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#### Basing politics on the gratuitous violence of racism usurps understanding of political economy—this legitimizes neoliberal ideology and mystifies class antagonism

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In both films the bogus happy endings are possible only because they characterize their respective regimes of racial hierarchy in the superficial terms of interpersonal transactions. In *The Help* segregationism’s evil was small-minded bigotry and lack of sensitivity; it was more like bad manners than oppression. In Tarantino’s vision, slavery’s definitive injustice was its **gratuitous** and sadistic brutalization and sexualized degradation. Malevolent, ludicrously arrogant whites owned slaves most conspicuously to degrade and torture them. Apart from serving a formal dinner in a plantation house—and Tarantino, the Chance the Gardener of American filmmakers (and Best Original Screenplay? Really?) seems to draw his images of plantation life from Birth of a Nation and Gone With the Wind, as well as old Warner Brothers cartoons—and the Mandingo fighters and comfort girls, Tarantino’s slaves do no actual work at all; they’re present only to be brutalized. In fact, the cavalier sadism with which owners and traders treat them belies the fact that slaves were, **first and foremost, capital investments.** It’s not for nothing that New Orleans has a monument to the estimated 20,000-30,000 antebellum Irish immigrants who died constructing the New Basin Canal; slave labor was **too valuable** for such lethal work.

*The Help* trivializes Jim Crow by reducing it to its most superficial features and irrational extremes. The master-servant nexus was, and is, a labor relation. And the problem of labor relations particular to the segregationist regime wasn’t employers’ bigoted lack of respect or failure to hear the voices of the domestic servants, or even benighted refusal to recognize their equal humanity. It was that the labor relation was structured within and sustained by a political and institutional order that severely impinged on, when it didn’t altogether deny, black citizens’ avenues for pursuit of grievances and standing before the law. The crucial lynchpin of that order was neither myopia nor malevolence; it was suppression of black citizens’ capacities for direct participation in civic and political life, with racial disfranchisement and the constant threat of terror intrinsic to substantive denial of equal protection and due process before the law as its principal mechanisms. And the point of the regime wasn’t racial hatred or enforced disregard; its roots lay in the **much more prosaic concern** of dominant elites to maintain their political and economic hegemony by suppressing potential opposition and in the linked ideal of maintaining access to a labor force with no options but to accept employment on whatever terms employers offered. (Those who liked *The Help* or found it moving should watch *The Long Walk Home*, a 1990 film set in Montgomery, Alabama, around the bus boycott. I suspect that’s the film you thought you were watching when you saw The Help.)

*Django Unchained* trivializes slavery by reducing it to its most barbaric and lurid excesses. Slavery also was fundamentally a labor relation. It was a form of forced labor regulated—systematized, enforced and sustained—through a political and institutional order that specified it as a civil relationship granting owners absolute control over the life, liberty, and fortunes of others defined as eligible for enslavement, including most of all control of the conditions of their labor and appropriation of its product. Historian Kenneth M. Stampp quotes a slaveholder’s succinct explanation: “‘For what purpose does the master hold the servant?’ asked an ante-bellum Southerner. ‘Is it not that by his labor, he, the master, may accumulate wealth?’”1

That absolute control permitted horrible, unthinkable brutality, to be sure, **but perpetrating such brutality was neither the point of slavery nor its essential injustice**. The master-slave relationship could, and did, exist without brutality, and certainly without sadism and sexual degradation. In Tarantino’s depiction, however, it is not clear that slavery shorn of its extremes of brutality would be objectionable. It does not diminish the historical injustice and horror of slavery to note that it was **not the product of *sui generis*, transcendent Evil but a terminus on a continuum of bound labor** that was more norm than exception in the Anglo-American world until well into the eighteenth century, if not later. As legal historian Robert Steinfeld points out, it is not so much slavery, but the emergence of the notion of free labor—as the absolute control of a worker over her person—that is the historical anomaly that needs to be explained.2 *Django Unchained* sanitizes the essential injustice of slavery by not problematizing it and by **focusing instead** on the extremes of brutality and degradation it permitted, to the extent of making some of them up, just as does *The Help* regarding Jim Crow.

*The Help* could not imagine a more honest and complex view of segregationist Mississippi partly because it uses the period ultimately as a prop for human interest cliché, and *Django Unchained*’s absurdly ahistorical view of plantation slavery is only backdrop for the merger of spaghetti western and blaxploitation hero movie. Neither film is really about the period in which it is set. Film critic Manohla Dargis, reflecting a decade ago on what she saw as a growing Hollywood penchant for period films, observed that such films are typically “stripped of politics and historical fact…and instead will find meaning in appealing to seemingly timeless ideals and stirring scenes of love, valor and compassion” and that “the Hollywood professionals who embrace accuracy most enthusiastically nowadays are costume designers.”3 That observation applies to both these films, although in *Django* concern with historically accurate representation of material culture applies only to the costumes and props of the 1970s film genres Tarantino wants to recall.

To make sense of how *Django Unchained* has received so much warmer a reception among black and leftoid commentators than did *The Help*, it is useful to recall Margaret Thatcher’s 1981 dictum that “economics are the method: the object is to change the soul.”4 Simply put, she and her element have won. Few observers—among opponents and boosters alike—have noted how deeply and thoroughly both films are embedded in the practical ontology of neoliberalism, the complex of unarticulated assumptions and unexamined first premises that provide its common sense, its lifeworld.

Objection to *The Help* has been largely of the shooting fish in a barrel variety: complaints about the film’s paternalistic treatment of the maids, which generally have boiled down to an objection that the master-servant relation is thematized at all, as well as the standard, predictable litany of anti-racist charges about whites speaking for blacks, the film’s inattentiveness to the fact that at that time in Mississippi black people were busily engaged in liberating themselves, etc. An illustration of this tendency that conveniently refers to several other variants of it is Akiba Solomon, “Why I’m Just Saying No to ‘The Help’ and Its Historical Whitewash” in Color Lines,August 10, 2011, available at:http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/08/why\_im\_just\_saying\_no\_to\_the\_help.html.

Defenses of *Django Unchained* pivot on claims about the social significance of the narrative of a black hero. One node of this argument emphasizes the need to validate a history of autonomous black agency and “resistance” as a politico-existential desideratum. It accommodates a view that stresses the importance of recognition of rebellious or militant individuals and revolts in black American history. Another centers on a notion that exposure to fictional black heroes can inculcate the sense of personal efficacy necessary to overcome the psychological effects of inequality and to facilitate upward mobility and may undermine some whites’ negative stereotypes about black people. In either register assignment of social or political importance to depictions of black heroes rests on presumptions about the nexus of mass cultural representation, social commentary, and racial justice that are more significant politically than the controversy about the film itself. In both versions, this argument casts political and **economic problems in psychological terms**. Injustice appears as a matter of disrespect and denial of due recognition, and the remedies proposed—which are all about images projected and the distribution of jobs associated with their projection—look a lot like self-esteem engineering. Moreover, nothing could indicate more strikingly the extent of neoliberal ideological hegemonythan the idea that the mass culture industry and its representational practices constitute a **meaningful terrain for struggle** to advance egalitarian interests. It is possible to entertain that view seriously only by ignoring the fact that the production and consumption of mass culture is thoroughly embedded in capitalist material and ideological imperatives.

That, incidentally, is why I prefer the usage “mass culture” to describe this industry and its products and processes, although I recognize that it may seem archaic to some readers. The mass culture v. popular culture debate dates at least from the 1950s and has continued with occasional crescendos ever since.5 For two decades or more, instructively in line with the retreat of possibilities for concerted left political action outside the academy, the popular culture side of that debate has been dominant, along with its view that the products of this precinct of mass consumption capitalism are somehow capable of transcending or subverting their material identity as commodities, if not avoiding that identity altogether. Despite the dogged commitment of several generations of American Studies and cultural studies graduate students who want to valorize watching television and immersion in hip-hop or other specialty market niches centered on youth recreation and the most ephemeral fads as both intellectually avant-garde and politically “resistive,” it should be time to admit that that earnest disposition is **intellectually shallow and an ersatz politics**. The idea of “popular” culture posits a spurious autonomy and organicism that actually affirm mass industrial processes by effacing them, especially in the putatively rebel, fringe, or underground market niches that **depend on the fiction of the authentic** to announce the birth of new product cycles.

The power of the hero is a cathartic trope that connects mainly with the sensibility of adolescent boys—of whatever nominal age. Tarantino has allowed as much, responding to black critics’ complaints about the violence and copious use of “nigger” by proclaiming “Even for the film’s biggest detractors, I think their children will grow up and love this movie. I think it could become a rite of passage for young black males.”6 This response stems no doubt from Tarantino’s arrogance and opportunism, and some critics have denounced it as no better than racially presumptuous. But he is hardly alone in defending the film with an assertion that it gives black youth heroes, is generically inspirational or both. Similarly, in a January 9, 2012 interview on the Daily Show, George Lucas adduced this line to promote his even more execrable race-oriented live-action cartoon, *Red Tails*, which, incidentally, trivializes segregation in the military by reducing it to a matter of bad or outmoded attitudes. The ironic effect is significant understatement of both the obstacles the Tuskegee airmen faced and their actual accomplishments by rendering them as backdrop for a blackface, slapped-together remake of *Top Gun*. (Norman Jewison’s 1984 film, *A Soldier’s Story*, adapted from Charles Fuller’s *A Soldier’s Play*, is a much more sensitive and thought-provoking rumination on the complexities of race and racism in the Jim Crow U.S. Army—an army mobilized, as my father, a veteran of the Normandy invasion, never tired of remarking sardonically, to fight the racist Nazis.) Lucas characterized his film as “patriotic, even jingoistic” and was explicit that he wanted to create a film that would feature “real heroes” and would be “inspirational for teenage boys.” Much as *Django Unchained*’s defenders compare it on those terms favorably to *Lincoln*, Lucas hyped *Red Tails* as being a genuine hero story unlike “*Glory*, where you have a lot of white officers running those guys into cannon fodder.”

Of course, the film industry is sharply tilted toward the youth market, as Lucas and Tarantino are acutely aware. But Lucas, unlike Tarantino, was not being defensive in asserting his desire to inspire the young; he offered it more as a boast. As he has said often, he’d wanted for years to make a film about the Tuskegee airmen, and he reports that he always intended telling their story as a feel-good, crossover inspirational tale. Telling it that way also fits in principle (though in this instance not in practice, as *Red Tails* bombed at the box office) with the commercial imperatives of increasingly degraded mass entertainment. Dargis observed that the ahistoricism of the recent period films is influenced by market imperatives in a global film industry. The more a film is tied to historically specific contexts, the more difficult it is to sell elsewhere. That logic selects for special effects-driven products as well as standardized, decontextualized and simplistic—“universal”—story lines, preferably set in fantasy worlds of the filmmakers’ design. As Dargis notes, these films find their meaning in shopworn clichés puffed up as timeless verities, including uplifting and inspirational messages for youth. But something else underlies the stress on inspiration in the black-interest films, which shows up in critical discussion of them as well.

All these films—*The Help, Red Tails, Django Unchained*, even *Lincoln* and *Glory*—make a claim to public attention based partly on their social significance beyond entertainment or art, and they do so because they engage with significant moments in the history of the nexus of race and politics in the United States. There would not be so much discussion and debate and no Golden Globe, NAACP Image, or Academy Award nominations for *The Help*, *Red Tails*, or *Django Unchained* if those films weren’t defined partly by thematizing that nexus of race and politics in some way.

The pretensions to social significance that fit these films into their particular market niche don’t conflict with the mass-market film industry’s imperative of infantilization because those pretensions are only part of the show; they are little more than empty bromides, product differentiation in the patter of “seemingly timeless ideals” which the mass entertainment industry constantly recycles. (Andrew O’Hehir observes as much about *Django Unchained*, which he describes as “a three-hour trailer for a movie that never happens.”7) That comes through in the defense of these films, in the face of evidence of their failings, that, after all, they are “just entertainment.” Their substantive content is ideological; it is their contribution to the naturalization of neoliberalism’s ontology as they propagandize its universalization across spatial, temporal, and social contexts.

Purportedly in the interest of popular education cum entertainment, *Django Unchained* and *The Help*, and *Red Tails* for that matter, read the sensibilities of the present into the past by divesting the latter of its specific historicity. They reinforce the sense of the past as generic old-timey times distinguishable from the present by superficial inadequacies—outmoded fashion, technology, commodities and ideas—since overcome. In *The Help* Hilly’s obsession with her pet project marks segregation’s petty apartheid as irrational in part because of the expense rigorously enforcing it would require; the breadwinning husbands express their frustration with it as financially impractical. Hilly is a mean-spirited, narrow-minded person whose rigid and tone-deaf commitment to segregationist consistency not only reflects her limitations of character but also is economically unsound, a fact that further defines her, and the cartoon version of Jim Crow she represents, as irrational.

