

Huey P. Newton's Intercommunalism: An Unacknowledged Theory of Empire

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Abstract

Huey P. Newton remains one the left's intellectual enigmas. Although lauded for being the leader of the Black Panther Party, Newton is relatively unacknowledged as an intellectual. This article challenges the neglect of Newton's thought by shedding light on his theory of empire, and the present-day value of returning to his thought. The article centres on how Newton's critique of what he called 'reactionary intercommunalism' prefigures many of the elements found in the work of Hardt and Negri on empire. This comparison will be used to show how Newton not only foresaw elements of the rise of contemporary neoliberal globalization, but also offered an idea of political solidarity and revolutionary politics for such a context. The article concludes by highlighting how Newton's ideas about the need for a war of position based on 'survival pending revolution' presents a more theoretically and empirically salient conceptualization of resistance than his successors.

Keywords

Black Panthers, Black Power, empire, globalization, intercommunalism, multitude, neoliberalism

Huey P. Newton: An Unacknowledged Intellectual

Something else fuels the left's criticism of Huey. They like us picking up guns and shooting it out with the pigs. But they don't want us as theoretical leaders. (Hilliard, 1993: 319)

Despite the fact that Huey P. Newton wrote extensively on issues such as anti-racism, anti-imperialism, police brutality, revolutionary violence, masculinity, sexuality and globalization,¹ he has always been something of an intellectual enigma. While lauded for being the co-founder and

leader of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and its initial armed resistance against state racism, Newton remains relatively unacknowledged as a theoretician. This may have been the result of the adage that the 'winners' get to write history. The early 1970s saw the apex of the Black Panther Party's embodiment of the revolutionary aspects of the Black Power era (Joseph, 2006). This not only saw FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover dub the Panthers the 'greatest threat' to internal US security, but also saw the party become a global icon of anti-racist and anti-imperialist politics (Angelo, 2009; Slate, 2012). However, by the mid-1970s, the Panthers and Newton had all but fallen apart as revolutionary agents, partly as a result of internal strife and, in large part, as a result of the counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO) of the US state. When the Panthers officially disbanded in the early 1980s, and Newton was murdered while in the spiral of his own drug addiction, the historical record seemed to declare them, and Black Power in general, as the failed, violent and regressive counterpart to the progressive, non-violent and successful US civil rights movement (Pearson, 1994; Street, 2010).

Over the last two decades, Black Power, and specifically the Black Panther Party, has been reappraised by a new generation of scholars. These largely historical studies have put the progressive and revolutionary politics of Black Power, and groups such as the Black Panthers, at the centre of their narratives (Bloom and Joshua, 2013; Joseph, 2006; Murch, 2010; Spencer, 2016). These works also place the Black Panthers within a longer historical arc of Black radicalism, decolonial thought and the politics of liberation both within and beyond the US (Singh, 2004; Slate, 2012). Yet, Newton's 'dialectical materialism', which in a Fanonian sense attempted to stretch and re-analyse Marxist concepts within the colonial environment, are still relatively absent from mainstream theoretical debates. This article aims to contribute to the burgeoning historical reappraisal of Black Power and the Black Panthers by reflecting on the idea of Newton as a 'radical social theorist' (Jefferies, 2002). Moreover, it seeks to show how Newton's idea of 'intercommunalism' – which saw him link the oppression of Black Americans with the logic and machinations of a newly formed, US-enforced global capitalist 'empire' – is a theoretical forerunner of contemporary debates about the material and political effects of neoliberal globalization.²

To achieve this, I want to contrast Newton's idea of 'intercommunalism' with Hardt and Negri's formulation of empire (Hardt and Negri, 1999, 2004, 2009). This choice of comparison is made because of Hardt and Negri's popularizing of the term 'empire' as a description of neoliberal globalization, and the way in which the same authors also hastily skim over Newton's theoretical contributions in their own work. In the third part of their trilogy on empire, for example, Hardt and Negri (2009: 331, 336) approvingly cite Newton's idea of intercommunalism as being supportive of their argument that human liberation is

tied to the destruction of racial and other forms of identity politics.³ Newton's thought here is seen as a forerunner of the ideas in Paul Gilroy's (2000) work on the constructed and unstable nature of racial division. But at no point in their much-debated trilogy about capital's transformation from a system of modern imperialism to a postmodern form of global empire do they engage with Newton's work on intercommunalism. As this article will highlight, this is a missed opportunity, as Newton's idea of intercommunalism appears to prefigure elements of Hardt and Negri's ontology of empire almost 40 years earlier, while at the same time offering a different narration of the politics of resistance within empire.⁴ This comparison is made even more politically prescient given the current social and political convulsions caused by the effects of neoliberal globalization. Hardt and Negri's work on the smooth space of empire became a *lingua franca* among activist circles throughout the early 2000s, providing a narration of the rise and potential fall of empire through the emergence of a planetary multitude. However, the recent rise in visceral and visible racism, xenophobia and regressive nationalism, especially across the Global North, points towards a far more dystopian future and fractured multitude. What I want to suggest is that Newton's narration of empire not only provides us with a more theoretically salient narration of the effects of empire, but also a far better conceptualization of potential resistance in our contemporary moment.

The article consists of four parts. The first part briefly outlines Hardt and Negri's understanding of neoliberal globalization and the emergence of what they call 'empire'. The second section outlines Newton's idea of reactionary intercommunalism and how his work prefigures significant elements of Hardt and Negri's ontology of empire. The third part seeks to show the similarities between Hardt and Negri's idea of the multitude and Newton's evocation of revolutionary intercommunalism. The fourth part will focus on the key differences between Newton and Hardt and Negri's politics of resistance within empire. This will stress that Newton's ideas about the regressive effects of capitalist exploitation present a different conceptualization of resistance within the confines of empire. In conclusion, the article highlights how Newton's analysis of empire offers a narration of the current trajectory of empire that is more cogent than that of his successors both theoretically and empirically.

Hardt and Negri's Empire: Capital's Smooth Space

The details of Hardt and Negri's (1999, 2004, 2009) neo-Marxist narration of neoliberal globalization as a form of global capitalist empire are well known. Empire is not a 'weak echo of modern imperialism', Hardt and Negri write, but a new 'form of rule' through global markets and circuits of production and transnational forms of political command

(Hardt and Negri, 1999: xi, 146). While earlier forms of imperialism had provided avenues for the expansion of capital into foreign territories, this had usually pivoted on nation-state interests acting as a 'straitjacket' for the free flow of money, technology, people and goods (Hardt and Negri, 1999: 31, 33). However, with the end of the Cold War and the hegemony of neoliberal globalization, the duo contend that capital is no longer constrained by national imperialist projects. Neoliberalism's decentralized and deterritorialized global networks of production, division of labour and finance have now founded a 'smooth space' for capital akin to Marx's conception of a world market. The ultimate symbol of this 'smooth space' are transnational corporations and the transnational capitalist class, who now directly 'distribute labour power over various markets, functionally allocate resources and organize hierarchically the various sectors of world production' (Hardt and Negri, 1999: 31–2).

