowing influencers performing themselves into the ether. As Marx said of religion, doubles are our opiates; we have less need for them when there is less pain and dissonance to escape.

Though rare, I have seen this happen. I have been in factories taken over by their workers and squares occupied by the people and cities in the grips of revolutionary fervor—moments when everyone you meet is your political comrade and lifelong friend rolled into one. And it was there, too, in that U.S. presidential campaign that united millions with three words that began as a slogan and became a kind of social justice prayer: “Not me. Us.” The campaign’s pivotal moment took place at a rally in Queens, New York, in October 2019. That’s when Sanders, in front of a crowd of twenty-five thousand people, did something he hadn’t done before. He exhorted everyone there to look to someone in their midst, someone they did not know, “maybe somebody who doesn’t look kinda like you, maybe somebody who might be of a different religion than you, maybe they come from a different country … My question now to you is are you willing to fight for that person who you don’t even know as much as you’re willing to fight for yourself?”

Would they fight to end student debt, even if they had no debt? Would they fight for the rights of immigrants, even if they were a citizen themselves? Would they fight for the rights of people who hadn’t been born yet to live a life safe from climate breakdown? In the roar of the crowd, people were more than moved—they were altered. Altered by the power represented by the idea of standing up and fighting beyond the narrowest conception of self and identity.

The trouble is, a presidential campaign isn’t capable of making good on a promise like that. By definition, an electoral campaign has a finite life span, and it ends when the candidate wins or loses. When Bernie lost and that end arrived, the unselfing we felt so powerfully on the campaign trail seemed to end right along with it. Shut in our homes by the first wave of strict lockdowns, severed from the movement that had held us together, so many of us who had been overcome by the power of “us” felt as if we had just been summarily dropped into a deep sea of “me.”

Still, we glimpsed what was possible, and we learned a critical lesson: An election is too fleeting and unstable a container to hold a message as important as “Not me. Us.” But that doesn’t mean the message was wrong.

Rebuilding the Roads Not Taken

This brings us to one last way of understanding doppelgangers and the messages they carry, one that may be useful in thinking about the difficult collective work that lies ahead. Freud speculated that the figure of the doppelganger recurs in the culture in part because the idea of there being duplicate selves stands in for the vast potentialities that our lives hold. We are the product of choices—made by us, and made by others. But, Freud wrote, those never are the only choices available. There are also “all the possibilities which, had they been realized, might have shaped our destiny, and to which our imagination still clings, all the strivings of the ego that were frustrated by adverse circumstances, all the suppressed acts of volition that fostered the illusion of free will.”

Seen in this way, the idea of our duplicates walking around stands in for the roads not taken. Who might we be if the choices that determined our lives had been slightly—or radically—different? What latent versions of ourselves exist but never got the chance to be realized because we took one road rather than another? Or lived in one type of society rather than another?

This is the kind of doppelganger explored in multiverse stories like Everything Everywhere All at Once. In the film, Michelle Yeoh plays an overburdened immigrant to the United States who is juggling a husband serving her with divorce papers, a daughter she doesn’t know how to love, a father she is disappointing, and a laundry business facing a government audit. But then this downtrodden woman turns out to be a multiverse- traveling superhero who, in one universe, is a glamorous film star, much like Yeoh herself (the directors used real footage of Yeoh on the red carpet for earlier films). The movie, and particularly that footage, underlines how thin the membrane is between the lives any of us end up with and the lives we might have had if circumstances had been different. Having a child is a decision to close off some potential lives and open others. So is taking a job, or not taking one.

Yet we all know (or should know) that the choices available to us are hardly random. They radically expand and contract based on which countries we happened to be born into, which bodies, which genders, which races, which families. It’s not only individual lives that hold doppelganger potentialities—so, too, do whole societies. Because we all embody Philip Roth’s that-and-this-ness. Kind and callous. Compassionate and out for our narrowest self-interest. Open to one another and harrowingly closed.

My dive into doppelganger culture helped attune me to many examples of that-and-thisness, in myself and in others. Extreme cases, like Hans Asperger, who went from a doctor who was curious and caring toward people like my son, to a man who sent kids who were a little different to their deaths. Or even my own Jewish culture—the way it flipped from a place of such bold and elastic debate to the rigid orthodoxies of with-Israel- or-against-us that are only now beginning to crack. Or the way many people joined the 2020 racial justice uprisings, full of revolutionary hope at the prospects for transforming a society based on principles of equality and care —and then, one year later, some of those very same people seemed unreachable, lost to despair and, at times, conspiracy. “If you have never believed yourself to be entitled to anything, you are less likely to turn against others than you are to turn against yourself,” Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor told me. Each flip is different, but we are all surrounded by evidence of the different people we might have been, and might still become, under slightly different circumstances.

Take those two trucker convoys: the noisy one and the quieter one eight months earlier, which was organized in solidarity with Indigenous communities grieving their stolen children. They made such a stark contrast. So, one way of seeing the two convoys is that one was good and the other bad. One was progress, the other a white-lash. That would be a comforting binary to choose between, and, in way, that’s how I told the story. But here is where the ground starts moving: some truckers participated in both convoys. In June 2021, they felt sorrow and solidarity; in February 2022, rage and self-righteousness. They were, like everyone, both that and this. And marginally different circumstances—social, political, economic—brought out different sides of them.

When I try to understand Other Naomi, I see something similar. She, too, is both that and this. As a young writer, she helped inspire countless women to become feminists. In middle age, she took stands that required real moral courage—as when she walked out of that synagogue or shared her platform with people being pounded by missiles. She has also, especially lately, done a great many things that are extremely harmful, and I think many of the reasons behind them are pretty uninteresting: a desire for attention, for ego gratification, for cash; perhaps a drive to prove that she was right and that every person who ever attacked her was wrong. But all of those baser impulses have been greatly exacerbated by a culture that places limitless value on attention and money, while creating information tools that seem designed to turn every person’s screwup into an opportunity for public shaming, mockery, abandonment, and humiliation on a scale previously unimaginable.

Which, I suppose, is another way of saying that my doppelganger doesn’t just look like me. To borrow from Jordan Peele, she looks like Us.

A Struggle Between Care and Uncare

The question I am left with is not the one I hear so frequently about her: How did a person like that turn into a person like this? But: What kind of system is most likely to light up the best parts of all of us—and sustain the fire beyond a protest, or a summer uprising, or a presidential campaign?

“I believe the starting point for building a more caring society,” writes Sally Weintrobe, a psychoanalyst who specializes in the climate crisis, “is never forgetting that care and uncare are inherent parts of us all, and that each seeks expression and dominance over the other.” In other words, we (not just those evil others) are all in a perpetual struggle with our that-and-thisness. The trouble is, we live in a society that encourages and rewards the uncaring parts of ourselves, while making it hard to care for others outside our immediate family (and often within it) in any sustained way. So, Weintrobe, argues, if we want more people to make better choices—not to shop for useless stuff as a source of solace, not to spread disinformation for clicks and clout, not to see other people’s vulnerability and need as a threat to our own interests—we need better structures and systems.

Personally, and to no one’s surprise, I think the jury is in on capitalism: it lights up our most uncaring, competitive parts and is failing us on every front that matters. What we need are systems that light up our better selves, the parts of ourselves that want to look outward at a world in crisis and join the work of repair. Systems that make it easier, in ways big and small, for care to win the battle over uncare.

### Moral Economy

#### Debt exemplifies how regimes of moral economy and punishment depend specifically on the subjectification of black people, NOT their abjection.

Max Haiven 20, Canada Research Chair in Culture, Media and Social Justice at Lakehead University, co-director of ReImagining Value Action Lab, author of Revenge Capitalism, editor of VAGABONDS book series, "Revenge Capitalism: The Ghosts of Empire, the Demons of Capital, and the Settling of Unpayable Debts," Pluto Press, 2020

III. RACE, COLONIALISM, AND UNPAYABLE DEBT

If the above artworks have taught us anything it is that systems and structures of financialized power fabricate and enforce unpayable debts on those people and communities whom they subordinate precisely in order to cover over the unpayable debts they themselves owe to the subordinated. As Graeber argues, the unpayable debt of the subjugated is made to appear in quantitative, monetized terms precisely to help mask its origins in social violence and to individualize and pathologize the debtor to prevent them from creating bonds of solidarity within and beyond their communities, with those likewise encumbered.104 Meanwhile, the debt owed by the systems and structures of financialized power are rendered qualitative and moral at best, irrelevant at worst, in any case unactionable.

But like an unquiet ghost, the deeper debt haunts: these profound unpaid, indeed ontological debts express themselves as contradictions and cataracts in the socio-economic and political fabric. Often, able to neither admit nor assuage the debt, those indebted systems take revenge in the form of punitive moralism or wanton cruelty: the hypocritical fetishization of the figure of the debt-free child; the passion play that blames Greek debt (and German wealth) on allegedly national cultural characteristics, but nonetheless abandons a whole population to penury; the poisoned benevolence of Canadian settler colonialism. Because ultimately these relationships are based on the exploitation and oppression inherent to the contradictions of capitalist accumulation in a financialized world, they breed resentment and are riven with crises which, as they deepen, require that the dominant systems unleash ever more structural and systemic violence.

