# Wilderson K JF16 (4:15 cut this down)

## 1NC

#### America is built on anti-blackness, while other forms of oppression may exist; the very structure of life in American civil society is predicated on the slave and its perfection. Africans were taken from Africa and came out in America as Blacks which is an inherently dead identity defined by slavery.

**Pak 12**

Yumi Pak (Prof of Phil), "Outside Relationality: Autobiographical Deformations and the Literary Lineage of Afro-Pessimism in 20th and 21st Century African American Literature.”

Because the four authors I examine focus intensively on untangling and retangling the nexus of race, gender, and sexuality in autobiographical narratives, this project originally relied most heavily on the frameworks provided by queer theory and performance studies, as the structural organization and methodology behind both disciplines offered the characteristic of being “‘inter’ – in between… intergenric [sic], interdisciplinary, intercultural – and therefore inherently unstable” (“What is Performance Studies Anyway?” 360). My abstract ideation of the dissertation was one which conceptualized the unloosening of the authors’ respective texts from the ways in which they have been read in particular genres. Yet the investigative progression of my  research redirected me to question the despondency I found within Toomer, Himes, Baldwin and Jones’ novels, a despondency and sorrow that seemed to reach beyond the individual and collective purportedly represented in these works. What does it mean, they seem to speculate, to suffer beyond the individual, beyond the collective, and into the far reaches of paradigmatic structure? What does it mean to exist beyond “social oppression” and veer instead into what Frank B. Wilderson, III calls “structural suffering” (Red, White & Black 36)? Briefly, Wilderson utilizes what he calls Frantz Fanon’s splitting of “the hair[s] between social oppression and structural suffering”; in other words, Wilderson refutes the possibility of analogizing blackness with any other positionality in the world. Others may be oppressed, indeed, may suffer experientially, but only the black, the paradigmatic slave, suffers structurally. Afro-pessimism, the theoretical means by which I attempt to answer this query, provides the integral term and parameters with which I bind together queer theory, performance studies, and autobiography studies in order to propose a re-examination of these authors and their texts. The structural suffering of blackness seeps into all elements of American history, culture, and life, and thus I begin my discussion with an analysis of Hortense Spillers’ concept of an American grammar in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.” To theorize blackness is to begin with the slave ship, in a space that is in actuality no place. 7 In discussing the transportation of human cargo across the Middle Passage, Spillers writes that this physical theft of bodies was “a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire” (Spillers 67). She contends here that in this mass gathering and transportation, what becomes illuminated is not only the complete and total deracination of native from soil, but rather the evisceration of subjectivity from blackness, the evacuation of will and desire from the body; in other words, we see that even before the black body there is flesh, “that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography” (67). Black flesh, which arrives in the United States to be manipulated and utilized as slave bodies, is “a primary narrative” with its “seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship’s hole, fallen, or ‘escaped’ overboard” (67). These markings – “lacerations, woundings, fissures, tears, scars, openings, ruptures, lesions, rendings, punctures of the flesh” – are indicative of the sheer scale of the structural violence amassed against blackness, and from this beginning Spillers culls an “American grammar” that grounds itself in the “rupture and a radically different kind of cultural continuation,” a grammar that is the fabric of blackness in the United States (67, 68). As Wilderson observes, “Africans went into the ships and came out as Blacks” (Red, White & Black 38). In other words, in the same moment they are (re)born as blacks, they are doomed to death as slaves. This rupture, I argue, is evident in the definitions of slavery set forth by Orlando Patterson in his seminal volume, Slavery and Social Death: natal alienation, general dishonor and openness to gratuitous violence. The captive body, which is constructed with torn flesh, is laid bare to any and all, and it is critical to note here that Patterson, in line with Afro-pessimists, does not align slavery with labor. The slave can – and did – work, but what defines him/her as such is that as a dishonored and violated object, the master’s whims for him/her to work, or not work, can be carried out without ramifications. Rather, the slave’s powerlessness is heightened to the greatest possible capacity, wherein s/he is marked by social death and the “permanent, violent domination” of their selves (Patterson 13). Spillers’ “radically different kind of cultural continuation” finds an articulation of the object status of blackness in the United States, one which impugns the separation of “slave” and “black.” As Jared Sexton and Huey Copeland inquire, “[h]ow might it feel to be… a scandal to ontology, an outrage to every marker of the human? What, in the final analysis, does it mean to suffer?” (Sexton and Copeland 53). Blackness functions as a scandal to ontology because, as Wilderson states, **black suffering forms the** ethical **backbone** **of civil society**. He writes, [c]hattel slavery did not simply reterritorialize the ontology of the African. It also created the Human out of cultural disparate identities from Europe to the East… Put another way, through chattel slavery the world gave birth and coherence to both its joys of domesticity and to its struggles of political discontent, and with these joys and struggles, the Human was born, but not before it murdered the Black, forging a symbiosis between the political ontology of Humanity and the social death of Blacks. (Red, White & Black 20 – 21) Again, the African is made black, and in this murder both ontological and physical, humanity gains its coherence. It is not my intention (nor of other Afro-pessimists) to argue that violence has only ever been committed against black individuals and communities in the United States, or in the world, but rather that the structural suffering that defines blackness, the violence enacted against blackness to maintain its positioning outside of civil society, that demarcates the black as slave, has no horizontal equivalent and, indeed, provides the logical ethos of existence for all othered subjectivities; by this I mean that all other subjects (and I use this word quite intentionally) retain a body and not the zero degree of flesh. As Sexton writes, “we might say of the colonized: you may lose your motherland, but you will not ‘lose your mother’ (Hartman 2007)” (“The Curtain of the Sky” 14). This is precisely why Sexton offers the succinct definition of Afro-pessimism as “a political ontology dividing the Slave from the world of the Human in a constitutive way” (“The Social Life of Social Death” 23). Furthermore, Afro-pessimists contest the idea that the modern world is one wherein the price of labor determines the price of being equally for all people. In this capitalistic reading of the world, we summon blacks back into civil society by utilizing Marxism to assume “a subaltern structured by capital, not by white supremacy” (“Gramsci’s Black Marx” 1). While it is undeniable, of course, that black bodies and labor were used to aid in the economic growth of the United States, we return again to the point that what defines enslavement is accumulation and fungibility, alongside natal alienation, general dishonor, and openness to gratuitous violence; the slave, then, is not constituted as part of the class struggle. 8 While it is true “that labor power is exploited and that the worker is alienated in it,” it is also true that “workers labor on the commodity, they are not the commodity itself is, their labor power is” (Red, White & Black 50). The slave is, then, invisible within this matrix, and, to a more detrimental effect, invisible within the ontology of lived subjects entirely. The slave cannot be defined as loss – as can the postcolonial subject, the woman, or the immigrant – but can only be configured as lack, as there is no potential for synthesis within a rubric of antagonism. Wilderson sets up the phrase “rubric of antagonism” in opposition to “rubric of conflict” to clarify the positionality of blacks outside relationality. The former is “an irreconcilable struggle between entities, or positions, the resolution of which is not dialectical but entails the obliteration of one of the positions,” whereas the latter is “a rubric of problems that can be posed and conceptually solved” (Red, White & Black 5). He continues, “[i]f a Black is the very antithesis of a Human subject… then his or her paradigmatic exile is not simply a function of repressive practices on the part of institutions” (9). Integrating Hegel and Marx, and returning to Spillers, Wilderson argues that within this grammar of suffering, the slave is not a laborer but what he calls “antiHuman, against which Humanity establishes, maintains, and renews its coherence, its corporeal integrity” (11). In contrast to imagining the black other in opposition to whiteness, Wilderson and other Afro-pessimists theorize blackness as being absent in the dialectic, as “anti-Human.”