The geo-economic and geo-political impact of what Hardt and Negri call the 'post-modernization of the global economy' can be said to be three-fold. The first is that neoliberal globalization's hegemonic rise in the late 1970s has transformed the power of the nation-state and led to the collapse of the classic conception of modern sovereignty. The nation-state now finds its jurisdiction and authority undermined and transformed by a process of 'de-nationalization'. This sees state elites look to enforce the tenets of neoliberal globalization, such as deregulation, privatization and openness to foreign capital, and for these to become key parts of the national interest (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 162–4).

The second impact of the postmodernization of the global economy is that the enforcement of neoliberal globalization through national policy sees the subsequent movement of government and politics from the democratized nation-state to undemocratized global governance and international financial institutions such as the United Nations, G7 (20), International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization and World Bank (Hardt and Negri, 1999: 306–9). This transnational form of capitalist power is policed by what Hardt and Negri denote as the 'global aristocracy'. This pyramid structure sees the US, its capital, state and military power, in the role of the 'monarch' negotiating its hegemony through relationships with the 'limited aristocracy' of other advanced capitalist states such as members of the G20 and the pseudo representatives of the people, such as nation-state politicians, non-governmental organizations, and dominant voices in the media. All of these groups come into conflict with one another, but all share a role in mediating the contradictions and conflicts generated by capitalist social relations (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 278).

The final impact of the postmodernization of the global economy is neoliberal globalization's disarticulating of Fordism and the emergence of a postcolonial form of capitalism. It is no longer possible, Hardt and Negri argue, to demarcate large geographical zones as First and Third

World, centre and periphery, North and South. This is not to say that countries and economies like 'the United States and Brazil, Britain and India' are now identical in terms of capitalist production but rather that 'between them are no differences of nature, only differences of degree' (Hardt and Negri, 1999: 335). This reflects Hardt and Negri's (1999: xii) belief that the new geo-economic and geo-political formation of empire now resembles a system of power that has 'no outside'.

Newton's Empire: Reactionary Intercommunalism

Having outlined Hardt and Negri's ontology of empire, in this section I will demonstrate how Newton's work prefigures these ontological descriptions. Newton's initial formulation of intercommunalism in November 1970 saw him place the concept within the ideological trajectory of the Black Panther Party.⁵ In Newton's narrative, the party had initially been founded in 1966 on the tenets of Black Nationalism. This had seen the party replicate elements of Malcolm X's thought during his time in the Nation of Islam, which conceptualized Black Americans as a 'dispersed colony' within the US and led Malcolm X to demand self-determination for African Americans through the establishment of a separate Black nation-state.

The Panthers' Black Nationalism was later replaced with a revolutionary nationalism, 'that, is, nationalism plus socialism' (Newton, 2002: 169–70, 184–5). This saw the Panthers align self-determination for Black Americans, which still included the possibility of a separate Black nation-state, with the eradication of capitalism. Adopting an idea of 'racial capitalism' (Robinson, 2000), the Panthers took racial oppression and capitalism to be entwined in the formation of the US state and in its current domination of the entire US population, both non-white and white. The only way to change the racist nature of US society was thus to 'revolutionize or transform' its economic institutions (Newton, 2009a: 196).

The Panthers' revolutionary nationalism saw them create alliances with a plethora of social movements such as the student-led anti-Vietnam war and peace movements, urban ethnic minority groups like the Young Lords Organization and poor white American groups like the Young Patriots Organization. Embracing the role of a vanguard party, the Panthers were at the forefront of the New Left and the re-articulating of socialist revolution within America (Jeffries, 2002: 69–74). The Panthers' revolutionary nationalism was, in turn, supplanted by the idea of internationalism, which saw the Panthers forge links of solidarity and common purpose with the 'peoples of the world' pursuing nationhood, such as the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam, the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization. This internationalism tied in the Panthers'

revolutionary nationalism with Third Worldism and the geo-politics of what Prashad (2007) has called 'the Third World Project'.

By late 1970, Newton came to the realization that even internationalism was no longer the correct approach for the Panthers. Newton argued that national politics, whether nationalist or internationalist, were obsolete due to the hegemony of US power. The geo-political ramifications of the Second World War had seen the US penetrate the former holdings of European imperial empires and reshape the global economy in its own interests. The post-war concentration of global production capabilities and raw materials in the hands of its economically powerful and increasingly multinational corporations, combined with the technological superiority of its military and the dominance of its emergent mass media, meant that the US now resembled an imperial 'empire' rather than nation-state (Newton, 2002: 169, 186, 251–3, 300, 2009a: 39). However, this US empire differed from the 'primitive empire' of the Romans, or even modern European imperial empires, because of its unrivalled global reach:

the evidence shows very clearly that the United States is not a nation, for its power transcends geographical boundaries and extends into every territory of the world. Through modern technology the United States can control the institutions of other countries. Hence, so long as it can control the political forces, the cultural institutions, the economy, the resources and military of other countries at will and for the narrow interests of a small clique then we cannot say that America is a nation any longer – it is an Empire. (Newton, 1970: 7)

The US 'ruling circle', which Newton located in the nexus between corporate power and government power, now held unprecedented direct or indirect power over every nation on earth. This, in turn, saw the US economy become a base for an 'international bourgeoisie' and western corporate power (Newton, 2009a: 200). As a result, the characteristics of nationhood, such as 'economic independence, cultural determination, control of the political institutions, territorial integrity, and safety', no longer existed for both the US state or those beyond the US state (Newton, 2002: 170). The interconnection of the world with the interests of the US empire and its international bourgeoisie meant that Third World nations, and even former European imperial powers, now bent to the 'weight' of its interests, 'yielding theoretical national sovereignty' (Newton, 2002: 253). Pre-empting Hardt and Negri's idea of the global aristocracy of empire, Newton declared that the new phase of imperialism now saw clashes between the 'rulers' of empire rather than clashes between the 'rulers and the people' (Newton, 1972a: 9).

Newton's narration of the end of modern sovereignty could be taken as shorthand for similar neo-Marxist critiques of post-war US geopolitical hegemony and the neo-imperialism of the now much feted era of 'embedded liberalism'.⁶ But Newton labelled the US empire 'reactionary intercommunalism' because he foresaw the interconnection of the entirety of the world's communities under a truly global form of capitalism (Newton, 2002: 187). Moreover, Newton put forward the idea that the global contours of the US empire were in the process of bringing forth the 'non-state' era that Marx and Lenin foresaw. However, the key difference was that this non-state centred on global capital and the global exploitation of humanity rather than the global spread of communism and human liberation (Newton, 2002: 170). Reactionary intercommunalism signalled a fundamental change in the nature of capitalist domination because it did not seek simply to replicate Europe's imperial exploitation of resources in the non-white nations of the Third World, but also to mitigate the problem of capitalist over-production by developing a world market and global base of labour and consumption (Newton, 2002: 256–8). The innovation of the US empire thus centred on its ruling circle's realization that 'they cannot send US troops everywhere' and that 'peaceful co-option' was the best way to preserve the capitalist system (Newton, 2002: 260, 265).⁷

This process sought to integrate the Third World's populations into capitalist production and consumption through a 'messianic crusade' to remake the world over: 'in the American image (read: subjected to the American corporate system) if the American Way of Life (read: the corporate economy) is to survive at home' (Newton, 2002: 300). This, in turn, shifted the practice of imperial rule from the occupation of land and native populations to the spread of technology, markets and potential consumers. The proof of this re-articulation of imperial rule was to be found in fundamental changes to the global economy and the geography of industrial production. Predicting the emergence of the new geography of industrial production that characterizes present-day neoliberal globalization, Newton argued that western multinational corporations had begun transplanting advanced industrial technologies from the First World to the Third World (Newton, 2002: 302). As Newton quipped, such multinational corporations did not care whether nations claimed to be communist, or indeed anything else, as long as 'Ford can build its motor company in their territory' (Newton, 2002: 261). Along with this shift in the geography of production, the spreading ideology of capitalist social relations in the non-capitalist world fostered ever greater pools of potential labour, consumers and forms of exploitation (Newton, 2002: 172, 264).