One might assess these and other artworks on the basis of how well they can reveal these underlying dynamics. But more importantly, one might assess them to the extent they make visible, even for a moment, the potentials for solidarity, refusal, and rebellion within and between those who are both abject debtor and secret creditor to an unchosen, destructive system. The latter is the crucial work of the radical imagination within, against, and beyond financialization.105 I will return to the prospects of generating a transformative avenging imaginary on the basis of unpayable debts in this book’s conclusion.

Saidiya Hartman’s magisterial book Scenes of Subjection provides us the resources to see the political and moral economy of unpayable debts in a different frame.106 Following the work of W. E. B. DuBois107 on the sabotage of post-Civil-War reconstruction and the renovation of a white-supremacist form of capitalism, Hartman details how in this period there emerged a new condition she calls “indebted servitude” to control Black labor and Black people. Debt served “to re-inscribe both servitude and the pained constitution of blackness”: not only were many formerly enslaved people quickly (re)ensnared in punitive and ruinous debt relations including sharecropping, convict leasing, and other schemes for the exploitation of their labor, they were now also subjected to a set of moral exhortations to develop a consciousness of gratitude, diligence, servility, and humility.108 Through an analysis of manuals written for (and sometimes by) freed people advising them on how to conduct themselves as free citizens, Hartman writes that “the cultivation of consciousness operated in the whip’s stead as an overseer of the soul.”109 Once-enslaved Black people were now free to sign themselves into contracts of extortionate debt peonage and relentless exploitation to which they could be “held accountable,” and contractual infractions were punishable by new legalized forms of forced labour.

The moral economy of debt was essential to the political economy of exploited Black labor, but the threats and practice of legal or extralegal punishment, rape, torture, and murder were also never far off. Indeed, Hartman notes that the “urging of servility” in the manuals “begrudgingly acknowledged the less than ideal labor conditions of the South and the averse racial sentiments to be negotiated and defused by the obeisance of the freed.”110 It is not simply that the freed needed to be warned against revenge toward their former owners; more accurately it was the revenge of the former owners, now cloaked as civil authorities (unevenly and heavyhandedly) enforcing laws and contracts, that needed to be mollified. Elsewhere in Scenes of Subjection Hartman catalogs the vindictive, sadistic, and spectacularized cruelty of white revanchism, including notably the terrorism of lynching. To my mind, this investment in normalized racial terrorism, which offers both financial dividends from the exploitation of Black labor and cultural or subjective dividends to those who fall on the side of the oppressor, expresses the quintessence of revenge capitalism.

“Emancipation instituted indebtedness,” Hartman writes,

Blame and duty and blood and dollars marked the birth of the free(d) subject. The very bestowal of freedom established the indebtedness of the freed through a calculus of blame and responsibility that mandated that the formerly enslaved both repay this investment of faith [in them] and prove their worthiness.

She continues:

indebtedness was central to the creation of a memory of the past in which white benefactors, courageous soldiers, and virtuous mothers sacrificed themselves for the enslaved. This memory was seared into the minds of the freed. Debt was at the centre of a moral economy of submission and servitude and was instrumental in the production of peonage … in short, to be free was to be a debtor.111

Then, as today, Hartman makes clear that

in the language of liberal individualism, the ravages of chattle slavery and the degradation still clinging to the freed after centuries of subjection to the white race were obstacles to be overcome through self-discipline, the renunciation of dependency and intemperate habits, and personal restraint … [this was] a commitment to equality made ineffectual by an atomized version of social relations and the apportioning of individual responsibility, if not blame, for what are clearly the consequences of dominative relations.112

The unpayable debt in question here is one that acts not only in a punitively and disciplinary fashion, but also affords the debtor the compulsory (master’s) tools to construct an appropriate economic and moral subjecthood, one that obliterates not just the desire but also the cause for seeking any justice beyond personal competitive striving. This framing of the debt of the freed subject is one that cannot be repaid because the freed subject is deemed morally deficient, tasked with striving to earn a place in a society built to exclude them and, indeed built by the coerced labors of the freed themselves for that purpose.

In this sense, Hartman notes that “as many former slaves asserted, they had not incurred any debt they had not repaid a thousandfold.” Hartman continues, “In the counter discourse of freedom, remedy was sought for injuries of slavery, not through the reconstruction of the Negro – in other words, the refashioning of the emancipated as rational and docile individuals – but through reparations.”113

With this in mind, we can revisit the example with which we began this chapter, of the subprime mortgage and its racialized dimensions. Ta-Nahesi Coates is one of the most popular voices linking the economic devastation of many Black people in the US to the afterlives of slavery, cataloging the ruination of Black people’s and families’ fortunes over successive generations through various forms of direct and systemic racist violence.114 These range from the sabotaging of Black farmers’ ability to succeed and upgrade their tools to the exclusion of Black workers from trade unions to the “red lining” and withholding of statebacked mortgages to majority-Black neighborhoods.115

Chakravartty and da Silva pose a set of difficult questions regarding the subprime crisis, particularly “How could the predatory targeting of economically dispossessed communities and the subsequent bailout of the nation’s largest investment banks, instantly and volubly, be recast as a problem caused by the racial other?”116 They argue that “the term subprime mortgage has become a racial signifier in the current debate about the causes and fixes for a capitalism in crisis,” but that this needs to be understood in the longer arc of race at the cusp of financial and moral economies charted above by Hartman: “historical materialism alone cannot account for the ways in which capitalism has lived off – always backed by the colonial and national state’s means of death – of colonial/racial expropriation.”117

Incomprehensible (moral) obligations and unpayable (monetary) debts – such as... those offered subprime loans – expose a politicaleconomic architecture that has always thrived on the construction of modern subjects who lack mental (moral and intellectual) capacities. In other words, the analytics of raciality allow us to see how, since the last third of the nineteenth century at least, modern political-economic architectures – in Europe and in its colonies – have been accompanied by a moral text, in which the principles of universality and historicity also sustain the writing of the “others of Europe” (both a colonial and racial other) as entities facing certain and necessary (self-inflicted) obliteration. Just like this time around in the global financial capitalist casino, the house (the cozy state-financial capital home) cannot but always win because when betting on the other’s (Black and Latino/a) inability to pay back its debts, it is betting on something it has itself brought into being.118

#### Racial slavery arose from economic demand to build global racial empire. Psychic anti-Blackness ignores a history of enslaved Indigenous peoples, poor Europeans, and other coerced labor. We should understand coerced labor as a driver of distributional injustice.

Dr. Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò 22. Associate Professor, Philosophy, Georgetown University; PhD, Philosophy, UCLA. “Reconsidering World History.” Chapter 2 in *Reconsidering Reparations*. Oxford University Press. 2022. https://global.oup.com/academic/product/reconsidering-reparations-9780197508893?cc=us&lang=en&.

Racialization and Slavery as Stages of Colonialism

When Oxford-educated historian (and eventual Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago) Eric Williams published Capitalism and Slavery in 1944, scholars reacted intensely. The book’s claims were explosive. Williams claimed that slavery had led to the Industrial Revolution, and that the resultant changes in the world economy, rather than the moral enlightenment of the British empire, accounted for the success of abolitionist movements.79 Where humanists might see an evolving human soul, Williams sees the cold, mechanical motion of a historical cart pushed downhill by the progressive logic of the global racial empire.

Many decades after Capitalism and Slavery, a careful look at the available evidence suggests that, if anything, Williams’s claim was too modest. Social scientists Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James Robinson published a quantitative study of the causes of Western Europe’s historically unprecedented growth. They found that the rise of Western Europe was “almost entirely” explained by access to the Atlantic economy: which was, in turn, dominated and enabled by the trafficking of enslaved Africans and participation in markets sustained by colonial conquest and exploitation.80

Following Williams, we can gain insight by taking careful stock of what is and is not historically unprecedented about trans-Atlantic slavery. Slavery, of course, has many precedents in world history: it was the basis of many a Greek economy, and also of the Roman empire.81 Chattel slavery specifically, in which the enslaved are rendered the legal property of their owners, sits under a wider umbrella of variants of social formations by which coerced labor and expropriation of the lowest class allows other classes to enjoy the economic and social benefits of their oppression. Other historical examples under this umbrella include serfdom, indentured servitude, nineteenth and twentieth century “company towns” in the United States, and aspects of the caste system in South Asia. Contemporary examples include the prison-industrial complex and the economic entrapment schemes that drive people into sweatshop labor.

But race as we know it today did not exist during most of those centuries. A Roman or a medieval slave market would often include people of diverse backgrounds, who wound up there through a variety of bad circumstances—usually because they were captured as prisoners of war or sold by family members to pay off debts. In the main, enslavement was an undesirable outcome of individual or group misfortune.