The deeper message of these films, insofar as they deny the integrity of the past, is that there is **no thinkable alternative to the ideological order under which we live**. This message is reproduced throughout the mass entertainment industry; it shapes the normative reality even of the fantasy worlds that masquerade as escapism. Even among those who laud the supposedly cathartic effects of Django’s insurgent violence as reflecting a greater truth of abolition than passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, few commentators notice that he and Broomhilda attained their freedom through a market transaction.8 This reflects an ideological hegemony in which students all too commonly wonder why planters would deny slaves or sharecroppers education because education would have made them more productive as workers. And, tellingly, in a glowing rumination in the Daily Kos, Ryan Brooke inadvertently thrusts mass culture’s destruction of historicity into bold relief by declaiming on “the segregated society presented” in *Django Unchained* and babbling on—with the absurdly ill-informed and pontifical self-righteousness that the blogosphere enables—about our need to take “responsibility for preserving racial divides” if we are “to put segregation in the past and fully fulfill Dr. King’s dream.”9 It’s all an indistinguishable mush of bad stuff about racial injustice in the old-timey days. Decoupled from its moorings in a historically specific political economy, slavery becomes at bottom a problem of race relations, and, as historian Michael R. West argues forcefully, “race relations” emerged as and has remained a discourse that substitutes etiquette for equality.10

This is the context in which we should take account of what “inspiring the young” means as a justification for those films. In part, the claim to inspire is a simple platitude, more filler than substance. It is, as I’ve already noted, both an excuse for films that are cartoons made for an infantilized, generic market and an assertion of a claim to a particular niche within that market. More insidiously, though, the ease with which “inspiration of youth” rolls out in this context resonates with three related and disturbing themes: 1) underclass ideology’s narratives—now all Americans’ common sense—that link poverty and inequality most crucially to (racialized) cultural inadequacy and psychological damage; 2) the belief that racial inequality stems from prejudice, bad ideas and ignorance, and 3) the cognate of both: the neoliberal rendering of social justice as equality of opportunity, with an aspiration of creating “competitive individual minority agents who might stand **a better fighting chance in the neoliberal rat race rather than a positive alternative vision of a society that eliminates the need to fight constantly against disruptive market whims** in the first place.”11

This politics seeps through in the chatter about *Django Unchained* in particular. Erin Aubry Kaplan, in the Los Angeles Times article in which Tarantino asserts his appeal to youth, remarks that the “most disturbing detail [about slavery] is the emotional violence and degradation directed at blacks that effectively keeps them at the bottom of the social order, a place they still occupy today.” Writing on the Institute of the Black World blog, one Dr. Kwa David Whitaker, a 1960s-style cultural nationalist, declaims on Django’s testament to the sources of degradation and “unending servitude [that] has rendered [black Americans] almost incapable of making sound evaluations of our current situations or the kind of steps we must take to improve our condition.”12 In its blindness to political economy, this notion of black cultural or psychological damage as either a legacy of slavery or of more indirect recent origin—e.g., urban migration, crack epidemic, matriarchy, babies making babies—comports well with the reduction of slavery and Jim Crow to interpersonal dynamics and bad attitudes. It **substitutes a “politics of recognition”** and a patter of racial uplift for politics and underwrites a conflation of political action and therapy.

With respect to the nexus of race and inequality, this discourse supports victim-blaming programs of personal rehabilitation and self-esteem engineering—inspiration—as easily as it does multiculturalist respect for difference, which, by the way, also feeds back to self-esteem engineering and inspiration as nodes within a larger political economy of race relations**.** Either way, this is a discourse that **displaces a politics** **challenging social structures that reproduce inequality** with concern for the feelings and characteristics of individuals and of categories of population statistics reified as singular groups that are equivalent to individuals. This discourse has made it possible (again, but more sanctimoniously this time) to characterize destruction of low-income housing as an uplift strategy for poor people; curtailment of access to public education as “choice”; being cut adrift from essential social wage protections as “empowerment”; and individual material success as socially important role modeling**.**

Neoliberalism’s triumph is affirmed with unselfconscious clarity in the ostensibly leftist defenses of *Django Unchained* that center on the theme of slaves’ having liberated themselves. Trotskyists, would-be anarchists, and psychobabbling identitarians have their respective sectarian garnishes: Trotskyists see everywhere the bugbear of “bureaucratism” and mystify “self-activity;” anarchists similarly fetishize direct action and voluntarism and oppose large-scale public institutions on principle, and identitarians romanticize essentialist notions of organic, folkish authenticity under constant threat from institutions. However, **all are indistinguishable from the nominally libertarian right in their disdain for government and institutionally based political action, which their common reflex is to disparage as inauthentic or corrupt.**

### 1nc taylor

#### Class is better starting point—intersecting inequality is real, but Marxism is key to historicize it and address collective imperatives

**Taylor 11** [Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, on the editorial board of the International Socialist Review and a doctoral student in African American Studies at Northwestern University; “Race, class and Marxism,” SocialistWorker.org, http://socialistworker.org/2011/01/04/race-class-and-marxism]

Marxists believe that the potential for that kind of unity is dependant on battles and struggles against racism today. Without a commitment by revolutionary organizations in the here and now to the fight against racism, working-class unity will never be achieved and the revolutionary potential of the working class will never be realized. Yet despite all the evidence of this commitment to fighting racism over many decades, Marxism has been maligned as, at best, "blind" to combating racism and, at worst, "incapable" of it. For example, in an article published last summer, popular commentator and self-described "anti-racist" Tim Wise summarized the critique of "left activists" that he later defines as Marxists. He writes: [L]eft activists often marginalize people of color by operating from a framework of extreme class reductionism, which holds that the "real" issue is class, not race, that "the only color that matters is green," and that issues like racism are mere "identity politics," which should take a backseat to promoting class-based universalism and programs to help working people. This reductionism, by ignoring the way that even middle class and affluent people of color face racism and color-based discrimination (and by presuming that low-income folks of color and low-income whites are equally oppressed, despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary) reinforces white denial, privileges white perspectivism and dismisses the lived reality of people of color. Even more, as we'll see, it ignores perhaps the most important political lesson regarding the interplay of race and class: namely, that the biggest reason why there is so little working-class consciousness and unity in the Untied States (and thus, why class-based programs to uplift all in need are so much weaker here than in the rest of the industrialized world), is precisely because of racism and the way that white racism has been deliberately inculcated among white working folks. Only by confronting that directly (rather than sidestepping it as class reductionists seek to do) can we ever hope to build cross-racial, class based coalitions. In other words, for the policies favored by the class reductionist to work--be they social democrats or Marxists--or even to come into being, racism and white supremacy must be challenged directly. Here, Wise accuses Marxism of: "extreme class reductionism," meaning that Marxists allegedly think that class is more important than race; reducing struggles against racism to "mere identity politics"; and requiring that struggles against racism should "take a back seat" to struggles over economic issues. Wise also accuses so-called "left activists" of reinforcing "white denial" and "dismiss[ing] the lived reality of people of color"--which, of course, presumes Left activists and Marxists to all be white. - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - What do Marxists actually say? Marxists argue that capitalism is a system that is based on the exploitation of the many by the few. Because it is a system based on gross inequality, it requires various **tools to divide the majority**--racism and **all oppressions** under capitalism serve this purpose. Moreover, oppression is used to justify and "explain" unequal relationships in society that enrich the minority that live off the majority's labor. Thus, racism developed initially to explain and justify the enslavement of Africans--because they were less than human and undeserving of liberty and freedom. Everyone accepts the idea that the oppression of slaves was rooted in the class relations of exploitation under that system. Fewer recognize that **under capitalism, wage slavery is the pivot around which all other inequalities and oppressions turn**. Capitalism used racism to justify plunder, conquest and slavery, but as Karl Marx pointed out, it also used racism to divide and rule--to pit one section of the working class against another and thereby blunt class consciousness. **To claim**, as Marxists do, **that racism is a product of capitalism is not to deny** or diminish **its importance** or impact in American society. It is simply to explain its origins and the reasons for its perpetuation. Many on the left today talk about class as if it is one of many oppressions, often describing it as "classism." What people are really referring to as "classism" is elitism or snobbery, and not the fundamental organization of society under capitalism. Moreover, it is popular today to talk about various oppressions, including class, as intersecting. While it is true that oppressions can reinforce and compound each other, they are born out of the material relations shaped by capitalism and the economic exploitation that is at the heart of capitalist society. In other words, it is the material and economic structure of society that gave rise to a range of ideas and ideologies to justify, explain and help perpetuate that order. In the United States, racism is the most important of those ideologies. Despite the widespread beliefs to the contrary of his critics, Karl Marx himself was well aware of the centrality of race under capitalism. While Marx did not write extensively on the question of slavery and its racial impact in societies specifically, he did write about the way in which European capitalism emerged because of its pilfering, rape and destruction, famously writing: The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of Black skins, signalized the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. He also recognized the extent to which slavery was central to the world economy. He wrote: Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton; without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given the colonies their value; it is the colonies that have created world trade, and it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large-scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance. Without slavery North America, the most progressive of countries, would be transformed into a patriarchal country. Wipe out North America from the map of the world, and you will have anarchy--the complete decay of modern commerce and civilization. Cause slavery to disappear and you will have wiped America off the map of nations. Thus slavery, because it is an economic category, has always existed among the institutions of the peoples. Modern nations have been able only to disguise slavery in their own countries, but they have imposed it without disguise upon the New World. Thus, there is a fundamental understanding of the centrality of slave labor in the national and international economy. But what about race? Despite the dearth of Marx's own writing on race in particular, one might look at Marx's correspondence and deliberations on the American Civil War to draw conclusions as to whether Marx was as dogmatically focused on purely economic issues as his critics make him out be. One must raise the question: If Marx was reductionist, how is his unabashed support and involvement in abolitionist struggles in England explained? If Marx was truly an economic reductionist, he might have surmised that slavery and capitalism were incompatible, and simply waited for slavery to whither away. W.E.B. Du Bois in his Marxist tome Black Reconstruction, quotes at length a letter penned by Marx as the head of the International Workingmen's Association, written to Abraham Lincoln in 1864 in the midst of the Civil War: The contest for the territories which opened the epoch, was it not to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the labor of the immigrant or be prostituted by the tramp of the slaver driver? When an oligarchy of 300,000 slave holders dared to inscribe for the first time in the annals of the world "Slavery" on the banner of armed revolt, when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, whence the first declaration of the rights of man was issued...when on the very spots counter-revolution...maintained "slavery to be a beneficial institution"...and cynically proclaimed property in man 'the cornerstone of the new edifice'...then the working classes of Europe understood at once...that the slaveholders' rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy war of property against labor... They consider it an earnest sign of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggles for the rescue of the enchained race and the Reconstruction of a social order. Not only was Marx personally opposed to slavery and actively organized against it, but he theorized that slavery and the resultant race discrimination that flowed from it were **not just problems for the slaves** themselves, but for white workers who were constantly under the threat of losing work to slave labor. This did not mean white workers were necessarily sympathetic to the cause of the slaves--most of them were not. But Marx was not addressing the issue of consciousness, but objective factors when he wrote in Capital, "In the United States of America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed as long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black it is branded." Moreover, Marx understood the dynamics of racism in a modern sense as well--as a means by which workers who had common, objective interests with each other could also become mortal enemies because of subjective, but nevertheless real, racist and nationalist ideas. Looking at the tensions between Irish and English workers, with a nod toward the American situation between Black and white workers, Marx wrote: Every industrial and commercial center in England possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker he feels himself a member of the ruling nation and so turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He cherishes religious, social and national prejudices against the Irish worker. His attitude is much the same as that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the USA. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker at once the accomplice and stupid tool of the English rule in Ireland. This antagonism is artificially kept alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes. This antagonism is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organization. It is the secret by which the capitalist maintains its power. And that class is fully aware of it. Out of this quote, one can see a Marxist theory of how racism operated in contemporary society, after slavery was ended. Marx was highlighting three things: first, that capitalism promotes economic competition between workers; second, that the ruling class uses racist ideology to divide workers against each other; and finally, that when one group of workers suffer oppression, it negatively impacts the entire class.

### 1nc chandler

#### Refuse their ethical criteria—it insulates protest from accountability and trades off with collective struggle—especially true for war

Chandler 7 – Researcher @ Centre for the Study of Democracy, Chandler. 2007. Centre for the Study of Democracy, Westminster, Area, Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 118-119

This disjunction between the human/ethical/global causes of post-territorial political activism and the capacity to 'make a difference' is what makes these individuated claims immediately abstract and metaphysical – there is no specific demand or programme or attempt to build a collective project. This is the politics of symbolism. The rise of symbolic activism is highlighted in the increasingly popular framework of 'raising awareness'– here there is no longer even a formal connection between ethical activity and intended outcomes (Pupavac 2006). Raising awareness about issues has replaced even the pretense of taking responsibility for engaging with the world – the act is ethical in-itself. Probably the most high profile example of awareness raising is the shift from Live Aid, which at least attempted to measure its consequences in fund-raising terms, to Live 8 whose goal was solely that of raising an 'awareness of poverty'. The struggle for 'awareness' makes it clear that the focus of symbolic politics is the individual and their desire to elaborate upon their identity – to make us aware of their 'awareness', rather than to engage us in an instrumental project of changing or engaging with the outside world. It would appear that in freeing politics from the constraints of territorial political community there is a danger that political activity is freed from any constraints of social mediation(see further, Chandler 2004a). Without being forced to test and hone our arguments, or even to clearly articulate them, we can rest on the radical 'incommunicability' of our personal identities and claims – you are 'either with us or against us'; engaging with those who disagree is no longer possible or even desirable. It is this lack of desire to engage which most distinguishes the unmediated activism of post-territorial political actors from the old politics of territorial communities, founded on struggles of collective interests (Chandler 2004b). The clearest example is old representational politics – this forced engagement in order to win the votes of people necessary for political parties to assume political power. Individuals with a belief in a collective programme knocked on strangers' doors and were willing to engage with them, not on the basis of personal feelings but on what they understood were their potential shared interests. Few people would engage in this type of campaigning today; engaging with people who do not share our views, in an attempt to change their minds, is increasingly anathema and most people would rather share their individual vulnerabilities or express their identities in protest than attempt to argue with a peer. This paper is not intended to be a nostalgic paean to the old world of collective subjects and national interests or a call for a revival of territorial state-based politics or even to reject global aspirations: quite the reverse. Today, politics has been 'freed' from the constraints of territorial political community – governments without coherent policy programmes do not face the constraints of failure or the constraints of the electorate in any meaningful way; activists, without any collective opposition to relate to, are free to choose their causes and ethical identities; protest, from Al Qaeda, to anti-war demonstrations, to the riots in France, is inchoate and atomized. When attempts are made to formally organize opposition, the ephemeral and incoherent character of protest is immediately apparent.