Newton concluded that all nation-states and their populations had now become a 'collection of communities', with no 'superstructure of their own' other than global capitalism. Although these collections of communities suffered different material realities, reactionary

intercommunalism actually meant that people of all cultures were now 'under siege by the same forces' of empire. Once more prefiguring Hardt and Negri's language, Newton (2002: 188) took intercommunalism to mean that there were now only 'differences in degree' between the material realities of Black Americans and other exploited communities across the world:

We see very little difference in what happens to a community here in North America and what happens to a community in Vietnam. We see very little difference in what happens, even culturally, to a Chinese community in San Francisco and a Chinese community in Hong Kong. We see very little difference in what happens to a Black community in Harlem and a Black community in South Africa, a Black community in Angola and one in Mozambique. We see very little difference. So, what has actually happened, is that the non-state has already been accomplished, but it is reactionary.... We are a collection of communities just as the Korean people, the Vietnamese people, and the Chinese people are a collection of communities – a dispersed collection of communities because we have no superstructure of our own. (Newton, 2002: 170–2)

What should be clear from the above exposition is just how much Newton's reactionary intercommunalism prefigures elements of Hardt and Negri's narration of empire. Newton's proto-theorization of neoliberal globalization not only foresaw what Hardt and Negri call de-nationalization and the usurping of modern sovereignty, but also saw how multinational corporations and an emergent transnational capitalist class would be key drivers of such a process of de-nationalization. Newton's belief that a new geography of production would emerge across the globe and disrupt the binaries between First and Third World populations also prefigures Hardt and Negri's analysis of the changing material realities of global capitalism. However, as I show below, the prescience of Newton's work on intercommunalism lies not only with its description of the ontology of neoliberal globalization but also with his conception of the politics of resistance under such circumstances. In the next two sections, I highlight how Newton's idea of revolutionary intercommunalism holds similarities with Hardt and Negri's articulation of 'the multitude' but also how his idea of 'survival pending revolution' raises critical questions about the emergence of revolutionary subjects in the age of neoliberal globalization.

The Multitude: From Hardt and Negri back to Newton

Hardt and Negri's mapping of empire also saw their development of a new radical agent of revolution, which they call 'the multitude'.

This conception of the multitude centres on how the postmodernization of global capitalism is a 'bio-political' regime because production has shifted from the 'means of life' to 'social life itself' (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 299). This has seen the hegemonic status of industrial labour replaced by 'immaterial labour'. Instead of focusing on the hierarchical, production-line-based material goods of its industrial predecessor, 'immaterial labour' produces 'ideas, images, codes, languages, knowledges, affects, and the like, through horizontal networks of communication and cooperation' (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 364).

Hardt and Negri contend that elements of immaterial production are increasingly found among all social levels of society, including the lumpen-proletariat and migrants who have traditionally been excluded by the formal economy. Capitalist exploitation within empire is now based on the privatization of the 'commonwealth of not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, and the modes of sociality that define our relationships' through a 'republic of property' based on laws, patents and enclosure of the commons (Hardt and Negri, 2009: viii–ix, 139).

Yet, Hardt and Negri write that empire's regime of bio-political production also facilitates the chance to re-propose Marx's global 'political project of class struggle' through the concept of the multitude (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 105). The idea of the multitude rejects the notion of a working-class vanguard and instead embraces a revolutionary body that includes all 'those who work under the rule' of bio-political production. Potentially, it is the 'class of those who refuse the rule of capital' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 106). This not only updates class analysis for the terrain of bio-political production but also circumvents Marxism's traditional exclusion of politics centred on identity. Hardt and Negri (2009: 179–84) locate the possible composition of the 'singularities' (identities) that would constitute the multitude through a possible ethics of 'love' engendered by the very forms of decentralized communication and collaboration that are central to bio-political production. For Hardt and Negri, the multitude represents the revolutionary potential of contemporary humanity within bio-political production rather than its actual empirical existence: 'The question to ask, in other words, is not "What is the Multitude?" but rather "What can the 'Multitude' become?"' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 105).

Even if Hardt and Negri are not forthcoming on the empirical composition of the multitude, they do provide clues as to what it would resemble. The multitude must abandon forms of 'love' such as the nation and the family, which would limit the composition of the multitude and prevent the overthrowing of global capitalism. The goal of identity politics must be the eventual destruction of such identities in the pursuit of love between all humanity. This marks the difference between the politics of emancipation, which strives for the freedom to

be who you really are, and the politics of liberation, which aims for the freedom to become what you can become. The politics of identity practised by those constituting the multitude must therefore, ultimately, be abandoned in the hope of innovation and invention beyond the regime of capital that engenders such subdivision in the first place (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 325–33).

The project of the ‘abolition of identity’, write Hardt and Negri (2009: 326), must accompany communism’s traditional focus on the abolition of property and the state. Across the three books that make up their trilogy on empire, Hardt and Negri offer political proposals such as universal basic income, the eradication of borders and open access to the commons that they believe could unite the disparate singularities that would constitute the multitude. Hardt and Negri (2009, 2012), for instance, espouse the virtues of the anti-globalization and Occupy movements as bearers of the possible non-hierarchical and horizontal democratic structures of the multitude (Harrison, 2016).

It should be no surprise that Newton also believed that global revolution, what he called ‘revolutionary intercommunalism’, was possible due to the very ontology of reactionary intercommunalism. Revolutionary intercommunalism was founded on Newton’s belief that attempts to fight reactionary intercommunalism through forms of nationalism, or even internationalism, were contradictory at political, economic and philosophical levels. The global economic and political contours of reactionary intercommunalism now meant that nations could no longer decolonize and pursue forms of sovereignty in order to practise nationalism, or even internationalism, because nations could not exist independently of the powers of empire, and the economic processes of empire now meant that global rather than national justice must be pursued (Newton, 2002: 187).

The only solution to reactionary intercommunalism’s ‘distorted form of collectivity’, where the ‘superstructure of Wall Street’ appropriated the wealth that the global communities of ‘labour’ produced, was to liberate all the communities of the world. Revolutionary intercommunalism was the name Newton gave to eradicating capitalist social relations and the redistribution of economic and political power to communities in order to eventually disperse such economic and political power to ‘benefit all the earth’s people (not peoples)’. In this future world, humanity would become ‘one community’ that would ‘transform the world into a place where people will be happy, wars will end, the state itself will no longer exist’. Newton identified this as communism (Newton, 2002: 174).