During the colonial period, the emptying of the Americas through plague and displacement created explosive demand for coercible labor, and the volume of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that rose to meet that demand created a radically new demographic situation. The volume of the trans-Atlantic slave trade was double that of all other African slave trades combined.82 It was, as are all slave trades, a moral atrocity. But to a much greater extent than other slave trades, it was also a massive transfer of population: twelve million people over the centuries from 1400 to 1900 as European colonialism (and, eventually capitalism) was creating the global world order.83 As Williams says in incendiary fashion: “A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery.”84

In some cases, European empires were able to build colonies primarily out of the cheap labor of European emigrants, as was the case for some of the Northern American colonies. But much more often, European empires faced considerable problems attracting the population levels necessary to secure control of territory and maximally exploit its resources. Politically free European labor was hard to come by: people were unlikely to willingly make the voyage in exchange for the kind of back-breaking working conditions that (for example) sugar cultivation involves. They were also unlikely to leave behind everything they owned, however little it might be, only to land in an even more subservient position with even lower political standing. To illustrate this point, Williams recounts the story of a capitalist who arrived to the Swan River Colony of Australia with 300 laborers, only to find that the abundance of land allowed all of them to become self-employed subsistence farmers and they left him by his lonesome.85

The European empires faced a particularly severe labor shortage in the Americas: for over the century following Columbus’s voyage, the combination of war, genocide, and disease that followed the Europeans into the American continents killed 56 million people.86 That figure represents 90 percent of the inhabitants of the western hemisphere, a demographic collapse so severe that it literally lowered the earth’s temperature.87 At several points in colonial history, colonists enslaved Indigenous peoples, but the combination of the Indigenous demographic collapse and potential military consequences of abduction imposed hard limits on the scale of those plans.88

Where else to find the necessary hands to build their empire? For elites trying to build fortunes abroad, enslaving within their existing political network was risky. This is the sort of moral atrocity people tend to remember, and it can breed and spread destabilizing anger. Plato predicted as much in The Republic, counseling the hypothetical rulers of a just city to “make a habit of sparing the Greek race” from enslavement and advise fellow Greeks to do the same. This, he imagined, would permit a level of conflict between Greeks but also a level of solidarity as inherently free peoples which would protect them from “barbarian” non-Greeks.89 As Williams notes, the Irish and Scottish peoples spent centuries providing the British empire an instructive example of the political problems that domination causes. The Irish “hated the English” and “were always ready to aid England’s enemies.”90 Disaffected Irish and Scottish peoples routinely provided military intelligence and direct combat support to England’s enemies—and, crucially, they were nearby enough to do so.91

So the fortune-hunters looked to the African continent—a place with long established slave trades, and much further from the intrigues of European politics. The Spanish and Portuguese were first and worst: they had been trading cloth and horses for enslaved Africans for the better part of the 1400s; a million enslaved people had been sailed to Portugal and Spain’s American colonies before the first twenty colonists landed in British Virginia.92 In the years immediately preceding and following the American Revolution, Africans were enslaved and exploited in every American colony and state, north to south.

Colonies tried coerced labor of other kinds as well: homeless Europeans, convicts, and kidnapping victims were forced onto ships bound for the New World and sold into indentured labor.93 However, in the American and Caribbean colonies, the pipeline of Africans created by the entrepreneurs of the Atlantic trade eclipsed other options in sheer volume. This led to distinctive populations of multiethnic enslaved laborers from Africa’s many ethnicities and nations. All of these had to build local expertise, social bonds, and an adaptive culture in the pressure cooker of captivity, while their consistent arrival in the hundreds on the same ships often led buyers to perceive them, with wild inaccuracy, as coming from the same place.

Trans-Atlantic slavery clearly solved economic problems for colonizers. Economist Barbara Solow argues that British use of African enslaved labor contributed to British economic growth by providing an efficient and elastic labor supply that secured constant returns on colonial investment.94 Enslaved labor was also a source of market size: more enslaved people meant more need for clothes, food, and shelter, needs which could be at least partially met by exports from the home country and thus served as a stimulus for business there. By Solow’s calculations, profits from the slave trade alone—that is, not accounting for the profits from the colonial ventures it propped up—could account for up to 8 percent of total British investment and 39 percent of all its commercial and industrial investment in a given year at the slave trade’s height.95

The racial aspect of slavery evolved as the empires and colonizer populations scrambled to respond strategically to conditions in the colonies as they found them after the initial stage of settling. Racializing slavery—associating the condition of enslavement with an imaginary concept of race for which skin color was the convenient proxy, and re-envisioning the concept of free labor on the same principle—solved important political problems.

Historian Barbara J. Fields points out that Europeans had, in fact, held other Europeans in slavery and serfdom, that the law in Tudor England provided for the enslavement of vagabonds, and English brutality against Irish resistance to English domination was of comparable violence to their colonial ventures elsewhere in the world. She concludes that whatever freedoms English citizens had enjoyed were not the result of any moral limitations genuinely felt by the English elite, but a ceiling of exploitation set by the political outcome of constant and often violent contest between the classes.96 Enslaving Europeans, then, could conceivably have provided similar economic advantages to enslaving Africans if it weren’t for the fact that it would have saddled colonizers with the political costs of this form of domination. Enslaving Indigenous Americans and African peoples exported the political costs to their social networks, setting off disastrous processes of cumulative disadvantage.

#### Treating slavery as paradigmatic and distinct from labor falls prey to legalistic distinctions. Unfree black labor opens up futurity and capability beyond coercive racial capitalism.

Drucilla Cornell 8, Political Science, Women's Studies & Comparative Literature at Rutgers, "Symbolic Forms for a New Humanity," pp. 140-150

black unfree labor

How does one give symbolic form to over 350 years of exploitative, colonial racism masquerading as the history of South Africa? What words, images, stories, or formulas can evoke any reasonable understanding of such history? If we simplify the matter and evoke the term “servitude,” then we have fallen short of recognizing the agentive presence of a subject behind black consciousness. If we call out against slavery, then the legal definition blurs the debilitating social, political, and economic effects of state domination at work. If we claim bondage, then we have no recourse to consider the meaning of freedom outside of entering into the dynamics of a free-market system. Perhaps, then, Terreblanche unknowingly coined with great insight the triple phrase we need to philosophically unpack: “unfree black labor.” What follows considers the idea of unfree black labor in three movements. The “unfree” in the term unfree black labor requires us to meaningfully know freedom, which can be gleaned from the capabilities development work of Amartya Sen and the carefully drawn-out philosophy of Lewis Gordon. The “black” in unfree black labor is a matter of understanding black consciousness as the way of life that would break the shackles of racial bondage imposed by the racist state in the sense meant by Steve Biko. The “labor” in unfree black labor demands that we return to Marx in order to understand the crippling effect of superexploitation.

Amartya Sen has famously worked from within the discipline of economics and social philosophy to argue that the development of human capability is integral to any question of freedom. The development of human capabilities must be defended, protected, and enhanced if anyone is to live a free life based on their own functional achievements. To be clear, “development” in this sense is not at all synonymous with so-called democratic projects of imperial control. Indeed, Sen is clear that there can be no enumerated list of human capabilities but that such endeavors must be collectively determined within a given community. Often, Sen discusses economic, social, and political factors in his concern for the ways facets of our lives function as limitations to such freedom. Thus, grotesque poverty, systematic exclusion, and forms of tyranny are concerning for Sen in the ways they inhibit our achievement of capabilities.

There is nothing in Sen that reduces the call for such development to particular, enumerated conditions that mirror freedom as a vision of Western, liberal principles.21 Instead, we must see, as Sen explains, that any impoverishment of the world is itself an experience that deprives the capability of human beings to live in this world according to a freedom of their own collaborative creation.22 The activity of developing our capability for achieving human freedom is very much a way we might try to address the ideality of our freedom in the wake of a catastrophic situation of our own making.

Today, most economists argue that we need only properly price everything as a commodity in the market, obliterate barriers to free trade, and allow people to buy interests in those commodities, which might range from created goods to natural resources to abstract concepts. However, Sen, in contradistinction, would suggest that we must developmentally provide all people with the very means that represent “substantive freedoms—the capabilities— to choose a life one has reason to value.”23 Because markets are actually human creations, and not objectively determined entities, it is within our power to change the way such markets work. It is also within our power to determine that people have a basic right both to the realized functioning of their freedom and to make reasoned decisions about their free development according to a just capability set.24 Of the two terms, the former refers to what we actually accomplish in our life while the latter suggests the range of how we are able to choose the enactment of our material human capacities for various valued activities of life.

Of course, one might object that people are responsible for the development of their own lives including the development of the capability set that will influence their realized functioning. However, to quote Sen: A child who is denied the opportunity of elementary schooling is not only deprived as a youngster, but also handicapped all through life (as a person unable to do certain basic things that rely on reading, writing, and arithmetic). The adult who lacks the means of having medical treatment for an ailment from which she suffers is not only prey to preventable morbidity and possibly escapable mortality, but may also be denied the freedom to do various things—for herself and for others—that she may wish to do as a responsible human being. The bonded laborer born into semislavery, the subjugated girl child stifled by a repressive society, the helpless landless laborer without substantial means of earning an income are all deprived not only in terms of well-being, but also in terms of the ability to lead responsible lives, which are contingent on having certain basic freedoms. Responsibility requires freedom.25 The provision of basic material and ideational needs that would allow people to come into being as self-determined thinking and acting subjects surely is a necessary precursor to any enactment of freedom and ethical responsibility.