### 1nc zizek

#### They have misidentified what war we’re in—flowing their arguments and potentially offering the ballot belies everything they’ve said about liberal gestures of inclusion—inclusion in debate space is an empty gesture that ensures nothing changes

Zizek 8—Institute for Social Sciences, Ljubljana (Slavoj, The Prospects of Radical Politics Today, Int’l Journal of Baudrillard Studies, 5;1)

ellipses in orig

Let us take two predominant topics of to day's American radical academia: postcolonial and queer (gay) studies. The problem of postcolonialism is undoubtedly crucial; however, "postcolonial studies" tend to translate it into the multiculturalist problematic of the colonized minorities' "right to narrate" their victimizing experience, of the power mechanisms which repress "otherness," so that, at the end of the day, we learn that the root of postcolonial exploitation is our intolerance toward the Other, and, furthermore, that this intolerance itself is rooted in our intolerance toward the "Stranger in Ourselves," in our inability to confront what we repressed in and of ourselves. The politico-economic struggle is thus imperceptibly transformed into a pseudo-psychoanalytic drama of the subject unable to confront its inner traumas ... The true corruption of American academia is not primarily financial, it is not only that they are able to buy many European critical intellectuals (myself included – up to a point), but conceptual: notions of "European" critical theory are imperceptibly translated into the benign universe of Cultural Studies chic.

My personal experience is that practically all of the "radical" academics silently count on the long-term stability of the American capitalist model, with the secure tenured position as their ultimate professional goal (a surprising number of them even play on the stock market). If there is a thing they are genuinely horrified of, it is a radical shattering of the (relatively) safe life environment of the "symbolic classes" in the developed Western societies. Their excessive Politically Correct zeal when dealing with sexism, racism, Third World sweatshops, etc., is thus ultimately a defense against their own innermost identi­fication, a kind of compulsive ritual whose hidden logic is: "Let's talk as much as possible about the necessity of a radical change to make sure that nothing will really change!" Symptomatic here is the journal October: when you ask one of the editors to what the title refers, they will half-confidentially signal that it is, of course, that October – in this way, one can indulge in the jargonistic analyses of modern art, with the hidden assurance that one is somehow retaining the link with the radical revolutionary past ... With regard to this radical chic, the first gesture toward Third Way ideologists and practitioners should be that of praise: they at least play their game straight and are honest in their acceptance of global capitalist coordinates, in contrast to the pseudo-radical academic Leftists who adopt toward the Third Way the attitude of utter disdain, while their own radicality ultimately amounts to an empty gesture which obligates no one to any­thing determinate.

II. From Human to Animal Rights

We live in the "postmodern" era in which truth­ claims as such are dismissed as an expression of hidden power mechanisms – as the reborn pseudo-Nietzscheans like to emphasize, truth is a lie which is most efficient in asserting our will to power. The very question "Is it true?" apropos of some statement is supplanted by another question: "Under what power con­ditions can this statement be uttered?" What we get instead of the universal truth is a multitude of perspectives, or, as it is fashionable to put it today, of "narratives" – not only of literature, but also of politics, religion, science, they are all different narratives, stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, and the ultimate goal of ethics is to guarantee the neutral space in which this multitude of narratives can peacefully coexist, in which everyone, from ethnic to sexual minorities, will have the right and possibility to tell his/her story. The two philosophers of today's global capitalism are the two great Left-liberal "progres­sives," Richard Rorty and Peter Singer – honest in their respective stances. Rorty defines the basic coordinates: the fundamental dimension of a human being is the ability to suffer, to experience pain and humiliation – consequently, since humans are symbolic animals, the fundamental right is the right to nar­rate one's experience of suffering and humiliation.2 Singer then provides the Darwinian background.3

### 1nc marcus & frank

#### The aff reflects the ideology of Occupy. Claiming “debate space” as a site for politics sells out radical change to the private sphere of individual protest in the academy

**Marcus 2012** – associate book editor at Dissent Magazine (Fall, David, “The Horizontalists”, http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-horizontalists)

There is a much-recycled and certainly apocryphal tale told of an ethnographer traveling in India. Journeying up and down the Ganges Delta, he encounters a fisherman who claims to know the source of all truth. “The world,” the fisherman explains, “rests upon the back of an elephant.”

“But what does the elephant stand on?” the ethnographer asks.

“A turtle.”

“And the turtle?”

“Another turtle.”

“And it?”

“Ah, friend,” smiles the fisherman, “it is turtles all the way down.”

As with most well-circulated apocrypha, it is a parable that lacks a clear provenance, but has a clear moral: that despite our ever-dialectical minds, we will never get to the bottom of things; that, in fact, ***there is nothing*** at the bottom of things. What we define as society is nothing more than a set of locally constructed practices and norms, and what we define as history is nothing more than the passage of one set to the next. Although we might “find the picture of our universe as an infinite tower of tortoises rather ridiculous,” as one reteller admitted, it only raises the question, “Why do we think we know better?”

Since the early 1970s we have wondered—with increasing anxiety—why and if we know better. Social scientists, literary critics, philosophers, and jurists have all begun to turn from their particular disciplines to the more general question of interpretation. There has been an **increasing uneasiness with universal categories of thought**; a whispered suspicion and then a commonly held belief that the sum—societies, histories, identities—never amounts to more than its parts. New analytical frameworks have begun to emerge, sensitive to both the pluralities and localities of life. “What we need,” as Clifford Geertz argued, “are not enormous ideas” but “ways of thinking that are responsive to particularities, to individualities, oddities, discontinuities, contrasts, and singularities.”

This growing anxiety over the precision of our interpretive powers has translated into a variety of political as well as epistemological concerns. Many have become uneasy with universal concepts of justice and equality. Simultaneous to—and in part because of—the ascendance of human rights, freedom has increasingly become understood as an individual entitlement instead of a collective possibility. The once prevalent conviction that a handful of centripetal values could bind society together has transformed into a deeply skeptical attitude toward general statements of value. If it is, indeed, turtles all the way down, then decisions can take place only on a local scale and on a horizontal plane. There is no overarching platform from which to legislate; only a “local knowledge.” As Michael Walzer argued in a 1985 lecture on social criticism, “We have to start from where we are,” we can only ask, “what is the right thing ***for us*** to do?”

This shift in scale has had a significant impact on the Left over the past twenty to thirty years. Socialism, once the “name of our desire,” has all but disappeared; new desires have emerged in its place: situationism, autonomism, localism, communitarianism, environmentalism, anti-globalism. Often spatial in metaphor, they have been more concerned with where and how politics happen rather than at what pace and to what end. Often local in theory and in practice, they have come to represent a shift in scale: from the large to the small, from the vertical to the horizontal, and from—what Geertz has called—the “thin” to the “thick.”

Class, race, and gender—those classic left themes—are, to be sure, still potent categories. But they have often been imagined as spectrums rather than binaries, varying shades rather than static lines of solidarity. Instead of society, there is now talk of communities and actor networks; instead of radical schemes to rework economic and political institutions, there is an emphasis on localized campaigns and everyday practices. The critique of capitalism—once heavily informed by intricate historical and social theories—has narrowed. The “ruthless criticism of all,” as Karl Marx once put it, has turned away from exploitative world systems to the pathologies of an over-regulated life. As post-Marxists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe declared in 1985,

Left-wing thought today stands at a crossroads. The “evident truths” of the past—the classical forms of analysis and political calculation, the nature of the forces in conflict, the very meaning of the Left’s struggles and objectives—have been seriously challenged….From Budapest to Prague and the Polish coup d’état, from Kabul to the sequels of Communist victory in Vietnam and Cambodia, a question-mark has fallen more and more heavily over the whole way of conceiving both socialism and the roads that should lead to it.

In many ways, the Left has just been keeping up with the times. Over the last quarter-century, there has been a general fracturing of our social and economic relations, a “multiplication of,” what one sociologist has called, “partial societies—grouped by age, sex, ethnicity, and proximity.” This has not necessarily been a bad thing. Even as the old Left—the ***vertical*** Left—frequently bemoaned the growing differentiation and individuation, these new categories did, in fact, open the door for marginalized voices and communities. They created a space for more diversity, tolerance, and inclusion. They signaled a turn toward the language of recognition: a politics more sensitive to difference. But this turn was also not without its disadvantages. Gone was the Left’s hope for an emerging class consciousness, a movement of the “people” seeking greater realms of freedom. Instead of challenging the top-down structures of late capitalism, radicals now aspired to create—what post-Marxists were frequently calling—“spaces of freedom.” If one of the explicit targets of the global justice movement of the late 1990s was the exploitative trade policies of the World Trade Organization, then its underlying critique was the alienating patterns of its bureaucracy: the erosion of spaces for self-determination and expression. The crisis of globalization was that it stripped individuals of their rights to participate, to act as free agents in a society that was increasingly becoming shaped by a set of global institutions. What most troubled leftists over the past three or four decades was not the increasingly unequal distribution of goods and services in capitalist societies but the increasingly unequal distribution of power. As one frequently sighted placard from the 1999 Seattle protests read, “No globalization without participation!”

Occupy Wall Street has come to represent the latest turn in this movement toward local and more horizontal spaces of freedom. Occupation was, itself, a matter of recovering local space: a way to repoliticize the square. And in a moment characterized by foreclosure, it was also symbolically, and sometimes literally, an attempt to reclaim lost homes and abandoned properties. But there was also a deeper notion of space at work. Occupy Wall Street sought out not only new political spaces but also new ways to relate to them. By resisting the top-down management of representative democracy as well as the bottom-up ideals of labor movements, Occupiers hoped to create a new politics in which decisions moved neither up nor down but horizontally. While embracing the new reach of globalization—linking arms and webcams with their encamped comrades in Madrid, Tel Aviv, Cairo, and Santiago—they were also rejecting its patterns of consolidation, its limits on personal freedom, its vertical and bureaucratic structures of decision-making.

Time was also to be transformed. The general assemblies and general strikes were efforts to reconstruct, and make more autonomous, our experience of time as well as space. Seeking to escape from the Taylorist demands of productivity, the assemblies insisted that decision-making was an endless process. Who we are, what we do, what we want to be are categories of flexibility, and consensus is as much about repairing this sense of open-endedness as it is about agreeing on a particular set of demands. Life is a mystery, as one pop star fashionista has insisted, and Occupiers wanted to keep it that way. Likewise, general strikes were imagined as ways in which workers could take back time—regain those parts of life that had become routinized by work. Rather than attempts to achieve large-scale reforms, general strikes were improvisations, escapes from the daily calculations of production that demonstrated that we can still be happy, creative, even productive individuals without jobs. As one unfurled banner along New York’s Broadway read during this spring’s May Day protests, “Why work? Be happy.”

In many ways, the Occupy movement was a rebellion against the institutionalized nature of twenty-first century capitalism and democracy. Equally skeptical of corporate monopolies as it was of the technocratic tendencies of the state, it was ultimately an insurgency against control, against the ways in which organized power and capital deprived the individual of the time and space needed to control his or her life. Just as the vertically inclined leftists of the twentieth century leveraged the public corporation—the welfare state—against the increasingly powerful number of private ones, so too were Occupy and, more generally, the horizontalist Left to embrace the age of the market: at the center of their politics was the anthropological “man” in both his forms—*homo faber* and *homo ludens*—who was capable of negotiating his interests outside the state. For this reason, the movement did not fit neatly into right or left, conservative or liberal, revolutionary or reformist categories. On the one hand, it was sympathetic to the most classic of left aspirations: to dismantle governing hierarchies. On the other, its language was imbued with a strident individualism: a politics of anti-institutionalism and personal freedom that has most often been affiliated with the Right.

Seeking an alternative to the bureaucratic tendencies of capitalism and socialism, Occupiers were to frequently invoke the image of autonomy: of a world in which social and economic relations exist outside the institutions of the state. **Their aspiration was a society based on organic, decentralized circuits of exchange and deliberation—on voluntary associations, on local debate**, on loose networks of affinity groups.

If political and economic life had become abstracted in the age of globalization and financialization, then Occupy activists wanted to re-politicize our everyday choices. As David Graeber, one of Occupy’s chief theoretical architects, explained two days after Zuccotti Park was occupied, “The idea is essentially that “the system is not going to save us,” so “we’re going to have to save ourselves.”

Borrowing from the anarchist tradition, Graeber has called this work “direct action”: the practice of circumventing, even on occasion subverting, hierarchies through practical projects. Instead of attempting “to pressure the government to institute reforms” or “seize state power,” direct actions seek to “build a new society in the shell of the old.” By creating spaces in which individuals take control over their lives, it is a strategy of acting and thinking “as if one is already free.” Marina Sitrin, another prominent Occupier, has offered another name for this politics—“horizontalism”: “the use of direct democracy, the striving for consensus” and “processes in which everyone is heard and new relationships are created.” It is a politics that not only refuses institutionalization but also imagines a new subjectivity from which one can project the future into the present.

Direct action and horizontal democracy are new names, of course, for old ideas. They descend—most directly—from the ideas and tactics of the global justice movement of the 1990s and 2000s. Direct Action Network was founded in 1999 to help coordinate the anti-WTO protests in Seattle; *horizontalidad*, as it was called in Argentina, emerged as a way for often unemployed workers to organize during the financial crisis of 2001. Both emerged out of the theories and practices of a movement that was learning as it went along. The ad hoc working groups, the all-night bull sessions, the daylong actions, the decentralized planning were all as much by necessity as they were by design. They were not necessarily intended at first. But what emerged out of anti-globalization was a new vision of globalization. Local and horizontal in practice, direct action and democracy were to become catchphrases for a movement that was attempting to resist the often autocratic tendencies of a fast-globalizing capitalism.

But direct action and horizontal democracy also tap into a longer, if often neglected, tradition on the left: the anarchism, syndicalism, and autonomist Marxism that stretch from Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman, and Rosa Luxemburg to C.L.R. James, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Antonio Negri. If revolutionary socialism was a theory about ideal possibilities, then anarchism and autonomism often focused on the revolutionary practices themselves. The way in which the revolution was organized was the primary act of revolution. Autonomy, as the Greco-French Castoriadis told *Le Monde* in 1977, demands not only “the elimination of dominant groups and of the institutions embodying and orchestrating that domination” but also new modes of what he calls “self-management and organization.”

