**We affirm, Public forum owes a debt to black debaters, and we should prioritize addressing that debt. This round is a debate about debate. For more than 150 years policy debate competitions were dominated by white people. Until the 70’s school segregation prevented black competitors from even attending tournaments with white folks, and unjust resource allocation through subsequent decades meant that black debaters never truly stood a chance at the few tournaments they were allowed to attend. Black debaters were largely pushed out of the competition, and those that could stay still didn’t receive fair judgment or evaluation.**

**In the early 2000’s this white domination of debate began to be interrogated at policy tournaments. Debaters from Louisville recognized that this activity is more than just a competition – it’s an academic community of vital importance to many students. It’s where many of us learn to prepare for college, and where others even attain scholarships for our achievements in the activity. Bracketing out black debaters and preventing black success not only made the community complicit in the segregation of debate, but actively undermined the chance black debaters had at getting into better colleges or making higher education more affordable. There are real, tangible consequences to the lack of black participation and success in debate – and those consequences are much more meaningful than vague hypothetical discussions about nuclear war. Liz and Tonia from Louisville didn’t center the debate on the resolution but debate itself. As they said, “I’m really just trying to change the halls of Congress that meets on the Capitol Hill of Debate Tournament tabrooms where pieces of legislation or ballots signed by judges enact the policies of our community. My words right here, right now can’t change the state, but they can change the state of debate.” Louisville’s arguments began to change the policy debate community for the better – more black competitors joined the activity, and many of them started finding more success as their arguments were evaluated alongside public interrogation of debate’s anti-black bias.**

**While Louisville inspired black debaters and began chipping away at community bias with some white competitors and judges – there were others that couldn’t stand black success with pro-black arguments. A cohort of these individuals thought that policy debate was becoming too stylistically different from traditional white debate, and that something had to be done to insulate the activity from these critical arguments. So, in 2002, debate had its own white flight and segregation. Rather than staying in policy debate and evaluating these arguments – many white coaches and competitors decided to start a new form of debate that pushed black arguments and debaters out. *Public forum* became a safe-haven for traditional white debate – insulated from arguments that would make white debaters question the privilege behind the activity they were competing in. This bias is not just an artifact of history. It is evident right here and right now at this tournament. In the quarterfinals rounds of Minneapple, We are the only team that feature a black debater. We’ve continuously prioritized arguments about black participation in debate, and found success doing so. Our success running arguments like this sends a message, inspiring black kids across the activity to stick with the competition and make their own paths. To know that their voice is heard. A team with a black debater arguing about black participation and winning this round at a national circuit tournament against one of the best teams in the country will serve as a rupture in public forum’s segregation, and help address the racial disparity in this community.**

**Our argument is not that you should vote for us because Bashir’s black, but that you should vote for an argument that makes increasing black participation central. This not only helps increase black participation in debate, but also helps white students and judges understand bias and anti-black racism. When privileged students lose competitions in a temporarily unfair way it creates cognitive dissonance and offers an opportunity to change their perspective on racial disparities. This debate serves as a teachable moment. Using the ballot to vote for black participation gives our opponents insight into what it’s like to be black in debate. Of course it’s frustrating to lose to an argument divorced from the topic – but that’s the point. They will get a small taste of the frustration of being barred from tournaments or losing a debate because the judge won’t vote for a kid with your skin color. Your ballot can’t tell the U.S to reduce military presence in Taiwan, but it can help produce real, tangible change in the Public Forum community and in the mentality of the people in this room.**