There is a materialist vein in the work of Sen that is deeply concerned with the distribution of goods in society in a way that would allow people to achieve material stability based on their own freedom. However, the material concerns throughout this text require some sort of teleological critique that would take notice of the ways in which distribution is itself a part of the larger system of capital making, which Karl Marx carefully explains is itself always integrally tied into production, exchange, and consumption. Finding freedom in simply one dimension will not succeed unless it also follows from the other three dimensions. The ideal of humanity given to us by Marx is one in which freedom itself is bound to the experience when communism as an ideal overthrows the chicanery of the enslaving, alien power known as the world market. For Marx, such a collective feat of revolutionary solidarity “can be expressed again speculatively and idealistically, that is, fantastically, as ‘self-generation of the species’ (‘society as the subject’), and thereby the consecutive series of interrelated individuals can be conceived as a single individual which accomplishes the mystery of generating itself.”26 The regeneration of the species restores society to a realm of subjects giving value to its objects and relationships at-large. Such is a necessary teleology that could aid Sen in thinking development within the pursuit of a regulative ideal. Without such a regulative ideal the progressive spirit of Sen can, perhaps, become possessed by those who would impose alternative ideals of racialized capital that has guided our historical understanding of market economics for far too long.27

Lewis Gordon adds to the work of Sen by suggesting that we need to meaningfully figure our social, economic, and political worlds in a way that promotes fuller options rather than mere choices.28Too often rhetoric under the banner of neoliberalism suggests that human beings are granted the choice to live out their lives under seemingly democratic forms of advanced capitalism. However, Gordon draws our attention to the reality that much of what we see as options is really just a matter of selecting between a limited set of choices:

A peculiar feature of the social world is that some practices and institutions can become so calcified that they function no differently than would a brick wall. That is, just as one cannot go through a brick wall without force, some social institutions function similarly. Those are options. They are either material reality or function as material functions of reality.

There are choices that are isomorphic with options, but when options are exhausted, choices can continue on how to relate to the exhaustion of options.29

Upon the exhaustion of meaningful options in our attempts to stand out and emerge in a life of our own making in community with other people, the maddening isomorphic depletion of options into a realm of mere choice ends with what Gordon calls implosivity: the asymmetrical realization in a racialized system of capital where one has been rendered beneath the threshold of humanity, a very real limitation that would purport the options of blacks as always far beneath the unlimited horizon preserved for whites. Truly, Gordon remains slightly wary of the work of Sen, given that many of the problems that have plagued the dispossessed throughout history have been a result of the recalcitrant imposition of economic and political forces. Still, Gordon admits sympathy with the work of Sen, offering a similar, though different, account of freedom from within the traditions of phenomenology and existentialism. If we are to think about freedom, then we must consider the very meaning of existence; such a term carries a double etymological origin and “means ‘to stand out’ or ‘to emerge.’ It is another way of saying that if one does not stand out, even to one’s self, it is as though one were not there. To exist, then is vital to every human being; it is what it means to live.”30 Such living resonates deeply with the idea of a regenerating species being. Surely, the material world must be made and shared so that people have more than the bare subsistence of survival. But we must remember the way Kant spoke of freedom as theoretically unprovable and animated through practical reason. There is no way to definitively prove that one is free or, by inverse, unfree. Rather, we must understand that “when we think ourselves as free we transfer ourselves into the world of understanding as members of it and cognize autonomy of the will along with its consequence, morality.”31 When we project ourselves into this imagined other world we encounter a suspended teleological projection, one that offers a regulative ideality where “the footpath of freedom is the only one on which it is possible to make use of our reason in our conduct.”32

In the work of Biko, black consciousness carries a special meaning, and it must be drawn out carefully in order to appreciate its fullness of spirit: Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its essence is the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression—the blackness of their skin—and to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.33

The call, here, is one of radical solidarity as a way of life. Indeed, for Biko, one has to internalize the ethical demand of racial equality and at the same time externalize its truth in all of our everyday activities—publicly, privately, and, of course, within the state. Against the totalitarian system of apartheid, Biko is always suggesting that the necessary antithesis to such a thesis is one of combined black struggle against racism that would render blacks mere prey to the subjugation of colonialism.34 Such a call to solidarity carries with it a message of coming to consciousness because “the blacks are tired of standing at the touchlines to witness a game that they should be playing. They want to do things for themselves and all by themselves.”35 Already, we can see that Biko imagined the practice of black consciousness as a means to the full, developed capability of all people to influence, enjoy, and change society.

Such an understanding is not one where suffering takes a position of primacy at the expense of developing a fuller notion of what it means to be human. “We do not want to be reminded that it is we, the indigenous people, who are poor and exploited in the land of our birth. These are concepts which the Black Consciousness approach,” Biko explains, “wishes to eradicate from the black man’s mind before our society is driven to chaos by irresponsible people from Coca-cola and hamburger cultural backgrounds.”36 Indeed, the founding documents used by all of the organizations that Biko was pivotal in establishing precisely state that, “Being black is not a matter of pigmentation—being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.”37 Again, we must understand black consciousness as not only a mental attitude but, more important, as one that leaves behind scientific notions of race through genetics or semblance. Thus, the “black” of black consciousness is about seeing the truth of all people as human beings and that each person holds inherent dignity and power of purpose. As Biko explains:

It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is if you realise that the only vehicle for change are these people who have lost their personality. The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth.38

To be clear, black consciousness is both about being black and more than being black. Biko strongly suggests, “Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being.”39

The struggle for such emancipation, the movement beyond being stamped as subservient by white supremacy, demands an ongoing fight against all the forces of oppression. Much of those forces can be seen through obvious material asymmetries in society, but some of those forces also take shape in the realm of consciousness. The project, then, of black consciousness is also one of conscientization:

We try to get blacks in conscientisation to grapple realistically with their problems, to attempt to find solutions to their problems, to develop what one might call an awareness, a physical awareness of their situation, to be able to analyse it, and to provide answers for themselves. The purpose behind it really being to provide some kind of hope; I think the central theme about black society is that it has got elements of a defeated society, people often look like they have given up the struggle. Like the man who was telling me that he now lives to work, he has given himself to the idea. Now this sense of defeat is basically what we are fighting against; people must not just give in to the hardship of life, people must develop a hope, people must develop some form of security to be together to look at their problems, and people must in this way build up their humanity. This is the point about conscientisation and Black Consciousness.40

The struggle to defeat hopelessness by beating back the world-weariness of hardship toward consciousness about the phenomenological trappings and ways out of racialized capital under Grand Apartheid, demands the selfdetermined understanding of not only a new black man or woman but also, a new humanity.

Such a new humanity may indeed be made through the work of black consciousness, but the writing of Biko, over time, extends this project to include all those that would give up their racially distributed privileges and take up, in all matters of their being, the fight for equality and freedom. Anyone who dares to completely resist the system of racialized capital is al- ready blackened against the mark of a fantasized whiteness. Surely, we are not suggesting, and neither would Biko, that a white person can in any simple way become black as a matter of identity or position within a society of structural racialized prejudice.41 But, what we are suggesting is that the idea of blackness within black consciousness taken up in the work of Biko is not one that can merely be understood through Manichaeism; rather, black consciousness is the willful formation of a new humanity that would annul the racialized world altogether through a projected regulative ideal giving us a new telos out of the history of racialized capital.

Last, we are reminded by Marx that a condition of superexploitation emerges when capitalism no longer operates under fair assumptions and strips workers of the bare subsistence necessary to keep alive their living labor. For Marx, labor under the system of capital relations does not provide workers with wealth or dignity, but instead it provides the bare subsistence necessary to survival within the system:

What he obtains from the exchange is therefore not exchange value, not wealth, but a means of subsistence, objects for the preservation of his life, the satisfaction of his needs in general, physical, social, etc. It is a specific equivalent in means of subsistence, in objectified labour, measured by the cost of production of his labour. What he gives up is his power to dispose of the later.42

However, when the capitalistic system fails to provide for workers as we saw in the history of inequality of South Africa outlined by Terreblanche, superexploitation emerges. That is to say, black workers were grossly unpaid for their work under the assumption that they had a secondary economic system within the “homelands” that informally provided for their means of subsistence. However, such an informal economy did not exist in any strong sense. Nor, if it did exist, would the situation be any less than superexploitation since the system of racialized capital still failed to meaningfully provide wages of subsistence to workers. Colonialism and imperialism are both notorious for their abuse of superexploitation and resulting failure to ever manage any reparation of redemption for such a wrong. Indeed, the living labor of African workers was siphoned off to fuel the very system of racialized capital that made the colonial situation possible in the first place. Biko, as reviewed in the last chapter, was right to be suspicious of liberal solutions to oppression through apartheid given that such liberals were themselves raised, nurtured, and thrived on the very privileges that came about through the draining of the creative force and living labor of black workers during centuries of exploitation.

However, throughout our discussion of black unfree labor we have been returning to Marx and an understanding of what such a systematic draining means in a deeper philosophical and political sense. The draining of the ethical, creative force of human beings is often rendered invisible to most people; but such a siphoning is the depletion of our very means for building, restoring, and reconfiguring the symbolic form of our world—both the material and ideational development of the basic needs of people and the flourishing of their capability freedom along the lines of a regulative ideal of a new humanity.

For Sylvia Wynter, echoing Foucault, history and more specifically economics are organized under epistemes, which are tied to knowledge constitutive goals represented as frameworks basic to the survival of a group. To borrow an example made by Wynter, the reigning episteme of the Aztec religion was that of maintaining the flow of creative energy between all life forms. Medieval Europe, alternatively, founded itself in the promise of religious redemption. In the modern age, for Wynter, the search has been for some rational redemption even in the movements of socialist battles for the control of the state and economy.