With direct action and horizontal democracy, the Occupy movement not only developed a set of new tactics but also a governing ideology, a theory of time and space that runs counter to many of the practices of earlier leftist movements. Unlike revolutionary socialism or evolutionary social democracy—Marx’s Esau and Jacob—Occupiers conceived of time as more cyclical than developmental, its understanding of space more local and horizontal than structural and vertical. The revolution was to come but only through everyday acts. It was to occur only through—what Castoriadis obliquely referred to as—“the self-institution of society.”

The seemingly spontaneous movement that emerged after the first general assemblies in Zuccotti Park was not, then, sui generis but an elaboration of a much larger turn by the Left. As occupations spread across the country and as activists begin to exchange organizational tactics, it was easy to forget that what was happening was, in fact, a part of a much larger shift in the scale and plane of Western politics: a turn toward more local and horizontal patterns of life, a growing skepticism toward the institutions of the state, and an increasing desire to seek out greater realms of personal freedom. And although its hibernation over the summer has, perhaps, marked the end of the Occupy movement, OWS has also come to represent an important—and perhaps more lasting—break. In both its ideas and tactics, it has given us a new set of desires—autonomy, radical democracy, direct action—that look well beyond the ideological and tactical tropes of socialism. Its occupations and general assemblies, its flash mobs and street performances, its loose network of activists all suggest a bold new set of possibilities for the Left: a horizontalist ethos that believes that revolution will begin by transforming our everyday lives.

It can be argued that horizontalism is, in many ways, a product of the growing disaggregation and individuation of Western society; that **it is a kind of free-market leftism: a politics jury-rigged out of the very culture it hopes to resist.** For not only does it emphasize the agency of the individual, but it draws one of its central inspirations from a neoclassical image: that of the self-managing society—the polity that functions best when the state is absent from everyday decisions.

But one can also find in its anti-institutionalism an attempt to speak in today’s language for yesterday’s goals. If we must live in a society that neither trusts nor feels compelled by collectivist visions, then horizontalism offers us a leftism that attempts to be, at once, both individualist and egalitarian, anti-institutional and democratic, open to the possibilities of self-management and yet also concerned with the casualties born out of an age that has let capital manage itself for far too long. Horizontalism has absorbed the crisis of knowledge—what we often call “postmodernism”—and the crisis of collectivism—what we often call “neoliberalism.” But instead of seeking to return to some golden age before our current moment of fracture, it seeks—for better and worse—to find a way to make leftist politics conform to our current age of anti-foundationalism and institutionalism. As Graeber argued in the prescriptive last pages of his anthropological epic, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*, “Capitalism has transformed the world in many ways that are clearly irreversible” and we therefore need to give up “the false choice between state and market that [has] so monopolized political ideology for the last centuries that it made it difficult to argue about anything else.” We need, in other words, to stop thinking like leftists.

But herein lies the problem. Not all possible forms of human existence and social interaction, no matter how removed they are from the institutions of power and capital, are good forms of social organization. Although it is easy to look enthusiastically to those societies—ancient or modern, Western or non-Western—that exist beyond the structures of the state, they, too, have their own patterns of hierarchy, their own embittered lines of inequality and injustice. More important, to select one form of social organization over the other is **always an act of exclusion**. Instituting and then protecting a particular way of life will always require a normative commitment in which not every value system is respected—in which, in other words, there is a moral hierarchy.

More problematically, by working outside structures of power one may circumvent coercive systems but one does **not necessarily subvert them**. Localizing politics—stripping it of its larger institutional ambitions—has, to be sure, its advantages. But without a larger structural vision, it does not go far enough. “Bubbles of freedom,” as Graeber calls them, may create a larger variety of non-institutional life. But they will always neglect other crucial avenues of freedom: in particular, those social and economic rights that can only be protected from the top down. In this way, the anti-institutionalism of horizontalism comes dangerously close to that of the libertarian Right. The turn to previous eras of social organization, the desire to locate and confine politics to a particular regional space, the deep skepticism toward all forms of institutional life not only mirror the aspirations of libertarianism but help cloak those hierarchies spawned from non-institutional forms of power and capital.

This is a particularly pointed irony for a political ideology that claims to be opposed to the many injustices of a non-institutional market—in particular, its unregulated financial schemes. Perhaps this is an irony deeply woven into the theoretical quilt of autonomy: a vision that, as a result of its anti-institutionalism, is drawn to all sites of individual liberation—even those that are to be found in the marketplace. As Graeber concludes in *Debt*, “Markets, when allowed to drift entirely free from their violent origins, invariably begin to grow into something different, into networks of honor, trust, and mutual connectedness,” whereas “the maintenance of systems of coercion constantly do the opposite: turn the products of human cooperation, creativity, devotion, love and trust back into numbers once again.”

In many ways, this is the result of a set of political ideas that have lost touch with their origins. The desire for autonomy was born out of the socialist—if not also often the Marxist—tradition and there was always a guarded sympathy for the structures needed to oppose organized systems of capital and power. Large-scale institutions were, for thinkers such as Castoriadis, Negri, and C.L.R. James, still essential if every cook was truly to govern. To only “try to create ‘spaces of freedom’ ‘alongside’ of the State” meant, as Castoriadis was to argue later in his life, to back “down from the problem of politics.” In fact, this was, he believed, the failure of 1968: “the inability to set up new, different institutions” and recognize that “there is no such thing as a society without institutions.”

This is—and will be—a problem for the horizontalist Left as it moves forward. As a leftism ready-made for an age in which all sides of the political spectrum are arrayed against the regulatory state, it is always in danger of becoming absorbed into the very ideological apparatus it seeks to dismantle. For it aspires to a decentralized and organic politics that, in both principle and practice, shares a lot in common with its central target. Both it and the “free market” are anti-institutional. And the latter will remain so without larger vertical measures. Structures, not only everyday practices, need to be reformed. The revolution cannot happen only on the ground; it must also happen from above. A direct democracy still needs its indirect structures, individual freedoms still need to be measured by their collective consequences, and notions of social and economic equality still need to stand next to the desire for greater political participation. Deregulation is another regulatory regime, and to replace it requires new regulations: institutions that will limit the excesses of the market. As Castoriadis insisted in the years after 1968, the Left’s task is not only to abolish old institutions but to discover “new kinds of relationship between society and its institutions.”

Horizontalism has come to serve as an important break from the static strategies and categories of analysis that have slowed an aging and vertically inclined Left. OWS was to represent its fullest expression yet, though it has a much longer back story and still—one hopes—a promising future. But horizontalists such as Graeber and Sitrin will struggle to establish spaces of freedom if they cannot formulate a larger vision for a society. Their vision is not—as several on the vertical left have suggested—too utopian but not utopian enough: in seeking out local spaces of freedom, they have confined their ambitions; they have, in fact, come, at times, to mirror the very ideology they hope to resist. In his famous retelling of the turtle parable, Clifford Geertz warned that in “the search of all-too-deep-lying turtles,” we have to be careful to not “lose touch with the hard surfaces of life—with the political, economic, stratificatory realities within which men are everywhere contained.” This is an ever-present temptation, and one that, in our age of ever more stratification, we must resist.

#### Prefer boring politics—key to prevent criticism from being an end in itself—we alternative is war against capital

**Frank '12** Thomas, brilliant badass, author of *What's the Matter with Kansas?* and editor of *The Baffler* "To the Precinct Station: How theory met practice …and drove it absolutely crazy" http://www.thebaffler.com/past/to\_the\_precinct\_station

Occupy itself is pretty much gone. It was evicted from Zuccotti Park about two months after it began—an utterly predictable outcome for which the group seems to have made inadequate preparation. OWS couldn’t bring itself to come up with a real set of demands until after it got busted, when it finally agreed on a single item. With the exception of some residual groups here and there populated by the usual activist types, OWS has today pretty much fizzled out. The media storm that once surrounded it has blown off to other quarters.

Pause for a moment and compare this record of accomplishment to that of Occupy’s evil twin, the Tea Party movement, and the larger right-wing revival of which it is a part. Well, under the urging of this trumped-up protest movement, the Republican Party proceeded to ***win a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives***; in the state legislatures of the nation it ***took some six hundred seats*** from the Democrats; as of this writing it is still ***purging Republican senators and congressmen*** deemed insufficiently conservative and has even succeeded in ***having one of its own named as the GOP’s vice-presidential candidate***.

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*T*he question that the books under consideration here seek to answer is: What is the magic formula that made OWS so successful? But it’s exactly the wrong question. What we need to be asking about Occupy Wall Street is: Why did this effort fail? How did OWS blow all the promise of its early days? Why do even the most popular efforts of the Left come to be mired in a gluey swamp of academic talk and pointless antihierarchical posturing?

The action certainly started with a bang. When the occupation of Zuccotti Park began, in September 2011, the OWS cause was overwhelmingly popular; indeed, as Todd Gitlin points out, hating Wall Street may well have been the most popular left-wing cause since the thirties. Inequality had reached obscene levels, and it was no longer the act of a radical to say so. The bank bailouts of the preceding years had made it obvious that government was captured by organized money. Just about everyone resented Wall Street in those days; just about everyone was happy to see someone finally put our fury in those crooks’ overpaid faces. People flocked to the OWS standard. Cash donations poured in; so did food and books. Celebrities made appearances in Zuccotti, and the media began covering the proceedings with an attentiveness it rarely gives to leftist actions.

But these accounts, with a few exceptions here and there, misread that overwhelming approval of Occupy’s *cause* as an approval of the movement’s *mechanics*: the camping out in the park, the way food was procured for an army of protesters, the endless search for consensus, the showdowns with the cops, the twinkles. These things, almost every writer separately assumes, are what the Occupy phenomenon was *really* about. These are the details the public hungers to know.

The building of a “community” in Zuccotti Park, for example, is a point of special emphasis. Noam Chomsky’s thoughts epitomize the genre when he tells us that “one of the main achievements” of the movement “has been to create communities, real functioning communities of mutual support, democratic interchange,” et cetera. The reason this is important, he continues, is because Americans “tend to be very isolated and neighborhoods are broken down, community structures have broken down, people are kind of alone.” How building such “communities” helps us to tackle the power of high finance is left unexplained, as is Chomsky’s implication that a city of eight million people, engaged in all the complexities of modern life, should learn how humans are supposed to live together by studying an encampment of college students.

The actual sins of Wall Street, by contrast, are much less visible. For example, when you read *Occupying Wall Street*, the work of a team of writers who participated in the protests, you first hear about the subject of predatory lending when a sympathetic policeman mentions it in the course of a bust. The authors themselves never bring it up.

And if you want to know how the people in Zuccotti intended to block the banks’ agenda—how they intended to stop predatory lending, for example—you have truly come to the wrong place. Not because it’s hard to figure out how to stop predatory lending, but because the way the Occupy campaign is depicted in these books, it seems to have had no intention of doing anything except building “communities” in public spaces and inspiring mankind with its noble refusal to have leaders.

Unfortunately, though, that’s not enough. Building a democratic movement culture is essential for movements on the left, but it’s also just a starting point. Occupy never evolved beyond it. It did not call for a subtreasury system, like the Populists did. It didn’t lead a strike (a real one, that is), or a sit-in, or a blockade of a recruitment center, or a takeover of the dean’s office. The IWW free-speech fights of a century ago look positively Prussian by comparison.

With Occupy, the **horizontal culture was everything. “The process is the message**,” as the protesters used to say and as most of the books considered here largely concur. The aforementioned camping, the cooking, the general-assembling, the filling of public places: that’s what Occupy was all about. Beyond that there seems to have been virtually no strategy to speak of, no agenda to transmit to the world.

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*W*hether or not to have demands, you might recall, was something that Occupy protesters debated hotly among themselves in the days when Occupy actually occupied something. Reading these books a year later, however, that debate seems to have been consensed out of existence. Virtually none of the authors reviewed here will say forthrightly that the failure to generate demands was a tactical mistake. On the contrary: the quasi-official account of the episode (*Occupying Wall Street*) laughs off demands as a fetish object of literal-minded media types who stupidly crave hierarchy and chains of command. Chris Hedges tells us that demands were something required only by “the elites, and their mouthpieces in the media.” Enlightened people, meanwhile, are supposed to know better; demands imply the legitimacy of the adversary, meaning the U.S. government and its friends, the banks. Launching a protest with no formal demands is thought to be a great accomplishment, a gesture of surpassing democratic virtue.

And here we come to the basic contradiction of the campaign. To protest Wall Street in 2011 was to protest, obviously, the outrageous financial misbehavior that gave us the Great Recession; it was to protest the political power of money, which gave us the bailouts; it was to protest the runaway compensation practices that have turned our society’s productive labor into bonuses for the 1 percent. All three of these catastrophes, however, were brought on by deregulation and tax-cutting—***by a philosophy of liberation as anarchic in its rhetoric as Occupy was in reality***. Check your premises, Rand-fans: it was the bankers’ own uprising against the hated state that wrecked the American way of life.

Nor does it require poststructuralism-leading-through-anarchism to understand how to reverse these developments. **You do it by rebuilding a powerful and competent regulatory state. You do it by rebuilding the labor movement. *You do it with bureaucracy***.

Occupiers often seemed aware of this. Recall what you heard so frequently from protesters’ lips back in the days of September 2011: Restore the old Glass-Steagall divide between investment and commercial banks, they insisted. **Bring back big government! Bring back safety! Bring back boredom!**

But that’s no way to fire the imagination of the world. So, how do you maintain the carnival while secretly lusting for the CPAs? By indefinitely suspending the obvious next step. By having no demands. Demands would have signaled that humorless, doctrinaire adults were back in charge and that the fun was over.

This was an inspired way to play the situation in the beginning, and for a time it was a great success. But it also put a clear expiration date on the protests. As long as demands and the rest of the logocentric requirements were postponed, Occupy could never graduate to the next level. It would remain captive to what Christopher Lasch criticized—way back in 1973—as the “cult of participation,” in which the experience of protesting is what protesting is all about.