Although Newton did not theorize the emergence of a bio-political economic formation, his view that the technological transformations of reactionary intercommunalism were laying the foundation for world revolution holds similarities with Hardt and Negri’s analysis of the emergence of a new revolutionary subject. As ex-Panther leader Elaine Brown

points out (Newton, 2009a: xx), although Newton did not live to see the rise of the internet, he believed that communication technology held the key for oppressed people across the world to communicate and collaborate and embark upon the path towards revolutionary intercommunalism:

Imperialism has laid the foundation for world communism, and imperialism itself has grown to the point of reactionary intercommunalism because the world is now integrated into one community. The communications revolution, combined with the expansive domination of the American empire, has created the global village. (Newton, 2002: 188)

This process of revolutionary intercommunalism could be discerned in the emergence of Third World liberation movements and radical social movements in the First World in the late 1960s and 1970s. Although the Panthers regularly evoked the idea of the ‘people’ through their evocation of ‘All Power to the People’ in opposition to the ‘Pig’ or ‘ruling circle’, at the conclusion of his autobiography, Newton actually locates the global collection of oppressed people who could make such a world revolution possible within the tradition of the multitude: ‘There is an old African saying, “I am We.” If you met an African in ancient times and asked him who he was, he would reply, “I am We.” ... I, we, all of us are the one and multitude’ (Newton, 2009b: 359).

Newton’s multitude, much like Hardt and Negri’s, included all members of the communities exploited under reactionary intercommunalism, and sought to break the Eurocentric, racist, patriarchal and heteronormative constitutions of the working class. This was pivotal because the theory of intercommunalism had convinced him that the ‘vanguard has to include all the people’ (Newton, 2002: 199). Prefiguring Hardt and Negri’s use of the concept of ‘love’ to describe the collaboration between singularities, Newton remarked on how ‘revolutionary love’ would mark the process of geographically and culturally disparate oppressed communities finding ‘common cause’ with one another and building forms of solidarity and camaraderie against the global reach of reactionary intercommunalism (Newton, 2009a: 41). This would provide the foundations, as Hardt and Negri also advocate, for the eventual emergence of a universal identity that could leave behind ‘racial, cultural and religious chauvinism’ and ‘realize that we are all *Homo sapiens* and have more in common than not’ (Newton, 2002: 191).

The War of Position: Newton contra Hardt and Negri

For all the similarities between Newton and Hardt and Negri’s narration of empire and the possible emergence of a globally disparate

revolutionary subject, there are fundamental differences between their understandings of how such a revolutionary subject can, and will, emerge within empire. This difference is best appreciated through the lens of Hardt and Negri's evocation of Antonio Gramsci's (1971: 238) distinction between the 'war of position' and the 'war of movement' to explain the revolutionary potential of the multitude. This distinction centres on Gramsci's idea of how, given the development between state and civil society, and perpetuation of bourgeois hegemony in advanced capitalist societies, insurrectional revolution (a war of movement) was unlikely to emerge or succeed. Instead, Gramsci posited that revolutionary strategy could centre on a war of position that would attempt to wrestle hegemonic control from the bourgeoisie in political and cultural spheres, and invent new counter-hegemonic institutions in civil society. Such hegemonic struggle, Gramsci suggested, could provide an alternative strategy to creating revolutionary institutional strength in non-revolutionary times and lead towards the eventual re-emergence of the Leninist idea of the active revolution among the proletariat.

Hardt and Negri (2009: 365–7) locate the politics of the multitude within, and beyond, Gramsci's distinction between the 'war of position' and the 'war of movement'. In this account, Gramsci is taken to be a 'prophet' of the multitude, who saw how the war of position would itself be perpetuated by the total subsumption of society under a form of capital that would provide the proletariat with new forms of communication and collaboration and, in turn, a new revolutionary subjectivity. However, Hardt and Negri contend that Gramsci failed to foresee how the war of position today need not be passive but could be 'active'. They argue that the multitude's 'democratic decision making in revolutionary institutions is exactly the kind of production of subjectivity that Gramsci sees as necessary for an active rather than passive revolution' (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 367). Hardt and Negri thus present the multitude as subjects pre-loaded with the skills necessary to embark upon a revolutionary war of position within the confines of empire.

Newton's post-prison reflections on armed insurrection and, later, intercommunalism find resonance with the distinction Gramsci made between the war of position and the war of movement. When released from prison in August 1970, Newton found himself back in charge of a Black Panther Party that had become internationally infamous. The 'Free Huey Campaign'⁸ had turned both him and the party into the cause célèbre of the New Left. Under violent repression from the US state, the party now looked to Newton for political energy and guidance. Newton's statements immediately before his release drew inspiration from the Cuban and Chinese revolutions, and guerrilla bands in Mozambique and Angola, and committed the Panthers to an armed revolutionary struggle against the US state (Newton, 2009a: 203–5). In the months that followed, however, both in the Panthers' day-to-day

operations and in his speeches and statements, Newton moved the party away from armed struggle and towards the idea of community engagement through what he called 'survival programs'.⁹ The reason for this re-orientation of the Panthers' political trajectory revolved around Newton's formulation of intercommunalism (Brown, 1992; Hilliard, 1993).¹⁰

Newton abandoned the idea of violent armed revolution because he believed the effects of reactionary intercommunalism were creating ideological disunity among the multitude both within and beyond the US. Newton feared that the effects of capitalist inequality would be taken as cure for capitalist inequality. This would see capitalist social relations presented as the only alternative to the poverty of the Third World, and subsequently accepted among those who had previously been excluded from the perceived luxuries associated with capitalist exploitation. This highlighted how reactionary intercommunalism marked the move from the struggle over imperial control of land and territory to a struggle to 'accommodate the needs and desires of people with concessions to US technology, its might and the infiltration, thereby, of imperialist ideology' (Newton, 2002: 265). The power of reactionary intercommunalism to grant proletarianization among the dispossessed was accompanied by the power to encourage possible revolutionary subjects to dream 'of mink coats and two-car garages' (Newton, 2002: 265).

Newton pushed this argument further when examining the possible emergence of a unified revolutionary subject within the US by positing a relationship between the active processes of reactionary intercommunalism and the destruction of revolutionary potential among the US population. Newton believed that expansion of proletarianization in the Third World and the technological development of capitalism (automation, robotics) would disrupt the racialized Fordist compact between labour and capital in the First World. The policies of the New Deal, for example, had conjoined full employment and welfare policies for the masses but had been largely ambivalent about the exclusion of the US Black population from the spoils of both democracy and welfare capitalism. However, Newton (2002: 193) argued that reactionary intercommunalism would now see the real 'integration' of 'black unemployables', who, through racist discrimination, were purposefully cut out of the economy, and 'the white racist hard hat' (industrial worker), who could now no longer be 'regularly employed' due to changes in the technological base and the geographic spread of labour within global capitalism.

Newton did not take this to be the end of US racial capitalism but rather recognized that the likely effects of this disruption to US capitalism's racial settlement would be the reinvigoration of nationalism, xenophobia and racism among, and between, the US populace. While he 'hoped' that the white majority would 'join forces' with minority populations who had already been deemed 'unemployable', his assertion that

white Americans continued to see Black Americans as a 'threat' emphasized the prevalent anti-revolutionary and regressive effects of reactionary intercommunalism. Moreover, Newton argued that the emergent economic insecurities of middle-class existence in the US now strengthened the resolve of white members of the middle class to refuse to 'live like black people' (Newton, 2002: 193–5). The processes linked to reactionary intercommunalism thus served to perpetuate forms of racial disunity between the US populace and foreclosed the emergence of a revolutionary subject.