Any episteme for Wynter creates its liminal other. Crucial for Wynter is the demonstration of precisely how oppression is connected to liminality. The goal for Wynter is not simply exposure, however, but is more political since Wynter remains committed to the historicist project of liberation. Paget Henry succinctly describes the power of Wynter’s use of liminality and its relationship to the failure to achieve a new way of being human: Wynter’s approach to this postcolonial crisis is to subject its development ideology to an epistemic analysis, exposing in the process its counterproductive entrapment in the liminal categories of the Western episteme.

This analysis suggests that the constructing of development projects in the language and discourses of the colonizer places severe limits on their originality. In Wynter’s view, this enmeshment of development thinking in the episteme and culture of the colonizer blocks the emergence of new social orders in these societies. To achieve such new orders, it is necessary to reject not only specific ideologies but also the founding episteme of the colonial project. Without such an epistemic break, the capacity for original and independent thinking will remain severely limited. These constraints on originality are further compounded by the fact that within the epistemic schemes of European colonial projects the colonized were redefined through the liminal categories. Inheriting these schemes also means internalizing liminal modes of self-definition and selfrealization. 43

Wynter is deeply suspicious of the binaries of development and underdevelopment as being completely bound in an episteme that has liminalized all people of color as others of horrible exploitation. Along with economic practices, we need to radically decolonize our governing epistemes including many socialist projects of development. As we have seen, the project Sen pursues can be freed from an episteme that liminalizes the Third World as hopelessly immature with the only hope for maturity arriving in the adoption of neoliberal capitalism. For Wynter, the other to the homo economicus of neoliberal capitalism is the black other. Yet, it is not simply enough to free those who are now blackened; rather, we must continue to evoke a vision of humanity in which no one group is liminalized and there is no further need for blackening. By suggesting that there is a regulative telos in history, we are in no way undermining the horrors of the twentieth century. Wynter follows Walter Benjamin in showing us how certain historical projects, even those that were purportedly rooted in progressive movements, have tragically become additions to the pile of wreckage seen by the Angel of History.44 As Benjamin recounts such an image, the angel has spread its wings and is looking toward us yet spies out of the corner of its eye a tragedy of the past that cannot be ignored. It is indeed a catastrophe of the highest magnitude, of which subsequent catastrophes continue to pile upon this original foundation. This angel, representing the weak messianic power inherent in all human beings, stands motionless but aware of the original catastrophe. It is an image burdened with guilt for both what the angel has noticed and the stillness that has become its prison. The angel of history stands motionless because “a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm,” Benjamin tells us, “is what we call progress.”45 The novelty of such progress is simply a reinvention of the old that ossifies our being, historicizing tragedy with the promise of being aligned with those who would usher forward the next coming epoch without attending to the ailments needing repair in the previous generation.

The angel of history is showing us that the sort of grandeur we live in today is very much only possible because of the continued wreck of catastrophes that has bequeathed to us the many privileges of life that come with living in empire, which Benjamin calls “the style of revolutionary terrorism, for which the state is an end in itself.”46 Instead, we are called to awaken to our deeper ethical obligation to enact a symbolic form of transformative redemption: both material and ideal. Without such redemption we are not ever living free but simply living freely atop the catastrophic suffering of our fellow human beings. If we examine this image from afar we are, metaphorically speaking, objects made by the context of an original catastrophe of suffering playing master over our subjective experience of the world. The only solution to such slavish relations, following Hegel, is to perform the sort of work of redemption that would authentically expand our lived consciousness of freedom. In a certain sense, the history Terreblanche offers of South Africa, and certainly his history of the failure by the ANC to transform power relations, can be read as a history of wreckage: a wreckage that forms the foundation to a vain tower of so-called progress atop the graves of those who died by the hand of racialized capital. Yet, with the idea of black unfree labor as a symbolic form, one that can be read through history with a telos, we are always pointed toward the reflective, regulative inverse that emerges: free human being**.**

#### Bridging anti-racist and anti-capitalist politics is the only way to cope with capitalism as a mechanism of racial subordination.

Nikhil Pal Singh 17, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis and History, Faculty Director NYU Prison Education Program, "Race and America's Long War," pp. 76-78

The main problem of this approach is that it discounts contemporaneous modes of economic expansion, particularly slavery and the slave trade. 2 It also supports a wider tendency in Marxist thought to think of slavery as an antecedent to capitalism-a historical stage -thereby glossing over the startling fact, affirmed in much recent historiography, that the chattel slave was a new kind of laboring being and a new species of property born with capitalism. 3 As Sven Beckert writes, slavery, especially on North America's "cotton frontier," was not only a labor regime but also a means of allocating capital that was "tightly linked to the intensity and profits of industrial capitalism" that largely dispensed with the direct coercion of producers (i.e., laborers).4 Marx's oeuvre, which often compares the labor of workers with that of slaves during this time, exemplifies the problem, on the one hand affirming what W. E. B. Du Bois once called the "slavery character" of capitalism in its Anglo-American ascendancy, yet on the other contributing to a problematic relegation of African slavery to a secondary role in capitalism's development that has haunted radical politics ever since.

An effect of this relegation has been the separation of race, sex, and gender domination from capitalist exploitation, conceptually and in the determination of strategic priorities for working-class unification and struggle. Ironically, this way of constituting anticapitalist struggle not only impedes the kind of solidarity required in a world characterized by "intimate and plural relationships to capital" (in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty), 5 but it also forfeits a powerful analytic, discernible within Marx's oeuvre, that conceives capitalism as a machine whose productive expansion depends on increasing degrees of appropriation and dispossession. 6 Marx not only describes capitalism as "veiled slavery" but also takes "slave management in slave-trade countries" as a reference point for thinking about capitalism's seizure of vital life processes, including what he calls the wage worker's "premature exhaustion and death. " 7 As subsequent anti-Marxist critics have argued, slavery in this register is paradoxically indispensable for thinking about capitalism and as such "unthinkable." Sometimes slavery seems "closer to capitalism's primal desire ... than wage [labor]," while at other times it seems to have been superseded by an order of oppression whose power rests on a supposed ability to dispense with violent dominion. 8 Strictly distinguishing between the worker's exploitation and the slave's "social death" -a common move in an important strand of contemporary black critical theorizing known as Afro-pessimism-offers no better answers to this conundrum but merely a kind of inversion in which slavery and the antiblackness that proceeds from it are the excluded ground of politics as such. This approach further alienates an understanding of slavery tied to the development of capitalism, and with it any impulse to overcome the problematic severing of racial domination and class subordination. To bridge this analytical and political divide, we might instead examine how the production of racial stigma that arises in support of chattel slavery has helped to foster the material, ideological, and affective infrastructures of appropriation and dispossession that have been indispensable to the rise of capitalism over a much longer period.

A key origin of race concepts was the differential ethical and material valuation of human subjects in slavery. Slave status was explicitly linked to race, gender, and sex within the planation household, upheld by private violence, and formally backed by state power. Wage labor (and even indentured servitude), by contrast, was increasingly nationalized and linked to a realm of public, social standing and limited state protection. As Jennifer Morgan and other historians have argued, the main legal innovation of chattel slavery in seventeenth-century North America was the assignment of hereditary force, by which captive Africans could only ever give birth to future slaves.9 The unpaid labor of slaves (like that of all workers) rested on another crucial layer of unpaid work: social and biological reproduction conducted by women. The process of conception and reproduction under slavery, however, was violently coerced and attached to the creation of a new species of human capital, "sustained," in the words of Frederick Douglass, "by the auctioneer's block."10 This biocapitalist innovation was in turn married to the slaveholder's power over life and death, expanding the ambit and varieties of corporeal violence that could be visited upon the bodies of slaves, up to and including homicide.11

[INSERT FOOTNOTE 11]

11. What Wilderson has termed "gratuitous violence" retained an instrumental value as exem plary violence, a deterrent to much-feared resistance and revolt. More recently, Edward Baptist has made a compelling case for the relationship between bodily torture and surplus extraction under slavery. Edward Baptist, The Half that Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

[END FOOTNOTE 11]

The rise of the commodity form, as Marx tells us, advanced broader ideas about universal exchangeability, formal equality, and general abstraction from the particular properties of persons and things. The legal and government procedures and material processes that produced these effects, however, operated in a world of human beings who were themselves commodities (as well as instruments of credit and capital investment), and on the basis of communally articulated differences and divisions that were in turn recast under forms of abstract thinking, most notably racial science, whose lineage contaminated the development of the human sciences more generally. In this view, racial subordination might be thought of as something that materialized with the production and governance of normative class differentiation. It represents a kind of superordinate class inequality that has been structured into (certain variants of) capitalist social formation through an association of whiteness with property, citizenship, wages, and credit, along with the renewal of surplus or superexploited subjectivities and collectivities at the openly coercive, lawless, and law-defining edge of capitalist accumulation by dispossession.12

#### Distinguishing worker and slave undermines solidarity rather than producing joyous negativity.

Michael C. Dawson 21, John D. MacArthur Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, 5-17-2021, “Against Afropessimism,” https://www.ideology-theory-practice.org/blog/against-afropessimism

Afropessimism Distorts the Relationship Between Anti-Blackness, White Supremacy, Patriarchy, and Capitalism

Finally and critically, this version of Afropessimism severely mischaracterises the relationship between anti-blackness, white supremacy, and capitalism.[17] Wilderson asserts that political economy is of little use for analysing the black condition as the condition of the slave, the condition of blacks, is subject to violence that cannot be explained by political economy. Further, the status of the slave is invariant to “historical shifts.” I assert that only by understanding the interaction between the multiple systems of domination blacks are subject to—white supremacy (of which anti-blackness is a central structural feature), patriarchy and capitalism—will we be able to understand for any given era the status of blacks; the massive and multiple forms of violence that blacks experience, and the way forward toward full black liberation.