### 1nc enns

#### That’s the only way to break the guilt and resentment cycle. Political critique key to prevent the ballot from becoming a palliative endorsement of catharsis

Enns 12—Professor of Philosophy at McMaster University (Dianne, The Violence of Victimhood, 28-30)

Guilt and Ressentiment We need to think carefully about what is at stake here. Why is this perspective appealing, and what are its effects? At first glance, the argument appears simple: white, privileged women, in their theoretical and practical interventions, must take into account the experiences and conceptual work of women who are less fortunate and less powerful, have fewer resources, and are therefore more subject to systemic oppression. The lesson of feminism's mistakes in the civil rights era is that this “mainstream” group must not speak for other women. But such a view must be interrogated. Its effects, as I have argued, include a veneration of the other, moral currency for the victim, and an insidious competition for victimhood. We will see in later chapters that these effects are also common in situations of conflict where the stakes are much higher. ¶ We witness here a twofold appeal: otherness discourse in feminism appeals both to the guilt of the privileged and to the resentment, or ressentiment, of the other. Suleri's allusion to “embarrassed privilege” exposes the operation of guilt in the misunderstanding that often divides Western feminists from women in the developing world, or white women from women of color. The guilt of those who feel themselves deeply implicated in and responsible for imperialism merely reinforces an imperialist benevolence, polarizes us unambiguously by locking us into the categories of victim and perpetrator, and blinds us to the power and agency of the other. Many fail to see that it is embarrassing and insulting for those identified as victimized others not to be subjected to the same critical intervention and held to the same demands of moral and political responsibility. Though we are by no means equal in power and ability, wealth and advantage, we are all collectively responsible for the world we inhabit in common. The condition of victimhood does not absolve one of moral responsibility. I will return to this point repeatedly throughout this book.¶ Mohanty's perspective ignores the possibility that one can become attached to one's subordinated status, which introduces the concept of *ressentiment*, the focus of much recent interest in the injury caused by racism and colonization. Nietzsche describes ressentiment as the overwhelming sentiment of “slave morality,” the revolt that begins when ressentiment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values. 19 The sufferer in this schema seeks out a cause for his suffering—“ a guilty agent who is susceptible to suffering”— someone on whom he can vent his affects and so procure the anesthesia necessary to ease the pain of injury. The motivation behind ressentiment, according to Nietzsche, is the desire “to deaden, by means of a more violent emotion of any kind, a tormenting, secret pain that is becoming unendurable, and to drive it out of consciousness at least for the moment: for that one requires an affect, as savage an affect as possible, and, in order to excite that, any pretext at all.” 20 In its contemporary manifestation, Wendy Brown argues that ressentiment acts as the “righteous critique of power from the perspective of the injured,” which “delimits a specific site of blame for suffering by constituting sovereign subjects and events as responsible for the ‘injury’ of social subordination.” Identities are fixed in an economy of perpetrator and victim, in which revenge, rather than power or emancipation, is sought for the injured, making the perpetrator hurt as the sufferer does. 21¶ 30¶ Such a concept is useful for understanding why an ethics of absolute responsibility to the other appeals to the victimized. Brown remarks that, for Nietzsche, the source of the triumph of a morality rooted in ressentiment is the denial that it has any access to power or contains a will to power. Politicized identities arise as both product of and reaction to this condition; the reaction is a substitute for action— an “imaginary revenge,” Nietzsche calls it. Suffering then becomes a social virtue at the same time that the sufferer attempts to displace his suffering onto another. The identity created by ressentiment, Brown explains, becomes invested in its own subjection not only through its discovery of someone to blame, and a new recognition and revaluation of that subjection, but also through the satisfaction of revenge. 22¶ The outcome of feminism's attraction to theories of difference and otherness is thus deeply contentious. First, we witness the further reification reification of the very oppositions in question and a simple reversal of the focus from the same to the other. This observation is not new and has been made by many critics of feminism, but it seems to have made no serious impact on mainstream feminist scholarship or teaching practices in women's studies programs. Second, in the eagerness to rectify the mistakes of “white, middle-class, liberal, western” feminism, the other has been uncritically exalted, which has led in turn to simplistic designations of marginal, “othered” status and, ultimately, a competition for victimhood. Ultimately, this approach has led to a new moral code in which ethics is equated with the responsibility of the privileged Western woman, while moral immunity is granted to the victimized other. Ranjana Khanna describes this operation aptly when she writes that in the field of transnational feminism, the reification of the other has produced “separate ethical universes” in which the privileged experience paralyzing guilt and the neocolonized, crippling resentment. The only “overarching imperative” is that one does not comment on another's ethical context. An ethical response turns out to be a nonresponse. 23 Let us turn now to an exploration of this third outcome.

### 1nc reed card that was marked

#### Insisting on transhistorical primacy of slavery is intellectually dangerous and should be rejected

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That sort of Malcolm X/blaxploitation narrative, including the insistence that Birth of a Nation and Gone With the Wind continue to shape Americans’ understandings of slavery, also is of a piece with a line of anti-racist argument and mobilization that asserts powerful continuities between current racial inequalities and either slavery or the Jim Crow regime. This line of argument has been most popularly condensed recently in Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow, which analogizes contemporary mass incarceration to the segregationist regime. But even she, after much huffing and puffing and asserting the relation gesturally throughout the book, ultimately acknowledges that the analogy fails.37 And it would have to fail because the segregationist regime was the artifact of a particular historical and political moment in a particular social order. Moreover, **the rhetorical force of the analogy** with Jim Crow or slavery derives from the fact that those regimes are associated symbolically with strong negative sanctions in the general culture because they have been vanquished. In that sense all versions of the lament that “it’s as if nothing has changed” give themselves the lie. **They are effective only to the extent that things have changed** significantly.

The tendency to craft political critique by demanding that we fix our gaze in the rearview mirror appeals to an **intellectual laziness.** Marking superficial similarities with familiar images of oppression is less mentally taxing than attempting to parse the multifarious, often contradictory dynamics and relations that shape racial inequality in particular and politics in general in the current moment. Assertions that phenomena like the Jena, Louisiana, incident, the killings of James Craig Anderson and Trayvon Martin, and racial disparities in incarceration demonstrate persistence of old-school, white supremacist racism and charges that the sensibilities of Thomas Dixon and Margaret Mitchell continue to shape most Americans’ understandings of slavery do important, obfuscatory ideological work.

They lay claim to a moral urgency that, as Mahmood Mamdani argues concerning the rhetorical use of charges of genocide, enables disparaging efforts either to differentiate discrete inequalities or to generate historically specific causal accounts of them as irresponsible dodges that abet injustice by temporizing in its face.38 But more is at work here as well.

**Insistence on the transhistorical primacy of racism** as a source of inequality is a class politics. It’s the politics of a stratum of the professional-managerial class whose material location and interests, and thus whose ideological commitments, are bound up with parsing, interpreting and administering inequality defined in terms of disparities among ascriptively defined populations reified as groups or even cultures. In fact, much of the intellectual life of this stratum is devoted to **“shoehorning into the rubric of racism** all manner of inequalities that may appear statistically as racial disparities.”39 And that project shares capitalism’s ideological tendency to obscure race’s foundations, as well as the foundations of all such ascriptive hierarchies, in historically specific political economy.

This felicitous convergence may help explain why proponents of “cultural politics” are so inclined to treat the products and production processes of the mass entertainment industry as a terrain for political struggle and debate. They don’t see the industry’s imperatives as fundamentally incompatible with the notions of a just society they seek to advance. In fact, they share its fetishization of heroes and penchant for inspirational stories of individual Overcoming. This sort of “politics of representation” is no more than an **image-management discourse within neoliberalism**. **That strains of an ersatz left imagine it to be something more marks the extent of our defeat**. And then, of course, there’s that Upton Sinclair point.

## 2nc

### hill (at: perm)

#### Even if cap is experienced racially for them—that doesn’t deny our argument—even if they destabilize race—cap ensures a constant reshuffling of artificial divisions—perm is deck chairs

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In contrast to both Critical Race Theorists and revisionist socialists/left liberals/equivalence theorists, and those who see caste as the primary form of oppression, Marxists would agree that objectively- whatever our “race” or gender or sexuality or current level of academic attainment or religious identity, whatever the individual and group history and fear of oppression and attack- **the fundamental objective and material form of oppression in capitalism is class oppression**. Black and Women capitalists, or Jewish and Arab capitalists, or Dalit capitalists in India, exploit the labour power of their multi-ethnic men and women workers, essentially (in terms of the exploitation of labour power and the appropriation of surplus value) in just the same way as do white male capitalists, or upper-caste capitalists. But the subjective consciousness of identity, this subjective affirmation of one particular identity, while seared into the souls of its victims, **should not mask the objective nature of contemporary oppression under capitalism** – class oppression that, of course, hits some “raced” and gendered and caste and occupational sections of the working class harder than others. Martha Gimenez (2001:24) succinctly explains that “class is **not simply another ideology** legitimating oppression.” Rather, class denotes “exploitative relations between people **mediated by their relations to the means of production**.” Apple’s “parallellist,” or equivalence model of exploitation (equivalence of exploitation based on “race,” class and gender, his “tryptarchic” model of inequality) produces valuable data and insights into aspects of and the extent and manifestations of gender oppression and “race” oppression in capitalist USA. However, such analyses serve to **occlude the class-capital relation**, the class struggle, **to obscure an essential and defining nature of capitalism,** class conflict. Objectively, whatever our “race” or gender or caste or sexual orientation or scholastic attainment, whatever the individual and group history and fear of oppression and attack, the **fundamental form of oppression in capitalism is class oppression**. While the capitalist class is predominantly white and male, capital in theory and in practice can be blind to colour and gender and caste – even if that does not happen very often. African Marxist-Leninists such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o (e.g., Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Ngugi wa Mirii, 1985) know very well that **when the white colonialist oppressors were ejected** from direct rule over African states in the 1950s and 60s, the white bourgeoisie in some African states such as Kenya was **replaced by a black bourgeoisie**, acting in concert with transnational capital and/or capital(ists) of the former colonial power. Similarly in India, capitalism is no longer exclusively white. It is Indian, not white British alone. As Bellamy observes, the diminution of class analysis “**denies immanent critique of any critical bite,” effectively disarming a meaningful opposition to the capitalist thesis** (Bellamy, 1997:25). And as Harvey notes, neoliberal rhetoric, with its foundational emphasis upon individual freedoms, has the power to split off libertarianism, identity politics, multiculturalism, and eventually narcissistic consumerism from the social forces ranged in pursuit of justice through the conquest of state power. (Harvey, 2005:41) To return to the broader relationship between “race,” gender, and social class, and to turn to the USA, are there many who would deny that Condoleeza Rice and Colin Powell have more in common with the Bushes and the rest of the Unites States capitalist class, be it white, black or Latina/o, than they do with the workers whose individual ownership of wealth and power is an infinetismal fraction of those individual members of the ruling and capitalist class? The various oppressions, of caste, gender, “race,” religion, for example, are functional in dividing the working class and securing the reproduction of capital; constructing social conflict between men and women, or black and white, or different castes, or tribes, or religious groups, or skilled and unskilled, thereby tending to dissolve the conflict between capital and labor, thus occluding the class-capital relation, the class struggle, and to obscure the essential and defining nature of capitalism, the labor-capital relation and its attendant class conflict.

### reed (at: interest convergence)

#### They’re conflating politics with will—there’s no concrete agenda there, there’s no intellectual tools furnished to create anti-humanist institutions—that’s why their aff is fundamentally libertarian and myopic

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In addition to knee-jerk anti-statism, the objection that the slaves freed themselves, as it shows up in favorable comparison of Django Unchained to Lincoln, stems from a racial pietism that issued from the unholy union of cultural studies and black studies in the university. More than twenty years of “resistance” studies that find again and again, at this point ritualistically, that oppressed people have and express agency have contributed to undermining the idea of politics as a discrete sphere of activity directed toward the outward-looking project of affecting the social order, most effectively through creating, challenging or redefining institutions that anchor collective action with the objective of developing and wielding power. Instead, the notion has been largely evacuated of specific content at all. “Politics” can refer to whatever one wants it to; all that’s required is an act of will in making a claim.

The fact that there has been no serious left presence with any political capacity in this country for at least a generation has exacerbated this problem. In the absence of dynamic movements that cohere around affirmative visions for making the society better, on the order of, say, Franklin Roosevelt’s 1944 “Second Bill of Rights,” and that organize and agitate around programs instrumental to pursuit of such visions, what remains is the fossil record of past movements—the still photo legacies of their public events, postures, and outcomes. Over time, the idea that a “left” is defined by commitment to a vision of social transformation and substantive program for realizing it has receded from cultural memory. Being on the left has become instead a posture, an identity, utterly disconnected from any specific practical commitments.

Thus star Maggie Gyllenhaal and director Daniel Barnz defended themselves against complaints about their complicity in the hideously anti-union propaganda film *Won’t Back Down* **by adducing their identities as progressives**. Gyllenhaal insisted that the movie couldn’t be anti-union because “There’s no world in which I would ever, EVER make an anti-union movie. My parents are left of Trotsky.”15 Barnz took a similar tack: “I’m a liberal Democrat, very pro-union, a member of two unions. I marched with my union a couple of years ago when we were on strike.”16 And Kathryn Bigelow similarly has countered criticism that her *Zero Dark Thirty* justifies torture and American militarism more broadly by invoking her identity as “a lifelong pacifist.”17 Being a progressive is now more a matter of how one thinks about oneself than what one stands for or does in the world. The best that can be said for that perspective is that it registers acquiescence in defeat. It amounts to an effort to salvage an idea of a left by **reformulating it as a sensibility within neoliberalism rather than a challenge to it**.