The regressive effects of revolutionary intercommunalism were not just confined to those who perceived themselves to be on the so-called superior side of the colour-line. Newton's reflections on the need to overcome patriarchy and homophobia in the Black community, and for the Black Panthers to form alliances with the Women's and Gay liberation movements, highlighted his belief that the revolutionary subject was fractured and disunited (Newton, 2009a: 153–6). Newton's thoughts on how Black Americans had responded negatively to the Panthers' collaborations with white radicals and their reaction to the party's offer to send members to fight for the NLF in South Vietnam clearly reveal his fear about the negative effects of reactionary intercommunalism:

We are the spearhead most of the time, and we try not to be too far ahead of the masses of the people, too far ahead of their thinking. We have to understand that most of the people are not ready for many of the things that we talk about. Now many of our relationships with other groups, such as the white radicals with whom we have formed coalitions, have been criticized by the very people we are trying to help. For example, our offer of troops to the Vietnamese received negative reaction from the people. And I mean from truly oppressed people. Welfare recipients wrote letters saying, 'I thought the Party was for us; why do you want to give those dirty Vietnamese our life blood?' (Newton, 2002: 198)

The negative reaction of oppressed people to the plight of other oppressed people brought home to Newton how reactionary intercommunalism hollowed out the means and resources of individuals and communities to grasp the global contours of their oppression and the common humanity they shared with others around the world. This transpired because the key sites for hegemonic battle within civil society often systemically discriminated against, or denied access to, oppressed groups. What is more, the processes of reactionary intercommunalism, such as the spreading of capitalist production and proletarianization in the Third World and lumpen-proletarianization and state retrenchment in the First World, now led to the co-opting or destruction of the very

socio-economic, cultural and political institutions (education, workplace, unions, democracy, socialist nation-state) that could facilitate revolutionary intercommunal subjectivity among the multitude.

Newton's perception of the divisive effects of reactionary intercommunalism saw him pivot the activities of the Panthers away from armed confrontation with the US state and towards what he called 'survival programs'. These programmes, which included initiatives such as free breakfasts for school children, employment centres, health clinics and the Black Panther newspaper, were designed to address the basic needs of a Black community that had been racially excluded from the spaces and spoils of US welfare capitalism and which had been further marginalized by economic and political changes associated with reactionary intercommunalism. However, Newton also believed that the survival programmes could help facilitate the Black community's consciousness and understanding of reactionary intercommunalism and engender revolutionary intercommunalism:

All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution. We say that the survival program of the Black Panther Party is like the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft. It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation. So the survival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help us to organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation. When consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boot of their oppressor. (Newton, 2002: 339)

The Panthers' programmes served to raise consciousness and understanding through practice as well as ideology. Survival programmes not only usurped the effects of reactionary intercommunalism but also created new and novel institutional forms of intercommunal cooperation and collaboration that provided democratic empowerment for subjugated communities.¹¹ While the party, through its various chapters across the US, often initiated programmes, the day-to-day running of them frequently involved the wider community, local businesses and professionals such as doctors and nurses. The Panthers' survival programmes therefore sought to 'raise consciousness in the form of the people participating in a program they had put together themselves to serve themselves' (Hilliard, 2008: 34). Newton's orientating of the Panthers towards survival programmes is best seen as an attempt to secure the material and ideological survival of the very communities that could achieve revolutionary intercommunalism in the face of

processes that he believed would materially and ideologically eviscerate such revolutionary potential. Newton thus presents a theorization of the war of position in the context of global capitalist empire that insists that such a strategy must focus on 'survival pending revolution' if revolution is to ever become a reality.

Newton's narration of reactionary intercommunalism and its regressive effects of racism, nationalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and capitalist hegemony among the multitude, makes clear that his understanding of the 'war of position' is radically different from that of Hardt and Negri. In Newton's narrative, although the foundations for the multitude are provided by global capitalism, the material and ideological effects of empire provide real and significant obstacles to the unification of a globally dispersed revolutionary subject. Moreover, Newton brings into focus how the so-called universalizing tendencies of empire are anything but universalizing. Rather, the contrasting and conflicting processes linked to empire, such as the spreading of capitalist production and proletarianization in the Third World and lumpen-proletarianization and state retrenchment in the First World, essentially fracture the multitude into often competitive and combative rather than communicative and collaborative subject positions and identities.¹²

What is interesting is that Hardt and Negri's narration of empire also recognizes what Newton takes to be empire's foreclosing of the emergence of the multitude, but seemingly pays this little heed. In their discussion of identity politics in *Commonwealth* (Hardt and Negri, 2009), for example, the duo highlight how the expansion of empire's postcolonial form of capitalism and the so-called justice of the market economy, readily purport to herald the end of racism, sexism and class inequalities—the election of a 'Black man' to the office of President of the United States and the idea of post-racial societies being the ultimate confirmation of this discourse. However, Hardt and Negri outline that this discourse is merely an ideological cover for the perpetuation of 'hierarchy primarily through social structures and institutions' that systematically reproduce intersectional forms of racial, gender and class inequality across the global contours of empire (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 329).

Hardt and Negri go on to state that identity politics must become the key site of resistance to empire. However, such identity politics must become intersectional if it is to be effective in forming the 'revolutionary assemblages' that would bring forth the multitude. The duo also acknowledge that such 'emancipation of identities' may in fact 'necessarily conflict' and that the 'articulation and parallelism' are not 'automatic but have to be achieved' (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 341). For example, they point out how anti-racist and worker movements have often neglected forms of gender subordination. What is puzzling is that Hardt and Negri, having identified the fractured nature of the multitude, through highlighting the reality of difference and conflict between singularities, seemingly ignore this reality

and put forward the idea that liberation movements associated with various identities have the 'potential to articulate with one another in parallel developments' (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 341). As a result, their account of the multitude is so abstract and technologically determinist in its conception – where subjects immersed in the regime of bio-political production move from technocratic expertise and from occupying often antagonistic subject positions to seamlessly embracing intersectional anti-capitalist politics – that it resembles a reactionary form of idealism.¹³

Part of the explanation for the contradiction in Hardt and Negri's account of the multitude can be explained by the duo's misappropriation of Deleuzian philosophy and its concepts such as 'assemblages'. Although Hardt and Negri do not spend extended time discussing Deleuze's work within their trilogy on empire, a common reading of their idea of multitude is of a Deleuzian recasting of Leninist ideas about the agents, means and ends of revolution (Tampio, 2009). In this sense, the duo use Deleuze's work, and its focus on difference and contestation, to reframe the multitude as a political body that avoids the pitfalls of the violence and exclusion which marked Lenin's theory of revolution. However, as Abbinnett (2006) and Tampio (2009) point out, Hardt and Negri's appropriation of Deleuzian ideas for such ends is a contradiction in terms. This is because Deleuzian philosophy, informed by the insights of thinkers such as Foucault and the history of 20th-century totalitarianism, rejects the Marxist articulation of proletarian revolution, whatever the proletariat's composition. This centres on the Deleuzian idea of conflict and contestation between singularities being ontological and unlikely to ever be resolved by a communist revolution or indeed any other form of revolution. In Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988: 161) this sees the replacement of Lenin's 'experience of revolution' with the idea of 'becoming revolutionary'.