In Afropessimism, Wilderson only briefly considers the role of political economy in black subjugation. He argues that the use/study of political economy cannot explain the violence committed against blacks. This violence, Wilderson argues, is invariant across time. Specifically:

“Black people exist in the throes of what historian David Eltis calls ‘violence beyond the limit,’ by which he means: (a) in the libidinal economy there are no forms of violence so excessive that they would be considered too cruel to inflict upon Blacks; and (b) in political economy there are no rational explanations for this limitless theatre of cruelty, no explanations that would make political or economic sense of the violence that positions and punishes Blackness….the Slave’s relationship to violence is open-ended…unaccountable to historical shifts.”[18]

What Wilderson misses is that blacks are subject to multiple sources of violence—the cumulative nature of which is monstrous. Simultaneously analysing the articulation of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism leads one to the realisation that blacks depending on context in various combinations experience violence as workers, women, and/or as black people. Each system of domination routinely inflicts violence for those at the bottom of each hierarchy. I would add that an aspect of white supremacy and anti-blackness is that for blacks even the forms of violence that derive from patriarchy and capitalism are intensified due to white supremacy. This violence is also rational to the degree that each form of violence is ultimately aimed at reinforcing the rule of those at the top of each system of domination.

In a much earlier essay, Wilderson more directly addresses the relationship between capitalism and black subjugation. Wilderson asserts that “…the United States is constructed at the intersection of both a capitalist and white supremacist matrix.”[19] This statement is promising in that it hints at the simultaneous analysis of the interaction between capitalism and white supremacy. Yet, he does not sufficiently explore the consequences of this statement and does not analyse the actual dynamics created by the articulation of capitalism and white supremacy.

For example, in Afropessimism Wilderson correctly asserts that “….the emergence of the slave, the subject-effect of an ensemble of direct relations of force marks the emergence of the capitalism itself.”[20] The “primitive” accumulation necessary for the establishment of the capitalist social order does have at its centre the brutal and hideous social relations of slavery and the slave trade, but not only slavery.[21] But unlike what Wilderson argues, the historical record shows that under white supremacy and colonialism blacks are not the only racially subordinate group to be subject to “direct relations of force.” As Ince argues, “direct relations of force” do not only mark the subject of the slave, but of the colonised more generally such as the genocide of the indigenous peoples of particularly the “New” World (itself a precondition of capitalism).[22] Establishing and maintaining capitalism has required the expropriation of resources and labour—simultaneously wedded to the violation of black, brown, and yellow bodies throughout the world. In the end, non-white bodies are disposable in the global North and South; in the ghettoes, barrios, reservations, prisons, refugee camps and immigration detention centres that can be grimly found throughout the world. The particularities are important—and anti-blackness is a key particularity that shapes capitalism and white supremacy, but as argued earlier, it still a part a global system of white supremacy marked by direct relations of force, and which non-whites are racialised differently by that force.

Within the context of the U.S., only a type of stubborn blindness, a refusal to acknowledge the historical record, and refusal to see the interrelationship between capitalism and racial domination can lead those such as Wilderson to argue that “we were never meant to be workers…..From the very beginning, we were meant to be accumulated and die.”[23] This assertion flies against the historical evidence. No, blacks were meant to work, die, and be accumulated as need be. White supremacy often demands that blacks die. Capitalism demands that blacks must also, when necessary work and/or be accumulated. Each, and patriarchy as well, continually make their bloody demands. Through politics and other means of struggle blacks continually resist. This resistance can only be successful by understanding the mutual articulation between each system of domination.

Conclusion: What is at Stake?

What is at stake is far more critical than an abstract academic debate between theorists. These debates speak directly to how we understand Trump’s victory in the 2016 presidential elections and the racist, authoritarian and potentially fascist phenomenon of “Trumpism” and the rise of neo-fascist movements in the global north and south. It speaks to how we best understand the accelerating rates of inequality in both the global north and south popularly described by Thomas Piketty.[24] It speaks to how we understand the rising wave of violence that black folks face here, throughout the Diaspora, and within Africa itself.

Afropessimists have an ahistorical narrative that distorts the relationship of white supremacy to capitalism—insisting despite all historical and contemporary empirical evidence to the contrary that the core logics of slave-based anti-blackness exists outside of, and ultimately invariant to, the dynamics of the capitalist political economy. This strand of theorising has taken root in real-world activism—in this case among young black activists struggling once again for black liberation. Afropessimism, however, presents real political dangers for those organising for black liberation. I will mention three such dangers here. By arguing that black subjugation lies outside the realm of the political, Afropessimism serves as a basis for political demobilisation rather than mobilisation. Indeed, Wilderson is correct when he states, “This is a difficult cognitive map for most activists to adjust to because it actually takes the problem outside of politics.”[25] Second, Afropessimism severely undermines those attempting to build solidarity with other racially subordinate groups. Do we still need to be building independent radical black movements and organisations? Yes. Is building solidarity hard. Yes. Is one likely to experience anti-black racism from some other peoples of colour? Yes. Is it still a necessary task if meaningful political victories are to be achieved? Yes.

Third, by ignoring the class and gender dynamics within black communities, Afropessimism makes it far more difficult to understand the dynamics of intra-black politics. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fighting all forms of oppression and domination that are experienced within black communities. Afropessimists are correct to insist that the logics of racial domination are autonomous and not fully determined by a capitalist social order. Afropessimists fail to understand, however, the effects of the interaction of multiple systems of domination have on black life and politics. It is our task to forge better theoretical weapons to not only illuminate the nature of oppressive systems of domination, but also to provide effective tools to combat oppression.

### AT: Link---Fiat / You Didn’t Do Anything

### AT: Sharpe/Wake Work – 2AC

#### A static account of blackness-as-abjection denies the ideological evolution of systems of racial capitalism. Racial capitalism operates via co-optation rather than pure elimination or abjection.

Arun Saldanha 19, Geography, Environment, and Society @ University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Minneapolis, "A date with destiny: Racial capitalism and the beginnings of the Anthropocene," Environmental Planning D: Society and Space, vol. 0, no. 0, published online first, pp. 11-14, DOI: 10.1177/0263775819871964

Second, pointing out that coercion, warfare, and letting die are at the heart of the global system does not necessarily deny the forcefulness of more seductive ideological processes. To put it bluntly, there must be more benignness to the capitalist system or it would have been overthrown long ago. Deleuze and Guattari’s work insists on the immense functionality of consumerism in chaining populations to the very megamachine which oppresses them. When Glen Coulthard (2014) takes aim at Canada’s liberal politics of recognition which slots its Indigenous peoples into a capitalist state while leaving intact the property codes which have always benefited white settlers, he tells Marx(ists) primitive accumulation encompasses not only the violences of genocide but an inculcation of possessive individualism amongst Native populations which continues unabated today (cf. Hartman, 1997 on such individualism amongst legally emancipated African Americans). If Wolfe and Coulthard conceive settler-colonialism (and primitive accumulation) as a “structure” rather than an “event,” they are in effect saying it had to transform itself from a regime of outright elimination and dispossession into a more subtle one of legalistic recognition, exploitation, and sentimental exoticization. This is not to say physical violence against Indigenous peoples is no longer prevalent. Ontologically, however, following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), more than annihilation, it is life, flow, desire, and productivity that racial capitalism feeds off, and this makes it all the more insidious.

In Christina Sharpe’s influential theorization (2016), blackness is a hole in human “being” itself, the reduction of a part of humanity to thinghood. Like others in the Afropessimist idiom, Sharpe (2016: 11–14) challenges the hegemonic assumption that the Shoah embodies modernity’s most radical evil, noting the violences of trans-Atlantic slavery not only include the still-ongoing eradication of sociocultural rootedness but have been neglected and misrepresented. In a move parallel to Coulthard’s on settler-colonialism, Sharpe conceives slavery not as a past event but the anchor of the structure of (Euro- American) society, which is in itself “antiblack” in that it is premised on the total suppression of black subjecthood. She thereby formally emulates a line of European thinkers like Giorgio Agamben on the role that the absolute abjection of Auschwitz plays in constituting the humanist mythology of modernity: if the intrinsic link between modernity and the Shoah must be disavowed for humanity to continue conceiving itself in liberal-progressivist vein, the more unspeakable disaster for Sharpe is that of slavery. But while European Jewishness constituted itself successfully after its near eradication—controversially in the form of Zionism—black being is for Sharpe always already a structural impossibility (black as written in Heideggerian typography by Warren, 2018).