Gyllenhaal, Barnz, and Bigelow exemplify the power of ideology as a mechanism that **harmonizes the principles one likes to believe one holds with what advances one’s material interests;** they also attest to the fact that the transmutation of leftism into pure self-image exponentially increases the potential power of that function of ideology. Upton Sinclair’s quip—“It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it”—takes on all the more force when applied not merely to actions or interpretations of an external world but to devoutly savored self-perception as well. That left political imagination now operates unself-consciously within the practical ontology of neoliberalism is also the most important lesson to be drawn from progressives’ discussion of Django Unchained and, especially, the move to compare it with Lincoln. Jon Wiener, writing in The Nation, renders the following comparisons: “In Spielberg’s film, the leading black female character is a humble seamstress in the White House whose eyes fill with tears of gratitude when Congress votes to abolish slavery. In Tarantino’s film, the leading female character (Kerry Washington) is a defiant slave who has been branded on the face as a punishment for running away, and is forced—by Leonardo DiCaprio—to work as a prostitute. In Spielberg’s film, old white men make history, and black people thank them for giving them their freedom. In Tarantino’s, a black gunslinger goes after the white slavemaster with homicidal vengeance.”18

Never mind that, for what it’s worth, Kerry Washington’s character, as she actually appears in the film, is mainly a cipher, a simpering damsel in distress more reminiscent of Fay Wray in the original King Kong than heroines of the blaxploitation era’s eponymous vehicles Coffy or Foxy Brown. More problematically, Wiener’s juxtapositions reproduce the elevation of private, voluntarist action as a politics—somehow more truly true or authentic, or at least more appealing emotionally—**over the machinations of government and institutional actors. That is a default presumption of the identitarian/culturalist left and is also a cornerstone of neoliberalism’s practical ontology.**

In an essay on Lincoln published a month earlier, Wiener identifies as the central failing of the film its dedication “to the proposition that Lincoln freed the slaves” and concludes, after considerable meandering and nit-picking ambivalence that brings the term pettifoggery to mind, “slavery died as a result of the actions of former slaves.”19 This either/or construct is both historically false and wrong-headed, and it is especially surprising that a professional historian like Wiener embraces it. The claim that slaves’ actions were responsible for the death of slavery is not only inaccurate; it is a pointless and counterproductive misrepresentation. What purpose is served by denying the significance of the four years of war and actions of the national government of the United States in ending slavery? Besides, it was indeed the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery.

Slaves’ mass departure from plantations was self-emancipation, by definition. Their doing so weakened the southern economy and undermined the secessionists’ capacity to fight, and the related infusion of black troops into the Union army provided a tremendous lift both on the battlefield and for northern morale. How does noting that proximity of Union troops greatly emboldened that self-emancipation diminish the import of their actions? But it was nonetheless the Thirteenth Amendment that finally outlawed slavery once and for all in the United States and provided a legal basis for preempting efforts to reinstate it in effect. Moreover, for all the debate concerning Lincoln’s motives, the sincerity of his commitment to emancipation, and his personal views of blacks, and notwithstanding its technical limits with respect to enforceability, the Emancipation Proclamation emboldened black people, slave and free, and encouraged all slavery’s opponents. And, as Wiener notes himself, the proclamation tied the war explicitly to the elimination of slavery as a system.

Firefly, or The Road to Serfdom

So why is a tale about a manumitted slave/homicidal black gunslinger more palatable to a contemporary leftoid sensibility than either a similarly cartoonish one about black maids and their white employers or one that thematizes Lincoln’s effort to push the Thirteenth Amendment through the House of Representatives? The answer is, to quote the saccharine 1970s ballad, “Feelings, nothing more than feelings.” Wiener’s juxtapositions reflect the political common sense that gives pride of place to demonstrations of respect for the “voices” of the oppressed and recognition of their suffering, agency, and accomplishments. That common sense informs the proposition that providing inspiration has social or political significance. But it equally shapes the generic human-interest “message” of films like The Help that represent injustice as an issue of human relations—the alchemy that promises to reconcile social justice and capitalist class power as a win/win for everyone by means of attitude adjustments and deepened mutual understanding.

That common sense underwrites the tendency to reduce the past to a storehouse of encouraging post-it messages for the present. It must, because the presumption that the crucial stakes of political action concern recognition and respect for the oppressed’s voices is a presentist view, and mining the past to reinforce it requires anachronism. The large struggles against slavery and Jim Crow were directed toward altering structured patterns of social relations anchored in law and state power, but stories of that sort are incompatible with both global marketing imperatives and the ideological predilections of neoliberalism and its identitarian loyal opposition. One can only shudder at the prospect of how Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 film, The Battle of Algiers, or Costa-Gavras’s State of Siege (1972) would be remade today. (Guy Ritchie’s and Madonna’s execrable 2002 remake of Lina Wertmüller’s 1974 film Swept Away may provide a clue; their abomination completely erases the original film’s complex class and political content and replaces it with a banal—aka “universal”—story of an encounter between an older woman and a younger man, while at the same time meticulously, almost eerily, reproducing, scene by scene, the visual structure of Wertmüller’s film.)

Particularly as those messages strive for “universality” as well as inspiration, their least common denominator tends toward the generic story of individual triumph over adversity. But the imagery of the individual overcoming odds to achieve fame, success, or recognition also maps onto the fantasy of limitless upward mobility for enterprising and persistent individuals who persevere and remain true to their dreams. As such, it is neoliberalism’s version of an ideal of social justice, legitimizing both success and failure as products of individual character. When combined with a multiculturalist rhetoric of “difference” that reifies as autonomous cultures—in effect racializes—what are actually contingent modes of life reproduced by structural inequalities, this fantasy crowds inequality as a metric of injustice out of the picture entirely. This accounts for the popularity of reactionary dreck like Beasts of the Southern Wild among people who should know better. The denizens of the Bathtub actively, even militantly, choose their poverty and cherish it and should be respected and appreciated for doing so. But no one ever supposed that Leni Riefenstahl was on the left.

The tale type of individual overcoming has become a script into which the great social struggles of the last century and a half have commonly been reformulated to fit the requirements of a wan, gestural multiculturalism. Those movements have been condensed into the personae of Great Men and Great Women—Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, George Washington Carver, Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer and others—who seem to have changed the society apparently by virtue of manifesting their own greatness. The different jacket photos adorning the 1982 and 1999 editions of Doug McAdam’s well known sociological study of the civil rights movement, Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970, exemplify the shift. The first edition’s cover was a photo of an anonymous group of marching protesters; the second edition featured the (staged) photo—made iconic by its use in an Apple advertising campaign—of a dignified Rosa Parks sitting alone on the front seat of a bus looking pensively out the window.20

Ironically, the scholarly turn away from organizations and institutional processes to valorize instead the local and everyday dimensions of those movements may have exacerbated this tendency by encouraging a focus on previously unrecognized individual figures and celebrating their lives and “contributions.” Rather than challenging the presumption that consequential social change is made by the will of extraordinary individuals, however, this scholarship in effect validates it by inflating the currency of Greatness so much that it can be found any and everywhere. Giving props to the unrecognized or underappreciated has become a feature particularly of that scholarship that defines scholarly production as a terrain of political action in itself and aspires to the function of the “public intellectual.” A perusal of the rosters of African American History Month and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day speakers at any random sample of colleges and universities attests to how closely this scholar/activist turn harmonizes with the reductionist individualism of prosperity religion and the varieties of latter-day mind cure through which much of the professional-managerial stratum of all races, genders, and sexual orientations, narrates its understandings of the world.

## 1nr

### schmidt-nowara (at: eltis)

#### Zero proof of his thesis

**Schmidt-Nowara 02** [Christopher, Professor of History and Associate Chair at the Lincoln Center campus at Fordham University, “Big Questions and Answers: Three Histories of Slavery, the Slave Trade and the Atlantic World” typos because of OCRing, Social History, Vol. 27, No. 2 (May, 2002), pp. 210-217]

Bold, but not always convincing. This reader found the volume's most controversial thesis, that the use of African slavery was an uneconomic decision guided by European racial and gender ideologies, particularly weak in its demonstration. Eltis wants to show that the social and institutional factors that would have permitted widespread European enslavement were in place in the early modern period (57-84). In doing so, he marshals impressive evidence about the various forms of coercive labour existing in early modern western Europe, such as indenture and convict labour. Given the prevalence of overt coercion in Europe, he asks, why did European elites not take the next step and enslave and transport Europeans in vast numbers? In doing so, he also examines and finds wanting explanations for African slavery based on epidemiological and economic assumptions. Europeans adapted as well as Africans to New World climates, while the shipping costs from Europe would have been cheaper than those from Africa. For Eltis, the explanation for this uneconomic behaviour lies in the realm of cultural values that bound all Europeans regardless of their class position: What seems incontestable is that in regard to slavery the sense of the appropriate was shared across social divisions and cannot easily be explained by ideological differences or power relationships among classes. Outrage at the treatment of Africans was rarely expressed at any level of society before the late eighteenth century. . . . For elite and non-elite alike enslavement remained a fate for which only non-Europeans were qualified. (83-4) Eltis's conclusion regarding a shared European racial identity and sense of racial supremacy is evocative and cannot be dismissed easily, if at all. But what this account lacks is sustained consideration of alternative types of sources and historical approaches that might reinforce or modify it. Eltis makes an inelegant leap from his counter-factual of mass European enslavement to his explanation of why it did not take place; his claim of homogeneity of racial values reads more like an assertion than a proof. For instance, there is little effort to flesh out the values he attributes to Europeans of the period, largely because his study is short on the types of sources that historians employ to plumb the beliefs of human cultures, such as pamphlets, broadsheets, autobiographies and memoirs, philosophical tracts or records of political and religious rituals. It would be foolish to demand of Eltis that he use these sources himself after such meticulous research into economic history. But it is quite reasonable to expect a more sophisticated engagement with historians who have reached alternative conclusions about early modern European culture through different sources and methods. Readers of E. P. Thompson, Natalie Zemon Davis or Carlo Ginzburg will be surprised to learn that early modern European society was so cohesive and homogenous in its values. They will also be dismayed by the indifference Eltis displays towards questions of resistance and agency and his glib dismissal of class conflict and consciousness as useful analytical categories (84). Historians working in the broader field of Atlantic history have also tended to see Europe as a contentious society, most notably Seymour Drescher, who sees class conflict in the industrialization process as a major factor in the rise of British anti-slavery. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have expanded the temporal and spatial dimensions of that conflict in their recent account of popular anti-slavery sentiment and cross-racial alliances against slavery in the early modern Atlantic.5 This is not to say categorically that these scholars are correct and Eltis wrong. Rather, to make his argument more robust and persuasive, Eltis needs to engage, not sidestep, the important scholarly literature that belies his conclusions. Any explanation of the absence of European enslavement and the apparent indifference towards African slavery must take into account the balance of political and social forces that produced some semblance of autonomy and liberty among the European working classes as well as cultural assumptions about race and gender. Eltis s instinct about the cultural origins of African slavery in the Americas is plausible but, given the narrow perspective from which he addresses the issue, his conclusion is not. Robin Blackburn's The Making of New World Slavery is more varied in its approach and interpretation. While insisting, unlike Eltis, upon the driving force of 'civil society' in the construction of the plantation complex (6-12), Blackburn none the less handles questions of ideology and politics with great care and insight. This multipronged explanatory method was also evident in his earlier volume, The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848, which today reads as perhaps the most cogent narrative of the forces at work in the Atlantic world's 'age of revolution'. One of the qualities that makes The Overthrow so attractive is the intermixture of a trenchant analysis of the political economy of war, empire, decolonization, abolitionism and slave rebellion with the invocation of a 'usable past' with which Blackburn introduces the volume: Despite the mixed results of anti-slavery in this period the sacrifices of slave rebels, of radical abolitionists and of revolutionary democrats were not in vain. They show how it was possible to challenge, and sometimes defeat, the oppression which grew as the horrible obverse of the growth of human social capacities and powers in the Atlantic world of the early modern period. More generally they are of interest in illuminating the ways in which, however incompletely or imperfectly, emancipatory interests can prevail against ancient law and custom and the spirit of ruthless accumulation.6 The task of the present volume is to explain the construction of the powerful political and economic complex that was undone in the nineteenth century. Like Eltis, Blackburn emphasizes European actions and decision-making in the process. The book's first section is tided 'The Selection of New World Slavery' and ranges from medieval Europe to the eighteenth-century Caribbean. It follows the tracks of the Iberian conquerors and their northern European imitators and inheritors, thus cutting effectively across the different European empires (the same is true of the works of Eltis and Thornton), unlike many Atlantic histories which exclude Iberia and Latin America.7 The selection of African slavery in the Americas was a tortuous process which involved experiments with indentured European labour and Indian slavery. Numerous factors made these alternatives unsatisfactory for the various European colonizers. Spain found a viable labour source in Indian waged labour and forms of coercion associated with the mita, encomienda and repartimiento in its imperial core, the mining centres of Peru and Mexico. Given the emphasis on bullion, rather than sugar, Spain found less use for African slave labour than did the other European colonizers (though African slavery was important in virtually every branch of the Spanish colonial economy). Not until the Cuban plantation economy took off in the later eighteenth century did the Spanish empire see the intensive use of slave labour for sugar cultivation that was the magnet for the Atlantic slave trade.8 The Portuguese, Dutch, English and French American colonies, in contrast, came to be based on the sugar plantation from north-eastern Brazil to the Caribbean. From the later sixteenth through the later seventeenth centuries these powers tested European and Indian labour before turning full-force to the African slave trade. Blackburn coincides with Eltis in that he acknowledges important ideological motives in the selection of African slavery, finding precedents for European practices in Roman law and Europeans' early association of Africans with slavery and servitude (31-93). Also, like Eltis, he notes the virtual absence of European criticism of African slavery, figures like the Spanish clerics Bartolome de las Casas and Alonso de Sandoval being few and far between. However, he places more explanatory power in existing economic and political forces. Not only was slavery entrenched in West Africa (as Thornton carefully discusses), but the development of class relations in late medieval and early modern western Europe precluded the mass enslavement and especially the hereditary enslavement - of Europeans, an explanation that Blackburn synchronizes with the arguments of Edmund Morgan, Richard Dunn and K. G. Davies.9 Blackburn sees ideas regarding race, or what Eltis calls 'cultural values', in Weberian terms as '"switchmen", selecting different paths of historical development' (357). Racism was a cause of the implantation of African slavery in the Americas and, therefore, more than an epiphenomenon of the master-slave relationship. **But it was not the primary one**. For Blackburn, the explanations of the rise of slavery by historians like Morgan, Davies and Dunn, who emphasize economic, political and institutional factors, are more convincing than Eltis