This form of politics focuses on transformation at local points of struggle, working with and through the state, law and policy, in order to foster a democratic and moderate leftist politics out of the conflict and contestation between singularities (Bobbio, 1996: 22). Deleuze and Guattari's (1988: 141) narration of how the ideational 'abstract machine' provides the materiality to varying 'assemblages' is indicative of the belief in this politics. As Tampio (2009: 393–4) highlights, while the 'abstract machine' of the left unites singularities through abstract ideas such as equality and liberty, the assemblages that emerge through such an abstract machine may have different and conflicting narratives and expressions of these ideals, and consequently give rise to potentially conflicting forms of leftist assemblages. Somewhat ironically, Hardt and Negri's appropriation of the idea of the assemblage ends up unwittingly replicating the very disuniting premise advocated and endorsed by Deleuze and Guattari. As a result, Hardt and Negri's appropriation of Deleuzian theory leads them to embrace means (assemblages)

that are predisposed to forestalling the very emergence of their desired ends (revolution).¹⁴

Newton's account of the divisive effects of reactionary intercommunalism on the multitude and the need to combat such effects provides the missing link Hardt and Negri fail to provide in their account of the revolutionary assemblages of the multitude. Newton's work confronts the problem of difference head on, arguing for the fundamental need to manufacture solidarity through intercommunal practices and institutions. Moreover, Newton's idea of revolutionary intercommunalism works from the basis that the processes and effects of empire largely work against establishing such solidarity.¹⁵ This position identifies the emergence of a truly revolutionary multitude through, and within, those social movements (assemblages) that would embed themselves within localities to re-establish and reinvent the communal institutional fabric (education, employment, media) torn apart by reactionary intercommunalism.¹⁶ It is only through building such an intercommunal institutional fabric that revolutionary intercommunal consciousness could emerge among the multitude.

The chances of revolution therefore pivot on the material and ideological survival of communities and, in turn, the raising of consciousness around global and intersectional issues both through, and beyond, the subjective identities (race, gender, sexuality) that are constitutive of such communities.¹⁷ Rather than insisting, as Hardt and Negri do, that such a revolutionary war of position has already been engendered by the changing nature of capitalist production, Newton calls for the instigation of a war of position to save the revolutionary potential of the multitude through recognizing the difference between:

what the people can do and what they will do. They can do anything they desire to do, but they will only take those actions which are consistent with their level of consciousness and their understanding of the situation. When we raise their consciousness, they will understand even more fully what they in fact can do, and they will move on the situation in a courageous manner. This is merging your theory with your practices. (Newton, 2002: 229)

The recognition of this point is imperative because, as Newton points out, the effects of reactionary intercommunalism need not lead to revolutionary intercommunalism. This is because the hegemony of empire, and the propagation of forms of regressive nationalism and racism in response to the machinations of empire, either through war and violence or the hell of the perpetual present of capitalist exploitation, could now just as easily lead to the annihilation rather than liberation of humanity:

Because there is reactionary intercommunalism, this does not necessarily mean that revolutionary intercommunalism will exist, you

might get annihilation due to the reactionary circumstances, and then of course you wouldn't have revolutionary intercommunalism you would have the extinction of man. (Newton, 1972a: 4)

Conclusion: From Acknowledgement to the Possibility of Survival

This article has highlighted how Huey P. Newton's relatively unacknowledged theoretical work on intercommunalism prefigures many of the elements of Hardt and Negri's work on empire and the potential for the emergence of a global multitude. Crucially, in the last part of the article I highlighted how Newton's idea of 'survival pending revolution' raises critical questions about the nature and emergence of the multitude within the confines of empire. Moreover, Newton's theorization of the war of position highlights a contradiction in Hardt and Negri's account of the multitude and presents a far better theoretical understanding of the potential emergence and non-emergence of the multitude in the current phase of empire. As I conclude, it is this prescience that makes it imperative that we return not only to Newton's theorization of empire but also to his politics of survival pending revolution.

A cursory glance at the contemporary divisions between what we can call communities within the multitude seems to confirm Newton's fears about the disunity of the multitude. Much of what Newton believed would happen has indeed happened over the last 40 years. The outsourcing of capitalist production and the persistence of super-exploitation in the Third World (Smith, 2016), or what we today call the Global South, has yielded an array of state actors such as the BRICS bloc whose 'neoliberalism with southern characteristics' only provides inter-imperialist rivalry with the US rather than an ideological and institutional alternative to empire (Prashad, 2013). In conjunction, the processes of deindustrialization, automation, precarious employment and state retrenchment linked to neoliberal globalization have been readily interpreted across, and through, the colonial histories and postcolonial fault lines of the First World, or what we today call the Global North. This has seen the emergence of xenophobia, regressive nationalism and racist populism across Global North populaces against both minorities at home and migrants and refugees who head to the Global North fleeing war and poverty that are so often caused by the machinations of empire (Bhambra and Narayan, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Milanovic, 2016). This not only confirms the very real possibility of 'annihilation' as the liberal social order of empire fractures along fault lines of identity such as nation and race, it also seems to confirm that the multitude is also fractured along the same fault lines of identity.

Indeed, the contemporary US context provides a prime example of the disunited nature of the multitude. As I have argued elsewhere (Narayan, 2017), the effects of neoliberal globalization in the US have effectively ended what Newton took to be the racial compact of the post-war US economy. On the one hand, this has seen the perpetuation of racial discrimination (labour market exclusion/police brutality) and economic exploitation (prison labour/cheap labour) of African Americans, and other communities of colour, that has been a hallmark of the US since its foundation. On the other hand, as Newton suggested, the effects of deindustrialization, automation and outsourcing have seen large parts of the white working and middle classes reduced to the precarious economic conditions of their non-white counterparts.

Yet, rather than creating inherent unity, the effects of empire have created disunity among the multitude. The dichotomous movements for #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) and Make American Great Again (MAGA) exemplify this disunity. On one side, the emergence of BLM in response to the extra-judicial murders of the Black community would seemingly confirm Hardt and Negri's views that the milieu of bio-political production can provide the tools for the emergence of a progressive and unifying multitude. BLM began through immaterial, online, networked relationships after the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2013. Following the extra-judicial killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, the movement's online presence evolved into the materiality of community-based activism, and demonstrations against police brutality and state violence. These have seen collaboration between Black and white activists and other communities of colour, while the decentralized nature of BLM has also allowed for a leaderless style of organization. BLM features women among its most visible members, and is flexible enough to allow for offshoot movements to emerge out of BLM itself. Moreover, BLM bases itself on intersectional foundations and starts 'from the basic recognition that the oppression of African Americans is multi-dimensional and must be fought on different fronts' (Kelly, 2016a; Taylor, 2016).