Rethinking blackness by way of modernity’s effort to extirpate it, Afropessimism’s position is radical, and it is conscious of the risk of repeating the oft-noted exceptionalist manner in which Israel puts the Shoah to use towards settler-colonial ends (see Wolfe, 2016). Black activists including Angela Davis (in a YouTube video, 2018, with Gayatri Spivak agreeing) have taken issue with this exceptionalist tendency, as inscribed in the term antiblackness and the resurgence of a black nationalism (see also Olaloku-Teriba, 2018 amongst others). Notwithstanding Sharpe’s eloquence in tracing antiblackness from the Middle Passage to refugee drownings in the Mediterranean, a Deleuze–Guattarian approach to racial capitalism differs markedly in that it seeks to map the specific modalities, gradients, and absurdities of institutional racism. Comprehending police brutality, for example, requires concepts like gentrification, securitization, and masculinity, and cannot follow directly from a negativity of blackness at the metaphysical level. We thereby avoid the quasi-theological dispute about which group has historically endured the most suffering. And while the global archives of violence against black peoples must continue to be elaborated, is it the case that slavery and racism seek to absolutely evacuate humanity from the enslaved or incarcerated body? Is it not precisely as humans capable of resistance, farming, crime, and sex that slaves were savagely oppressed? While conceptualizing blackness as dehumanized “nonbeing” makes sense in a Heideggerian framework, for Deleuze and Guattari and (broadly internationalist) feminists like Davis and Spivak, there can be no such sweeping binary between black and everything else (another critique of Afropessimist binarization is found in Day, 2015).

Finally, the historical question is how genocide and slavery prepared for capitalism. The integration of the United States of America as a white-majority nation-state and superpower could only be achieved with rapid immigration, urbanization, and fossilfuelled transport. During the time when “pioneer” families and farmers were moving in, there were still sizeable areas controlled by Native confederations. When we look at specific regions like William Cronon (1991) does with the Midwest, the eradication of Native ecosystems and the concomitant creation of new European-derived ones—what Alfred Crosby (1986) from a more conservative angle calls “Neo-Europes”—became possible with aggressive new urban assemblages and foodways. White farmers and Indigenous populations have lived in constant tension on the Great Plains. What environmental histories like Cronon show, complementing accounts like Coulthard’s, is that there was a decisive shift in the settling of the American interior when banks could supply loans for parceling land and establishing large infrastructure and industry projects. Tellingly, movies and museums fantasize about the fleeting symbiotic relationships which are supposed to have existed between Indigenous and white. In retrospect, however, such fantasies and the ensuing lamentations about the vanishing Indian were but ideological fig leaves hiding how industrialization in Britain, intra-European imperial wars, and mass consumerism conspired to continue genocide by other means (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). If Indigenous populations had somehow become resistant to Old World diseases and continued using guns and horses efficiently, it is conceivable a patchwork of white and Indigenous states might have persisted, if it were not for a giant wave of capital and migrants coming over from Europe (and later elsewhere). With Indigenous Americans contained and plantation slavery and its quasi-feudal and patriarchal ways outlawed, capital could wipe the continent clean for a new megamachinic arrangement.

Hence ontologizing racial capitalism as always already tethered to slavery and/or genocide avoids the question when exactly “modernity” and the Anthropocene started. For the perspective I am developing, industrialization and related transformations like wage-labor, urbanization, motorized transport, and mass communications are fundamental shifts. While the slave trade and the displacement of Indigenous peoples were essential to enriching Europe for global hegemony, it is manufacturing with its intrinsic relation to proletarianization and slums, accelerating technological innovation, and an irrepressible invitation to consume which spread around the planet, which meant that extermination and coerced labor became slower and more covert processes. Doubtless there are work and mobility conditions approaching chattel slavery in all continents, and there is plenty of biopolitical domination approaching genocide even during alleged peace times. But it is difficult to see how multinational corporations, megacities, and mass migration could have obtained were it not for industrial capitalism overcoming the severe limitations built into the mercantile, plantation, colonial, and eliminationist models.

In the US itself, as scholars from WEB Du Bois (1935) onwards have shown, slavery had to be formally abolished for manufacturing and cities to kick off, spurring processes like the Great Migration of African Americans and, more fortuitously, black music. Following Deleuze and Guattari (and Marx), however dire the extraction of surplus-value from the laboring body, racial capitalism involves some degree (and ideology) of “freedom.” Saidiya Hartman’s (1997) excavation of the terroristic, legal, and psychical aspects of slavery living on after legal Emancipation demonstrates there are strong but disavowed continuities in institutional racism and misogyny. But however violent the post-Emancipation United States has been, from lynching to the prison-industrial complex to the war on crack, there was also the slow rise of black subjectivity, as testified by the black radical tradition to which Hartman herself belongs. She presents one of the finest analyses of the libidinal economies and legal codifications precluding a real black liberation from racial capitalism and individualism, hence of the hypocrisy underneath the official nationalist ideology of “we the people.” Yet an overemphasis on abjection deters from appreciating the enduring plasticity of racism.1 Politically speaking, there must be room, as there is for Du Bois, Fanon, Angela Davis, and the Black Panthers, for theorizing how a black elite could possibly emerge against such backdrop of violence and despair, and why it does not dismantle the system of privilege it gains from itself (from Booker Washington to Jay Z). To wit, if blackness is modernity’s quintessential site of abjection, it becomes difficult to explain why the “most powerful man on Earth” has been black. Afropessimists have of course passionately critiqued the deep complicity with an antiblack system shaping Barack Obama and all liberal antiracism, but true to their pessimistic stance consistently eschew formulating where exactly hope for black people (and other minorities) could come from. With the benefit of hindsight, we can understand why capital was compelled to expunge slavery and feudal territorialities, often pitting itself explicitly against older forms of racism and sexism, as well as colonialism and nationalism. After the Second World War, the system of United Nations and Bretton-Woods explicitly aimed to allow capital to flow planet-wide so as to transcend the genocidal nationalisms and imperialisms which had just led to such destruction, even though the world remained catastrophically divided between East and West. Formal decolonization was on the one hand an egalitarian antiracist project often inspired by Marxism-Leninism, but on the other, it turned out to be a new phase in capital’s expansion under the rubric of development, with China now occupying the strangest systemic role. However hypocritical the reproach of premodern brutalities by industrial capitalism, it has proven tremendously effective.

Following feminist, black, postcolonial/decolonial, Indigenous, and queer critiques, capital cannot be the only system of violence, even if it posits itself as the dominant one. For Deleuze and Guattari, capital is always reconfiguring the “despotic” or “barbarian” assemblages of patriarchy, religion, kinship, cruelty, extraction of resources, and domestication of plants and animals, all with their various racial dimensions (Saldanha and Adams, 2013). There can only be an extreme fluidity of money by virtue of the fixities of borders, commodification, and biopower. And these pseudo-archaic forces, these reterritorializations through the deterritorializing impetus of capital, have their own ecohistories which the multidisciplinary conversations around the Anthropocene are bringing to light. What is required is a nonreductionist ontology which grants that capital strives to bring all of life, in fact all of the thinkable universe, into its preternatural ambit, but it can do so only by virtue of the biophysical and sociocultural characteristics of what it captures. Capital is such a formidable genie precisely because it is conjured from deep within the earth.

#### Ontology elides the differently situated yet coeval anticolonial and antislavery struggles across global racial empire. Racial difference is the afterlife of imperialism. Only recognizing intimacies between slavery and other forms of coerced labor enables self-determination.

Lisa Lowe 15, Distinguished Professor of English and Humanities, faculty member of the Consortium of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora, and Director of the Center for the Humanities at Tufts University, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," Duke University Press, 05/20/2015

Yet without an explicit interrogation of the universal idea of the human, or the unified totalities of nationalist, socialist, or republican ends, the dialectical history of The Black Jacobins could be read as a reiteration of the subsumption of other peoples, lands, and temporalities to the progressive development of the revolutionary slaves as the new subject of modern history. I would suggest otherwise that James’s commitment to understanding differently situated yet coeval struggles against colonialism and exploitation, so evident in his lifelong thinking and political practice, mitigates against such a reading.73 Connections across world differences were thematized in so many of his writings, from Mariners, Renegades and Castaways, his discussion of the international laborers in the motley whaling crew in Melville’s Moby-Dick, to Beyond a Bound- ary, his memoir that considered the “heterotopian” engagements of the cricket team as a terrain for anticolonial solidarity and struggle.74 In the 1950s and 1960s, when James was active in the West Indian Federal Labour Party, a federation of Caribbean socialist groups and Labour parties that ranged across Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Monserrat, Jamaica, St. Kitts, and St. Lucia, the urgency of addressing what Stuart Hall would later term the “non-homogenous class subject” was evident in James’s efforts to connect the laboring groups who had been divided by race under British colonialism in the West Indies.75 In “Lecture on Federation (West Indies and British Guiana)” (1958), James spoke about the dangers of nationalism in the buildup to independence, which brought with it racial rivalry and tension between Blacks and Asian Indians, in Trinidad and in British Guiana; without implying their equivalence, he urged the necessary collaboration of “the colonized of Africa, the West Indies, and Indochina . . . in order to have economic freedom from colonialism.” 76 In a pamphlet, “The West Indian of East Indian Descent,” James discussed the colonial legacy of racism between West Indians of East Indian and African descent, and framed the importance of their solidarity: “Sugar and oil workers together can make a new Trinidad.” He spoke of the “miserable division” into racial parties as the afterlife of colonialism in the postcolonial nation. Racial differences, he wrote, are “the off-spring of imperialism and colonialism which lived on them and could not live otherwise. Under Independence, they are a disgrace and a scandal.”77 In this sense, despite James’s commitment to dialectical history, in his later life, his political imagination remained concerned with episodes and constellations that went “beyond a boundary,” and whose pitfalls and outcomes could not be subsumed within a singular teleology or universal history.