s depiction of racism as the motive force behind American slavery, a thesis Blackburn rebuts at length and counters with his own counter-factual construction of an Atlantic system built on free, instead of bonded, labour (350-63).10 Blackburn's discussion of the selection of African slavery is wide-ranging and comprehensive. It is surely the single best place to read about the early phase of African slavery in the Americas. Many of his conclusions in this section will be familiar to scholars of slavery and colonialism, something Blackburn himself acknowledges through references to the works of Morgan and Dunn and his own reworking of the Freyre—Tannenbaum thesis regarding the differences between Iberian and northern European, especially English, slave societies. The former Blackburn calls 'baroque','an alternative modernity to that associated with the Puritan ethic' (20-1). This modernity was more inclusive (though hierarchical and exploitative) than the British and French plantation colonies, where slaves were not treated as members of a stratified yet organic community beholden to Crown and Church, but as mere factors of production in a ruthlessly capitalistic vision of modernity.11 The latter, however, won out, as Blackburn argues in the second half of the book, 'Slavery and Accumulation'. Barbados, Jamaica and St Domingue were the pinnacle of the early modern Atlantic plantation complex, importing hundreds of thousands of slaves and exporting vast quantities of sugar in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. England, in particular, emerged triumphant, in part because of the victorious slaves of St Domingue/Haiti who overthrew their bondage at the end of the eighteenth century, but also because England settled on a more successful colonial policy that encouraged investment and innovation both in the metropolis and the colonies. In Blackburn's characterization, English colonialism was 'orchestrated by an inverted mercantilism - that is to say, not by financiers and merchants serving raison d'etat but by the state serving capitalist purposes. . . . The colonial and Adantic regime of extended primitive accumulation allowed metropolitan accumulation to break out of its agrarian and national limits and discover an industrial and global destiny' (515). In the chapter entided 'New World slavery, primitive accumulation and British industrialization', Blackburn takes the exact opposite position from Eltis, arguing that colonial slavery was the foundation of England's industrial revolution, a labyrinthine account that takes him through the works of Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Eric Hobsbawm, Charles Kindelberger, Paul Bairoch and Stanley Engerman, among others (510-80). The length and care of that chapter indicates one of the major purposes of The Making of New World Slavery. This work is not just about the rise of African slavery in the Americas; it is also about the rise of the 'West'. How and why did Europe emerge as the world's dominant power? For Blackburn, Europe's ascendancy led directly through the early modern Atlantic world. Indeed, while his two volumes have come to occupy centre stage in the historiography of the rise and fall of Atlantic slavery, his work must also be seen in relationship to the recent revisions in British sociology of the ideas of Marx and Weber concerning the origins and nature of capitalist modernity and the nation-state. Michael Mann, Perry Anderson, Ernest Gellner, John Hall and Anthony Giddens - as much as C. L. R. James and Fernando Ortiz - are his peers.12 The most comparable figure is Paul Gilroy. Like Gilroy's The Black Atlantic, The Making of New World Slavery seeks to demonstrate that the Atlantic slave complex was the wheelhouse — and slaughterhouse - of modernity. Whereas Gilroy focuses on the Black experience of modernity forged in the Atlantic world and Black reflections on that experience, Blackburn approaches the slave complex as the pivot of European industrialization and state formation. Though his work builds up to an evaluation of European modernity, it would be a gross simplification to call the work of Blackburn, or Eltis, Eurocentric. However, it is correct to say that the two works do focus on European actions, interests and decisions and conclude with incisive arguments about the impact of slavery on European economic, political and social development. Just such a focus John Thornton seeks to displace by emphasizing the actions, interests and decisions of Africans in the making of the Atlantic world. How Africans influenced the origins and management of the Atlantic slave trade and how Africans affected the culture of the New World colonies are his major concerns. A reader like myself who works on Europe and the Americas will find this work indispensable both as a conceptual tool and as an introduction to various historiographies pertaining to Africa and to Africans in the Americas. The book's most provocative and counter-intuitive section,' Africans in Africa', discusses the origins and development of the slave trade and is most comparable to the other works discussed here. Thornton makes a strong case that the decisive players in the process were not Europeans but Africans. He constructs his argument through various considerations. Slavery was a fundamental institution in most West African societies, though it differed greatly from the plantation slavery of the Americas. Slaves in West Africa, usually captured in the endemic wars among the myriad polities of the region, fulfilled a wide variety of roles, from menial labour to administrative and military leadership. Slavery was not necessarily associated with a society's most debased tasks, as it was in the American plantation zone. It was not based on colour, nor was it hereditary, the most pernicious of changes in slavery as it crossed the Atlantic (72-97). Moreover, Thornton takes great pains to show that the European presence on the west coast of Africa, with the possible exception of the Portuguese in Angola, was weak and completely dependent on the interests and goodwill of African states and merchants. These latter were the true masters of the slave trade. In making this argument, Thornton is consciously inverting the terms of dependency theory explanations of the origins and impact of the slave trade. Pointing specifically to the work of Walter Rodney (43), Thornton disputes the view that the origins of the slave trade lay in European military and commercial superiority, that the immediate consequences of the European presence were an escalation of African warfare, and that the longer term consequences were a drain on African human capital and the bending of the African economy to European interests (a description captured in the title of Rodney's influential work How Europe Underdeveloped Africa).,3 Thornton, in contrast, argues that Africans held the upper hand. Different African states possessed sophisticated naval technologies well adapted to the coastal environment that made effective penetration impossible for the Europeans. European efforts to subdue African kingdoms through force of arms met with repeated failure. Confronted with a military and naval foe of equal or greater strength, Europeans had no choice but to establish small trading forts on islands off the coast of Africa. Such a weak presence, Thornton holds, had very little effect on the nature of African politics. The same was true of Europe's economic impact on the region. In the lengthy chapter 'The process of enslavement and the slave trade', Thornton argues that it was not the temptation of European commodities such as guns that stoked the slave trade and African warfare. Rather, war among African states responded more frequently to internal political pressures, while African slave traders had various markets open to them, so that selling to Europeans was only one option among others. Economic decisions regarding the pace and volume of the slave trade were made by Africans. Europeans, therefore, and not Africans, were in a dependent position: 'African participation in the slave trade was voluntary and under the control of African decision makers. This was not just at the surface level of daily exchange but even at deeper levels. Europeans possessed no means, either economic or military, to compel African leaders to sell slaves' (125). Thornton bases his arguments on an extensive scholarly literature and on close readings of primary sources. Those sources were produced almost exclusively by Europeans in European languages. This situation thus opens an intriguing question that Thornton does not directly address: what does it mean that an argument about African primacy in military and economic encounters with Europeans relies heavily on the European perspective? Thornton's method of interpreting documents relevant to the slave trade and to African cultures in the Americas is familiar: frequently he checks them against contemporary anthropological studies of African cultures and societies and reads those back into the historical sources. Such a method is generally convincing, but it also implies a historical hierarchy. In the written record, Europeans are the active agents, Africans their objects of description and contemplation. The prevalence of the European perspective in the writing of the history of the slave trade thus led this reader to puzzle over Thornton's virtual effacement of colonialism from his explanation of Atlantic slavery's rise (and of the legacies of colonialism in the writing of history). His argument about African autonomy and agency is forceful and persuasive, and he demonstrates spectacularly that the history of Atlantic slavery is not only the history of the rise of the West. But by inverting the terms of the dependency theory approach of Rodney and others, Thornton eclipses Europe's role in the making of both the Atlantic slave trade and the American plantation, without which the slave trade would never have existed. Should he have presented a more balanced account? Maybe not; balance is not necessarily the only virtue of the Atlantic historian. To argue with rigour, imagination and over a broad canvas are the marks of the great histories of Atlantic slavery. Thornton, Blackburn and Eltis are squarely in that tradition and, like C. L. R. James, Fernando Ortiz, David Brion Davis, Seymour Drescher and others before them, they have produced works that incite the reader to ask big questions and reach for big answers about a history whose legacies continue to shape the Atlantic world.

### hudson (at: ontological)

#### Anti-blackness is not an ontological antagonism---conflict is inevitable in politics, but does not have to be demarcated around whiteness and blackness---the aff’s ontological fatalism recreates colonial violence

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Thus the self-same/other distinction is necessary for the possibility of identity itself. There always has to exist an outside, which is also inside, to the extent it is designated as the impossibility from which the possibility of the existence of the subject derives its rule (Badiou 2009, 220). But although the excluded place which isn’t excluded insofar as it is necessary for the very possibility of inclusion and identity may be universal (may be considered “ontological”), its content (what fills it) – as well as the mode of this filling and its reproduction – are contingent. In other words, the meaning of the signifier of exclusion is not determined once and for all: the place of the place of exclusion, of death is itself over-determined, i.e. the very framework for deciding the other and the same, exclusion and inclusion, is nowhere engraved in ontological stone but is political and never terminally settled. Put differently, the “curvature of intersubjective space” (Critchley 2007, 61) and thus, the specific modes of the “othering” of “otherness” are nowhere decided in advance (as a certain ontological fatalism might have it) (see Wilderson 2008). The social does not have to be divided into white and black, and the meaning of these signifiers is never necessary – because they are signifiers. To be sure, colonialism institutes an ontological division, in that whites exist in a way barred to blacks – who are not. But this ontological relation is really on the side of the ontic – that is, of all contingently constructed identities, rather than the ontology of the social which refers to the ultimate unfixity, the indeterminacy or lack of the social. In this sense, then, the white man doesn’t exist, the black man doesn’t exist (Fanon 1968, 165); and neither does the colonial symbolic itself, including its most intimate structuring relations – division is constitutive of the social, not the colonial division. “Whiteness” may well be very deeply sediment in modernity itself, but respect for the “ontological difference” (see Heidegger 1962, 26; Watts 2011, 279) shows up its ontological status as ontic. It may be so deeply sedimented that it becomes difficult even to identify the very possibility of the separation of whiteness from the very possibility of order, but from this it does not follow that the “void” of “black being” functions as the ultimate substance, the transcendental signified on which all possible forms of sociality are said to rest. What gets lost here, then, is the specificity of colonialism, of its constitutive axis, its “ontological” differential. A crucial feature of the colonial symbolic is that the real is not screened off by the imaginary in the way it is under capitalism. At the place of the colonised, the symbolic and the imaginary give way because non-identity (the real of the social) is immediately inscribed in the “lived experience” (vécu) of the colonised subject. The colonised is “traversing the fantasy” (Zizek 2006a, 40–60) all the time; the void of the verb “to be” is the very content of his interpellation. The colonised is, in other words, the subject of anxiety for whom the symbolic and the imaginary never work, who is left stranded by his very interpellation.4 “Fixed” into “non-fixity,” he is eternally suspended between “element” and “moment”5 – he is where the colonial symbolic falters in the production of meaning and is thus the point of entry of the real into the texture itself of colonialism. Be this as it may, whiteness and blackness are (sustained by) determinate and contingent practices of signification; the “structuring relation” of colonialism thus itself comprises a knot of significations which, no matter how tight, can always be undone. Anti-colonial – i.e., anti-“white” – modes of struggle are not (just) “psychic” 6 but involve the “reactivation” (or “de-sedimentation”)7 of colonial objectivity itself. No matter how sedimented (or global), colonial objectivity is not ontologically immune to antagonism. Differentiality, as Zizek insists (see Zizek 2012, chapter 11, 771 n48), immanently entails antagonism in that differentiality both makes possible the existence of any identity whatsoever and at the same time – because it is the presence of one object in another – undermines any identity ever being (fully) itself. Each element in a differential relation is the condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of each other. It is this dimension of antagonism that the Master Signifier covers over transforming its outside (Other) into an element of itself, reducing it to a condition of its possibility.8 All symbolisation produces an ineradicable excess over itself, something it can’t totalise or make sense of, where its production of meaning falters. This is its internal limit point, its real:9 an errant “object” that has no place of its own, isn’t recognised in the categories of the system but is produced by it – its “part of no part” or “object small a.”10 Correlative to this object “a” is the subject “stricto sensu” – i.e., as the empty subject of the signifier without an identity that pins it down.11 That is the subject of antagonism in confrontation with the real of the social, as distinct from “subject” position based on a determinate identity.