Despite what we could learn from BLM's bio-political formation, it is telling that the main opposition to BLM has been the emergence of Donald Trump's now successful presidential campaign to Make America Great Again. Trump's discourse combined nationalism, xenophobia, misogyny and Islamophobia within a critique of the processes of neoliberal globalization that have destroyed the economic and political privileges of the US white working and middle classes. This provided a vision of the return to a racially segregated but economically dynamic form of US capitalism where a large section of white citizens felt both economically and politically empowered (Narayan, 2017). While BLM and MAGA are thus violently dichotomous, they also both appear to be

movements that have been created through the effects of neoliberal globalization being refracted through the historical divisions of US racial capitalism:

Both Black Lives Matter and Make America Great Again are slogans of dissatisfaction with the direction the country is taking from populations that have seen their conditions deteriorate dramatically. But what divides them is the fault line of race. It is likely that an urban resident who is black will be in prison, guarded by a rural resident who is white. One might see the relevance of Black Lives Matter, while the other might be an adherent of Make America Great Again. Neither benefits from the system. Both are its detritus. (Prashad, 2016)

The BLM and MAGA dichotomy highlights the prescience of Newton's views about the way in which the effects of neoliberal globalization – in particular, the destruction of the racial compact of post-war settlement – would lead to the continued fracturing of the multitude in the US along lines formed by identity such as race. This example demonstrates that Hardt and Negri fail to understand how empire's processes of deindustrialization, precarious employment and wealth inequality are just as important as the spread of the processes linked to immaterial labour. It also highlights how the changes brought about by empire, such as economic precariousness and the spread of immaterial labour, must be read through and not outside of histories of identity and oppression.¹⁸ The effect of this has been the destruction, rather than the cultivation, of the communicative and collaborative potential of a revolutionary multitude. When these factors are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that Newton's narration of the effects of reactionary intercommunalism on the revolutionary potential of the multitude holds more empirical validity than the narration of empire offered by his successors.

Yet, Newton's work also offers the possibility of hope through the strategy of survival pending revolution. The contemporary effects of empire have turned issues of identity, such as race, into the front line of political contestation. For example, anti-racist struggles against the extra-judicial murder of Black citizens, Islamophobia or resurgent white nationalism are some of the key sites of contemporary protest in the Global North. As Taylor (2016: 186–90) notes of BLM in the US, the goal must be to shift from protest to the organization and coordination of a wider movement for liberation. This centres on the need to create forms of solidarity and political collaboration between groups such as African Americans and communities of colour, Muslims suffering from Islamophobia and poor white communities, through highlighting how the contours of racial oppression are interlinked with capitalist exploitation both at home and abroad. In words similar to those of Newton,

Taylor (2016: 216) reiterates that 'working class is female, immigrant, black, white, latino/a, and more', and points to the need to highlight how 'immigrant issues, gender issues, and antiracism *are* working-class issues'.

What Newton's work offers scholar-activists such as Taylor and movements such as BLM is not only a theorization of how the processes of empire create such divisions within the multitude but also a blueprint for embarking upon a war of position that would save and build up revolutionary potential of the multitude through using sites of contestation, such as race, as a base to foster revolutionary intercommunalism across all of society. As we have seen, Newton believed that the regressive effects of empire among the multitude can only be tackled if such communities are provided with a greater consciousness through the re-establishing and re-articulating of communal institutions (education, employment, media), and the values of communities and subjects around intercommunal ideals. This means social movements of resistance, attached to issues such as anti-racism, such as BLM, must not only focus on protest and disruption of racism but also seek to save the people from processes that seek to materially and ideologically eviscerate their revolutionary potential to unite with others. What Newton's work demands of us today is to save the revolutionary potential people possess through the reinvention of the community around ideals of revolutionary intercommunalism.¹⁹

In the era of precarious employment and the retrenchment of the welfare state in the Global North, which often disproportionately affect communities of colour, has there ever been a more appropriate time for the re-articulation and re-imagining of the Panther's survival programmes? Could survival programmes be used, for example, by anti-racist movements such as BLM to help create intercommunal cooperation and collaboration both within and between different communities in the Global North and the Global South? Could these solidarities be the starting point for offering an alternative intersectional anti-capitalist vision for all of society? These are questions that cannot be fully explored or answered here.²⁰ But if resistance to empire, or resistance to the dismembering of empire along nationalist, xenophobic and racist lines, is to forestall the annihilation of humanity, it is imperative to recall what Newton (2002: 161) knew all too well in the 1970s: 'if the people are not here revolution cannot be achieved, for the people and only the people make revolutions'. In light of the current machinations of empire we would thus do well to finally acknowledge Newton's theory of empire and his calls for survival pending revolution.

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Notes

1. See Newton (2002, 2009a, 2009b). At the time of writing, Newton's (2002) autobiography only registers over 300 citations on Google Scholar, despite having been available for over 40 years. The citations for the collections of Newton's writings such as *To Die for the People* and *The Huey P. Newton Reader* are both in the low 100s. Newton has been read and studied in Black and Africana Studies in the US. Jefferies (2002), for instance, attempts to place Newton's work in the lineage of Marx and Du Bois, while Rodriguez (2006) centres Newton's work within the politics of the Tri-Continental tradition. Newton has also been utilized by geographers such as Tynner (2006) and Heynen (2009), but he remains neglected by cultural and sociological theory.
2. Jefferies (2002), Singh (2004) and Rodriguez (2006) provide accounts of Newton's ideas about intercommunalism that see it as a foreground to ideas about contemporary globalization. But these authors never really flesh out what I call Newton's proto-theorization of neoliberal globalization or compare it with modern narrations of neoliberal globalization.
3. This is in stark contrast to *Multitude* where Hardt and Negri (2004: 343–4) reduce the Panthers to tragic revolutionaries who failed to understand that the 'gun' was no longer the right tactic for self-defence. As I show below, Newton fully understood this point 40 years ago.
4. I must make clear that I am not suggesting that any similarity between Newton's and Hardt and Negri's thought is intellectually sinister. However, this set of circumstances reveals how the Black Panthers and their theoretical endeavours have regularly been ignored or denied. For example, see Heiner (2007) on how Black Panther thought, such as the work of Newton, Angela Davis and George Jackson, inflects Foucault's changing ideas about power in works such as *Discipline and Punish*. It is also telling, for example, that Hardt and Negri's narration of the Black Panthers often comes through the work of Jean Genet (1992) rather than the plethora of essays, memoirs and articles produced by Panther members such as Newton, Elaine Brown, George Jackson and Eldridge Cleaver. In fact, one can situate the work of the Panthers within a wider and longer lineage of what Cedric Robinson (2000) has called the Black Radical Tradition. As Robinson highlights, this 'Black Marxism' includes thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Richard Wright, Frantz Fanon and a plethora of other Black intellectuals who have used the idea of racial capitalism to re-examine concepts such as the working class, revolution and even communism. While some of these figures have often been marginalized in traditional models of leftist or sociological thought, increasingly this alternative genealogy of resistance appears to offer a more prescient grasp of the present than was acknowledged at the time of their initial marginalization.
5. Although Newton delivered a lecture called 'Intercommunalism' in February 1971 at Yale University (Newton and Erikson, 1973), the dating of the emergence of Newton's idea of intercommunalism varies. Newton (Newton and