James would understand that colonialism in the West Indies comprised different yet linked logics of settlement, slavery, and bonded immigrant labor, according to which various peoples were governed differently in the empire’s interest. He would surmise that colonialism also created conditions of encounter and mixture, and transformed definitions of communities, both as it was interpreted to have existed in the past and as it was lived in the present. The violent appropriations of land, through subjection and extermination of indigenous people in the Americas, were the conditions of possibility for transatlantic slavery and for the brutal transport and commodification of African labor to the so-called new world. The seventeenth-and eighteenth-century sugar industry brought together this ongoing settler colonialism in the Americas with the horrors of slave plantations, which produced the wealth for the West Indian plantocracy, and for the European colonial mercantile powers. Asia and Asian labor became deeply implicated in abolition and the legal end of slavery and the slave trade: the importing of Chinese and Indian workers was imagined as a means to replace the slaves, while the colonial profits of the plantation system were expanded in the imperial East Indies and China trades in goods and people. Settler colonialism enforcing native genocide and removal, the opposition of slavery and wage labor, agrarian production acceding to metropolitan industry, maritime trade and colonial military sovereignty—these processes connected four continents and were intimate parts of the same imperial conjuncture. These conditions were accompanied by the intimacies of contacts and conflicts between captured, colonized subjects and communities, differentially affected by the longer history of empire. The afterlives of these conditions are deciphered not only in the great events of revolutions, wars, and republics, but in the phenomena of everyday life, not only in the monumental successes, but also in the too frequently overlooked so-called failures. James would understand that distilling a singular triumphant history out of this braided past would elide the interdependence of both these different colonial projects, and their anticolonial counter-formations. Forgetting these important connections restricts understanding the linked modes of colonial governance across continents, and impedes the anticolonial and antislavery imagination about the imminent, necessary means for ongoing projects of decolonization.

### AT: Link---KWYRLS

### AT: Parasitic on Black Debate---2AC

#### 2. Demanding an indebted relationship to Black debate mimics territorialization and coercive use of debt. Homogenizing Black debate as a worldview that must be stewarded through each debate prevents experiments in new forms of solidarity.

Jennifer Nash 20, Jean Fox O'Barr Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University, "Citational Desires: On Black Feminism's Institutional Longings," pp. 77-80

The call to “bring out your dead” is a plea to make visible how Black women have labored intensively to produce space in the academy for Black feminist theory, and for Black women’s bodies. And this labor has produced embodied consequences for Black women, most often discussed as the premature deaths that have come to be associated with Black feminist labor, with the university increasingly theorized as violently extractive, literally sucking the life out of Black women. The failure to cite this work is often taken as evidence of an institutional disregard for Black women’s intellectual labor and lives, even as institutions increasingly rely on the aesthetics of diversity which Black women’s bodies are thought to emblemize.6

In the twenty-five years since duCille’s article was published—as Black feminist theory’s worldmaking possibilities have found partial homes in the university—the question of how scholars, particularly non-Black scholars, engage with and in Black feminist theory remains a site of intense debate for Black feminist scholars. Indeed, one might read the long history of Black feminist scholarly engagement with the university, particularly around the anxiety that Black feminism and Black feminists might not “survive the academy,”7 as a rumination on Black feminism’s uneasy relationship with its simultaneous precarity and institutionalization, and as a meditation on what it means to find the field occupied by scholars who do not identify as Black women, who are not trained in Black feminist studies, and who, as duCille suggests, might be drawn to Black feminist theory for an array of reasons, from genuine intellectual and political commitment to a sense that Black feminism offers a valuable left credential.8 There remains a tremendous anxiety around how we Black feminists determine or discern whether scholars’ mobilization of Black feminist theory is genuine or predatory, embedded in political commitment or rooted in gaming a hyper-competitive academic marketplace.

The Black feminist concern about scholars with questionable “commitments” to Black feminist theory and praxis reveals that Black feminists construct our field in very particular ways. Black feminists often narrate their work as requiring deep intellectual and political commitments, with the work itself standing as a form of care for the soul (here, we might think of Sara Ahmed’s reflection on Black feminist theory as not only an intellectual project but also a “life-line,”9 or Eric Anthony Grollman’s assertion that “Black feminism will save my life”10). Thus, to practice Black feminist scholarship is imagined to require a worldview, a praxis, and an ethical commitment, not simply a theoretical framework, method, and approach to answer a research question, as one might imagine research in other fields. Of course, this figuring of Black feminist intellectual production as soul work and laboring with it as “being saved” is precisely the language of love that can mask work, much as, Black feminists have argued, the institution has constantly extracted, devalued, and rendered invisible Black women’s intellectual, psychic, and material labor.11 This is where the call for “care” becomes so central to Black feminist work: to treat Black feminist theory, to treat Black feminist foremothers, to treat Black feminist theoretical innovations with respect and thoughtfulness is imagined to do justice to Black feminism’s salvific capacities.

How then have Black feminists suggested that scholars navigate this minefield where to not engage Black feminist theory is to ignore Black women’s intellectual production and to engage Black feminist theory can be seen as an act of appropriation, colonization, or even anti-Black and misogynistic violence? This essay argues that the Black feminist preoccupation with the politics of citation—manifested in the celebration of certain “generous” or “collective” citational practices and the rejection of dominant citational practices—has been a strategy designed to manage Black feminist anxieties around the field’s cache.12 Here, citationality is about far more than a name on a page—it is nothing short of life or death. To name Black women innovators is to do justice to their labor, their lives, their soul work. I see the preoccupation with citation—the hailing of some forms of citation as just, even as manifesting Black feminist ethics, and the critiquing of other forms of citation as problematically enforcing prevailing institutional logics—as a visible manifestation of Black feminists’ collective anxiety about the field’s popularity generally, and about the particular circulation of certain Black feminist analytics, methods, and theories, perhaps most visibly intersectionality.

This anxiety has undergirded the popular and scholarly call to “cite Black women” as a practice of care, and has resulted in citation becoming the primary way that scholars are called upon to make visible their ethical engagement with, rather than the strategic deployment of Black feminist work. As Ahmed notes, “citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow.”13 Citing “correctly”—and describing citation as something political and intentional—is imagined as a form of debt acknowledgement, and also a way of aligning oneself with the role of preservationist and “steward” rather than with that of the interloper or even colonizer. In describing the Black feminist construction of some forms of citation as ethical “stewardship,” I draw on Ange-Marie Hancock’s work on intersectionality which celebrates “stewardship” as the hallmark of generous engagement with the analytic. Hancock notes that “we must also act as what I call ‘stewards’ of intersectionality studies—create epistemic communities both local and global that will ensure the production of intersectional work that is simultaneously inclusive of the heterogeneity of intersectionality studies and is clear about how not to engage intersectionality.”14 For Hancock, “stewardship” is a form of careful and forward-looking engagement with intersectionality, a loving, tender orientation toward the analytic committed to ensuring its future viability and vitality. It is this notion of preservationist rather than strategic or even careerist use of Black feminist theory that I argue underpins Black feminist advocacy around a certain politics of citation.

In this essay, I interrogate the Black feminist argument that certain forms of citation reveal an ethical usage of Black feminist theory and others index a non-ethical deployment or even theft. My venture here, as in my earlier work, is to treat this preoccupation with ethical usage as one of the myriad ways that Black feminist theory invests in itself as intellectual property,15 as terrain that must be defended from the specter of dangerous critics, colonizers, appropriators, and even from scholars who lack the requisite commitment to the tradition.16 While Hancock, for example, develops her conception of stewardship as a form of collective ownership over intersectionality, advancing the notion that we can all carefully hold intersectionality and pass it on, I read this preoccupation with correct usage as indicative of a collective desire to maintain the territory of Black feminist theory, ensuring that it is appropriately and correctly tended. In critically exploring the preoccupation with an ethical politics of citation as a performance of stewardship, my intention is not to disavow the ongoing Black feminist conversations about the invisibility of Black women’s labor (and lives) in the university, or the ways that academic disciplines have been formed around the simultaneous invisibility and strategic deployment of Black women’s ideas. Instead, my commitment in this essay is to probing the psychic structure and attachments of Black feminist theory itself, always with an investment in imagining how we might deepen our commitments to non-captivity and non-territoriality in the most profoundly challenging of moments, precisely the one that duCille describes: when our work, which Black feminists have always argued is not merely academic work but life-sustaining creative output, feels like it is being used, circulated, mobilized, taken apart from our names, our histories, our bodies. I am as invested in understanding the feeling of having something taken from us as I am in exploring the development of citation as a tool for discerning the colonizer from the ally. I seek to urge Black feminist scholars to find other ways to respond to the feeling we have of being under siege, and to sit with rather than seek to resolve through a territorial impulse precisely the ambivalence that duCille suggests is constitutive of Black feminist academic subjectivity.