### reed 5 (at: starting point)

#### Their argument about giving anti-capitalist stances coherence is fundamentally flawed – they also make the right stronger and abandon political accountability for the tactical means of creating political accountability

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Race in this context becomes a cheap and safely predictable alternative to pressing a substantive critique of the **sources of this horror** in New Orleans and its likely outcomes. Granted, the images projected from the Superdome, the convention center, overpasses, and rooftops seemed to cry out a stark statement of racial inequality. But that’s partly because in the contemporary U.S., race is the most familiar language of inequality or injustice. It’s what we see partly because it’s what we’re accustomed to seeing, what we look for. As I argued in The Nation, class—as income, wealth, and access to material resources, including a safety net of social connections—was certainly a better predictor than race of who evacuated the city before the hurricane, who was able to survive the storm itself, who was warehoused in the Superdome or convention center or stuck without food and water on the parched overpasses, who is marooned in shelters in Houston or elsewhere, and whose interests will be factored into the reconstruction of the city, who will be able to return. New Orleans is a predominantly black city, and it is a largely poor city. The black population is disproportionately poor, and the poor population is disproportionately black. It is not surprising that those who were stranded and forgotten, probably those who died, were conspicuously black and poor. None of that, however, means that race—or even racism —is adequate as an explanation of those patterns of inequality. And **race is especially useless as a basis on which to craft a politics** that can effectively pursue social justice. Before the “yes, buts” begin, I am not claiming that systemic inequalities in the United States are not significantly racialized. The evidence of racial disparities is far too great for any sane or honest person to deny, and they largely emerge from a history of discrimination and racial injustice. Nor am I saying that we should overlook that fact in the interest of some idealized nonracial or post-racial politics. Let me be blunter than I’ve ever been in print about what I am saying: **As a political strategy, exposing racism is wrongheaded and at best an utter waste of time**. It is the political equivalent of an appendix: a useless vestige of an earlier evolutionary moment that’s usually innocuous but can flare up and become harmful. There are two reasons for this judgment. One is that the language of race and racism is too imprecise to describe effectively even how patterns of injustice and inequality are racialized in a post-Jim Crow world. “Racism” can cover everything from individual prejudice and bigotry, unself-conscious perception of racial stereotypes, concerted group action to exclude or subordinate, or the results of ostensibly neutral market forces. It can be a one-word description and explanation of patterns of unequal distribution of income and wealth, services and opportunities, police brutality, a stockbroker’s inability to get a cab, neighborhood dislocation and gentrification, poverty, unfair criticism of black or Latino athletes, or being denied admission to a boutique. Because the category is so porous, it doesn’t really explain anything. Indeed, it **is an alternative to explanation**. Exposing racism apparently makes those who do it feel good about themselves. Doing so is cathartic, though safely so, in the same way that proclaiming one’s patriotism is in other circles. It is a summary, concluding judgment rather than a preliminary to a concrete argument. It doesn’t allow for politically significant distinctions; in fact, as a strategy, exposing racism requires subordinating the discrete features of a political situation to the overarching goal of asserting the persistence and power of racism as an abstraction. This leads to the second reason for my harsh judgment. Many liberals gravitate to the language of racism not simply because it makes them feel righteous but also because **it doesn’t carry any political warrant beyond exhorting people not to be racist**. In fact, it often is exactly the opposite of a call to action. Such formulations as “racism is our national disease” or similar pieties imply that racism is a natural condition. Further, it implies that most whites inevitably and immutably oppose blacks and therefore can’t be expected to align with them around common political goals. This view dovetails nicely with Democrats’ contention that the only way to win elections is to reject a social justice agenda that is stigmatized by association with blacks and appeal to an upper-income white constituency concerned exclusively with issues like abortion rights and the deficit. Upper-status liberals are more likely to have relatively secure, rewarding jobs, access to health care, adequate housing, and prospects for providing for the kids’ education, and are much less likely to be in danger of seeing their nineteen-year-old go off to Iraq. They tend, therefore, to have a higher threshold of tolerance for political compromises in the name of electing this year’s sorry pro-corporate Democrat. Acknowledging racism—and, of course, being pro-choice—is one of the few ways many of them can distinguish themselves from their Republican co-workers and relatives. As the appendix analogy suggests, insistence on understanding inequality in racial terms is a vestige of an earlier political style. The race line persists partly out of habit and partly because it connects with the material interests of those who would be race relations technicians. In this sense, race is not an alternative to class. The tendency to insist on the primacy of race itself stems from a class perspective. For roughly a generation it seemed reasonable to expect that defining inequalities in racial terms would provoke some, albeit inadequate, remedial response from the federal government. But that’s no longer the case; nor has it been for quite some time. That approach **presumed a federal government** that was concerned at least not to appear racially unjust. Such a government no longer exists. A key marker of the right’s victory in national politics is that the discussion of race now largely serves as a way to reinforce a message to whites that the public sector is there merely to help some combination of black, poor, and loser. Liberals have legitimized this perspective through their own racial bad faith. For many whites, the discussion of race also reinforces the idea that cutting public spending is justifiably aimed at weaning a lazy black underclass off the dole or—in the supposedly benign, liberal Democratic version—teaching them “personal responsibility.” New Orleans is instructive. The right has a built-in counter to the racism charge by mobilizing all the scurrilous racial stereotypes that it has propagated to justify attacks on social protection and government responsibility all along. **Only those who already are inclined to believe that racism is the source of inequality accept that charge**. For others, nasty victim-blaming narratives abound to explain away obvious racial disparities. **What we must do, to pursue justice** for displaced, impoverished New Orleanians as well as for the society as a whole, is to emphasize that their plight is a more extreme, condensed version of the precarious position of millions of Americans today, as more and more lose health care, bankruptcy protection, secure employment, afford¬able housing, civil liberties, and access to education. And their plight will be the future of many, many more people in this country once the bipartisan neoliberal consensus reduces government to a tool of corporations and the investor class alone.

### frank (at: concrete demands bad)

#### Concrete political demands are necessary despite the evil of the state—their approach bears a strange equivalence to Rand’s philosophy

Frank '12 Thomas, brilliant badass, author of *What's the Matter with Kansas?* and editor of *The Baffler* "To the Precinct Station: How theory met practice …and drove it absolutely crazy" http://www.thebaffler.com/past/to\_the\_precinct\_station

Leaderlessness is another virtue claimed by ***indignados*** on the right as well as left. In fact, there’s even a chapter in the 2010 “Tea Party manifesto” written by Dick Armey that is entitled, “We are a Movement of Ideas, Not Leaders”—which is ironic, since Armey is commonly referred to as “Leader Armey,” in recognition of the days when he was majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives. The reasoning, though, is the same here as it is with Occupy. As Armey puts it, “If they knew who was in charge, they could attack him or her. They could crush the inconvenient dissent of the Tea Party.” Occupiers, of course, say pretty much the same thing: if you have leaders, they can be co-opted. Surely, though, the distinctive Occupy idea that protesting is an end in itself—that “the process is the message”—surely *that* is unique, right? After all, Occupiers and their chroniclers have spent so much brainpower theorizing and explicating and defending the idea that horizontalism is a model and a demand and a philosophy rolled into one that it can’t possibly be shared by their political opposite. But of course it is—with the theory slightly modified. “We call this complex and diverse movement ‘beautiful chaos,’” writes Leader Armey in his Tea Party manifesto. “By this we reference what is now the dominant understanding in organizational management theory: decentralization of personal knowledge is the best way to maximize the contributions of people.” While the glorious decentralization of OWS was supposed to enact some academic theory of space-creating, the glorious decentralization of the Tea Party enacts the principles of the market; it enacts the latest in management theory; it enacts democracy itself. Big-government liberals, on the other hand, are in Armey’s account drawn to hierarchy as surely as are the big-media dumbshits scorned by Occupy’s chroniclers: “They can’t imagine an undirected social order,” Armey declares. *“Someone needs to be in charge.”* Armey’s coauthor, Matt Kibbe, then grabs this idea and gallops downfield. “This is not a political party,” he insists; “it is a social gathering.” Tea Party events don’t have drum circles, as far as I know, but Kibbe nevertheless says he is “reminded of the sense of community you used to experience in the parking lot before a Grateful Dead concert: peaceful, connected, smiling, gathered in common purpose.” It is “a revolt from the bottom up,” he declares. It is “a community in the fullest sense of the word.” If you look closely enough at Tea Party culture, you can even find traces of the Occupiers’ refusal to make explicit demands. Consider movement inamorata Ayn Rand (a philosopher every bit as prolix as Judith Butler) and her 1957 magnum opus ***Atlas Shrugged***, where “demands” are something that government makes on behalf of its lazy and unproductive constituents. Businessmen, by contrast, deal in contracts; they act only via the supposedly consensual relations of the market. As John Galt, the leader of the book’s capital strike, explains in a lengthy speech to the American people Rand clearly loathed: “We have no demands to present to you, no terms to bargain about, no compromise to reach. You have nothing to offer us. *We do not need you.*” **A strike with no demands?** *Wha-a-a-a?* **Why not? Because demands would imply the legitimacy of their enemy, the state**. Rand’s fake-sophisticated term for this is “the sanction of the victim.” In the course of actualizing himself, the business tycoon—the “victim,” in Rand’s distorted worldview—is supposed to learn to withhold his blessing from the society that exploits him via taxes and regulations. Once enlightened, this billionaire is to have nothing to do with the looters and moochers of the liberal world; it is to be adversarial proceedings only. So how do Rand’s downtrodden 1 percent plan to prevail? *By building a model community in the shell of the old, exactly as Occupy intended to do.* Instead of holding assemblies in the park, however, her persecuted billionaires retreat to an uncharted valley in Colorado where they practice perfect noncoercive capitalism, complete with a homemade gold standard. A high-altitude Singapore, I guess. Then, when America collapses—an eventuality Rand describes in hundreds of pages of quasi-pornographic detail—the tycoons simply step forward to take over. One last similarity. The distinctive ideological move of the Tea Party was, of course, to redirect the public’s fury away from Wall Street and toward government. And Occupy did it too, in a more abstract and theoretical way. Consider, for example, the words anthropologist Jeffrey Juris chooses when telling us why occupying parks was the thing to do: “the occupations contested the sovereign power of the state to regulate and control the distribution of bodies in space [five citations are given here], in part, by appropriating and resignifying particular urban spaces such as public parks and squares as arenas for public assembly and democratic expression [three more citations].” This kind of rhetoric is entirely typical of both Occupy and the academic Left—always fighting “the state” and its infernal power to “regulate and control”—but it doesn’t take a very close reading of the text to notice that this language, with a little tweaking, could also pass as a libertarian protest against zoning. Since none of the books described here take seriously the many obvious parallels between the two protests, none of them offers a theory for why the two were so strikingly similar. Allow me, then, to advance my own. The reason Occupy and the Tea Party were such uncanny replicas of one another is because they both drew on the lazy, reflexive libertarianism that suffuses our idea of protest these days, all the way from Disney Channel teens longing to be themselves to punk rock teens vandalizing a Starbucks. From Chris Hedges to Paul Ryan, every dissenter imagines that they are rising up against “the state.” It’s in the cultural DNA of our times, it seems; our rock ‘n’ roll rebels, our Hollywood heroes, even our FBI agents. They all hate the state—protesters in Zuccotti Park as well as the Zegna-wearing traders those protesters think they’re frightening. But here’s the rub: only the Right manages to profit from it.

### selfa (at: worker focus bad)

#### Specifically, the distinction between slave and worker was created to gain the allegiance of poor whites - the idea was they would say "at least we aren't slaves" and accept capitalist brutality

**Selfa 3** (on the editorial board of the International Socialist Review, Lance, the author of The Democrats: A Critical History, a socialist analysis of the Democratic Party, and editor of The Struggle for Palestine, a collection of essays by leading solidarity activists, “Slavery and the Origins of Racism”, International Socialist Review, Issue 26, http://www.isreview.org/issues/26/roots\_of\_racism.shtml)

Within a few decades, the ideology of white supremacy was fully developed. Some of the greatest minds of the day—such as Scottish philosopher David Hume and Thomas Jefferson, the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence‹wrote treatises alleging Black inferiority. The ideology of white supremacy based on the natural inferiority of Blacks, even allegations that Blacks were subhuman, strengthened throughout the 18th century. This was the way that the leading intellectual figures of the time reconciled the ideals of the 1776 American Revolution with slavery. The American Revolution of 1776 and later the French Revolution of 1789 popularized the ideas of liberty and the rights of all human beings. The Declaration of Independence asserts that “all menèare created equal” and possess certain “unalienable rights”—rights that can’t be taken away‹of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” As the first major bourgeois revolution, the American Revolution sought to establish the rights of the new capitalist class against the old feudal monarchy. It started with the resentment of the American merchant class that wanted to break free from British restrictions on its trading partners. But its challenge to British tyranny also gave expression to a whole range of ideas that expanded the concept of “liberty” from being just about trade to include ideas of human rights, democracy, and civil liberties. It legitimized an assault on slavery as an offense to liberty, so that some of the leading American revolutionaries, such as Thomas Paine and Benjamin Franklin, endorsed abolition. Slaves and free Blacks also pointed to the ideals of the revolution to call for getting rid of slavery. But because the revolution aimed to establish the rule of capital in America, and because a lot of capitalists and planters made a lot of money from slavery, the revolution compromised with slavery. The Declaration initially contained a condemnation of King George for allowing the slave trade, but Jefferson dropped it following protests from representatives from Georgia and the Carolinas. How could the founding fathers of the U.S.—most of whom owned slaves themselves—reconcile the ideals of liberty for which they were fighting with the existence of a system that represented the exact negation of liberty? The ideology of white supremacy fit the bill. We know today that “all men” didn’t include women, Indians, or most Blacks. But to rule Black slaves out of the blessings of liberty, the leading head-fixers of the time argued that Blacks weren’t really “men,” they were a lower order of being. Jefferson’s Notes from Virginia, meant to be a scientific catalog of the flora and fauna of Virginia, uses arguments that anticipate the “scientific racism” of the 1800s and 1900s. With few exceptions, no major institution—such as the universities, the churches, or the newspapers of the time—raised criticisms of white supremacy or of slavery. In fact, they helped pioneer religious and academic justifications for slavery and Black inferiority. As C.L.R. James put it, “[T]he conception of dividing people by race begins with the slave trade. This thing was so shocking, so opposed to all the conceptions of society which religion and philosophers had that the only justification by which humanity could face it was to divide people into races and decide that the Africans were an inferior race.”23 White supremacy wasn’t only used to justify slavery. It was also used to keep in line the two-thirds of Southern whites who weren’t slaveholders. Unlike the French colony of St. Domingue or the British colony of Barbados, where Blacks vastly outnumbered whites, Blacks represented a minority in the slave South. A tiny minority of slave-holding whites, who controlled the governments and economies of the Deep South states, ruled over a population that was roughly two-thirds white farmers and workers and one-third Black slaves. The slaveholders’ ideology of racism and white supremacy helped to divide the working population, tying poor whites to the slaveholders. Slavery afforded poor white farmers what Fields called a “social space” whereby they preserved an illusory “independence” based on debt and subsistence farming while the rich planters continued to dominate Southern politics and society. “A caste system as well as a form of labor,” historian James M. McPherson wrote, “slavery elevated all whites to the ruling caste and thereby reduced the potential for class conflict.”24 The great abolitionist Frederick Douglass understood this dynamic: The hostility between the whites and blacks of the South is easily explained. It has its root and sap in the relation of slavery, and was incited on both sides by the poor whites and the blacks by putting enmity between them. They divided both to conquer each.Ö[Slaveholders denounced emancipation as] tending to put the white working man on an equality with Blacks, and by this means, they succeed in drawing off the minds of the poor whites from the real fact, that by the rich slave-master, they are already regarded as but a single remove from equality with the slave.25