- Erikson, 1973: 133) states that the idea emerged out of his dissatisfaction with his statement to the National Liberation Front (NLF) of South Vietnam in August 1970, which affirmed Vietnamese nationalism while simultaneously questioning the idea of nationhood (Newton, 2009a: 180–3). Newton's introduction of the term at a speech at Boston College in November 1970 would appear to back this up. Hilliard (1993: 319) believed that Newton came up with the idea while in prison. Indeed, elements of intercommunalism appear to be apparent in his writing during this period. See 'On the peace movement' written in 1969 (Newton, 2002: 150–4).
6. In particular, one could see Newton's work within the lineage of Mandel's (1975) *Late Capitalism* and its idea of 'super-imperialism', and Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capitalism* (1966). However, Newton's idea of reactionary intercommunalism seems to go beyond the idea of American empire contained within these works. Baran and Sweezy, for example, only list one European country (Greece) and do not include Japan within conceptions of American empire. One could also find links between Newton and Pantich and Gindin's (2013) contemporary work on US empire. These parallels were also made during Newton's lifetime. In Box 47, Folder 9 of the Dr. Huey P. Newton, Dept of Special Collections, Stanford University, one can find a transcript of Immanuel Wallerstein's presentation at an annual meeting of the ASA in 1972 of his now famous paper 'The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: Concepts for comparative analysis' (Wallerstein, 1974). Scribbled on the front of it is a note to Newton from a 'David' that reads 'Dear Huey, the framework of this analysis is very close to yours – I thought you might find it interesting.'
 7. Reactionary intercommunalism does not preclude the use of militarism to achieve such co-option. Moreover, Newton saw US military power as a form of 'policing' which held similarities with policing of Black communities to uphold capitalist exploitation (Newton, 2002: 173). The primary example of this for Newton was the Vietnam War, which he believed would lead to 'inevitable' expulsion of US forces but also the 'inevitability' of Vietnam succumbing to the power of US empire as a result of the contours of world trade. This scenario would see Vietnam liberate its land but become dependent on access to forms of capital and trade that pivot on capitalist principles (Newton, 2002: 259, 265). Consequently, while Newton and the Black Panthers supported national liberation struggles, they ultimately saw them as futile if not connected to struggles beyond the nation and the goal of global socialist liberation.
 8. Newton had been convicted and imprisoned in 1968 for the voluntary manslaughter of Oakland policemen, John Frey. As a result of public pressure through the 'Free Huey' campaign's questioning of the state's evidence, and two subsequent re-trials with hung juries, Newton was released in August 1970.
 9. The Panther's survival programmes actually pre-date Newton's ideological pivot to revolutionary intercommunalism, with the first free breakfast programme opening in Oakland in late January 1969 (Bloom and Joshua, 2013: 182). In this sense, Newton's theorizing and ramping up of the roll-out of survival programmes was made in response to the actions on the ground of the rank and file of party (see Murch, 2010 and Heynen, 2009).

10. While Elaine Brown (1992: 277–81) seems unequivocal about the lone genius of Newton, it should be pointed out that he did not develop his ideas in isolation. An unpublished manuscript (Newton, 1972b) of a taped discussion between Brown and Newton clearly highlights how Brown's ideas influence Newton's thought on intercommunalism going forward. Indeed, parts of Brown's contributions to this discussion have been wrongly attributed to Newton in an amended version of the discussion (see 'The technology question: 1972', in Newton, 2002).
11. A common misconception about the Panthers' community programmes is that they were solely for the Black community and not truly intercommunal. Although the Panthers embedded these programmes in communities of Black people they frequently offered their services to the whole of society. This often saw other communities of colour and poor white communities access Panther programmes such as the free medical centres.
12. This prefigures Laclau's (2005) criticism that Hardt and Negri fail to adequately politically explain the emergence and solidarity of the multitude beyond an argument of spontaneity. It also anticipates Dean's (2016) insistence that Hardt and Negri underplay the capitalist inscription of the communicative and collaborative subjectivity of the multitude.
13. This abstraction of the relationship between technology and the composition of the multitude can also be traced to Negri's (2003) *Time for Revolution*. In the essay 'Karios, Alma Venus and multitudo', the section called Karios almost posits a metaphysical relationship between technology and subjective composition of the poor.
14. Ironically, Hardt and Negri (1999: 28) chide Deleuze and Guattari for their 'insubstantial' and 'impotent' politics while at the same time celebrating Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of bio-power. My argument is that Hardt and Negri's attempts at the neo-Marxist rehabilitation of concepts such as assemblages relapse into the very limits Deleuze and Guattari imposed on these concepts in the first place. However, this does not foreclose other possible readings of assemblages. Puar's (2012) reading of assemblages as 'becoming-intersectional assemblages' suggests that intersectional difference need not be seen as bringing into being simply conflicting assemblages but also assemblages that evolve and change in response to these intersections. In many ways, Newton's work seems to prefigure elements of this argument, making the case for revolutionary left-wing assemblages that could include all of the interests of the people and thus evolve through the establishment of solidarities.
15. This still leaves Newton open to the same Deleuzian criticism as Hardt and Negri, which centres on the idea that conflict and contestation are ontological and hence communist revolution is a misguided endeavour. Interestingly, Newton (2002: 197) took the substance of this point seriously, stressing in 1971 that even when people seize the 'means of production', you will still have 'racism', 'ethnocentrism' and 'contradictions' between subjects. Although Newton embraced a form of humanism, his dialectical materialism never conceives of a time free of contradictions and difference but rather a time where:

the material conditions exist that would allow the people of the world to develop a culture that is essentially human and would

nurture those things that would allow the people to resolve contradictions in a way that would not cause the mutual slaughter of all of us. The development of such a culture would be revolutionary intercommunalism. (Newton, 2002: 187)

In this sense, Newton believed that without a change in capitalist social relations the moderate, democratic and innovative form of politics, as espoused by authors like Deleuze and Foucault, would never actually be possible.

16. This brings us to a key difference between Newton and Hardt and Negri's thinking about the role of a vanguard. Hardt and Negri dismiss the idea of a vanguard as outmoded given the subjective composition of the multitude. They also see it as a path towards undemocratic horizons. But Newton's work clearly highlights that without the emergence of social movements that can lead and organize, there is unlikely to be an emergent multitude because of the effects of reactionary intercommunalism on the subjective disposition of communities who would form the multitude. This is not to suggest that Newton's ideas have nothing to learn from those of Hardt and Negri. For example, the Panthers did not practise democracy but rather a form of democratic centralism, which empowered a few select individuals and led to abuses of power. The emergence of groups wishing to participate in the programmes of 'survival pending revolution' today would be wise to heed the calls for the use of forms of horizontal democracy made by Hardt and Negri and others on the left.
17. This position also disputes neo-Marxist reactions to the problem of identity that simply assert class as a primary explanation of social conflict. Harvey (2009), for example, has criticized Hardt and Negri's expansion of the proletariat through identity. But, as Newton made clear, it is impossible to disentangle class from issues such as race and gender.
18. This is even more telling when you consider how Trump's campaign was helped immensely by the 'Alt-Right' and its use of social media to both challenge mainstream news sources and build support for MAGA through the spreading of 'Fake News'.
19. See Narayan (2017) for more detail on how Newton's work demands global rather than national settlements and, in turn, pushes the left towards internationalism.
20. In the US context some of the answers may be found in the 2016 BLM publication *A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom and Justice*, which advocates the large-scale economic and political transformation of US racial capitalism as the only solution to the devaluation and dehumanization of Black Lives and all other lives within, and beyond, the US (Kelly, 2016a). Such a vision provides the ground to forge an intercommunal form of politics. This, in turn, lays down the gauntlet for those committed to BLM to embark upon a war of position that will secure communal renewal for all, even those who support MAGA, along the lines of revolutionary intercommunal values. Indeed, contemporary groups like the anti-racist and anti-capitalist 'Redneck Revolt', with its focus on community organization and embracing of survival programmes, seems to confirm that the politics of the Panthers is still very much alive today, even among white activists (see Ware, 2017).

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