#### The call for a gun ban gives more power to police who use this as an opportunity to further their violent occupation of Black existence. They sadistically use Black deaths as justification for police militarization. Gourevitch 15

Alex Gourevitch, assistant professor of political science at Brown University. "Gun Control’s Racist Reality: The Liberal Argument against Giving Police More Power." 24 June 2015

Soon after the shootings at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, the first black president of the United States offered some thoughts on Dylan Roof’s racist attack. First and foremost, President Obama said, recent events were about how “innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hand on a gun.” The killings were also about a “dark chapter in our history,” namely racial slavery and Jim Crow. Obama only suggested practical action regarding the first issue, namely gun control. He did not consider that such measures will make the persistence of the second problem even worse. It is perhaps counterintuitive to say so but gun control responses to mass killings – whether racially motivated or otherwise – are a deep mistake. The standard form of gun control means writing more criminal laws, creating new crimes, and therefore creating more criminals or more reasons for police to suspect people of crimes. More than that, it means creating yet more pretexts for a militarized police, full of racial and class prejudice, to overpolice. As multiple police killings of unarmed black men have reminded us, the police already operate with barely constrained force in poor, minority neighborhoods. From SWAT to stop-and-frisk to mass incarceration to parole monitoring, the police manage a panoply of programs that subject these populations to multiple layers of coercion and control. As a consequence, more than 7 million Americans are subject to some form of correctional control, an extremely disproportionate number of whom are poor and minority. While it is commonly assumed that the drug war is to blame for all this, work by scholars like Benjamin Levin and Jeff Fagan demonstrates that already existing gun control efforts also play an important role. One of the most notorious areas of policing, the NYPD’s stop-and-frisk program, was justified as a gun control rather than a drug war measure. In the name of preventing violence, hundreds of thousands of poor minorities are subject to searches without probable cause each year. Further, a range of Supreme Court-authorized exceptions to standard Fourth Amendment protections against illegal search and seizure derive from a concern with gun violence.

#### Measures against blackness codified in law create the paradox that justifies black death alongside civil rights laws that bind Blacks to the law. This legal doublebind sustains white supremacy. The only real attempt to solve anti-blackness is anarchic logic.

**Farley 5:**

Anthony Paul Farley (Associate Prof @ Boston College Law school), “Perfecting Slavery” pg 235-238, January 27 2005.

What is to be done? Two hundred years ago, when the slaves in Haiti rose up, they, of necessity, burned everything: They burned San Domingo flat so that at the end of the war it was a charred desert. Why do you burn everything? asked a French officer of a prisoner. We have a right to burn what we cultivate because a man has a right to dispose of his own labour, was the reply of this unknown anarchist. 48 The slaves burned everything because everything was against them. Everything was against the slaves, the entire order that it was their lot to follow, the entire order in which they were positioned as worse than senseless things, every plantation, everything. 49 “**Leave nothing white behind you**,” said Toussaint to those dedicated to the end of white-overblack. 50 “God gave Noah the rainbow sign. No more water, the fire next time.” 51 The slaves burned everything, yes, but, unfortunately, they only burned everything in Haiti. 52 Theirs was the greatest and most successful revolution in the history of the world but the failure of their fire to cross the waters was the great tragedy of the nineteenth century. 53 At the dawn of the twentieth century, W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, “The colorline belts the world.” 54 Du Bois said that the problem of the twentieth century was the problem of the colorline. 55 The problem, now, at the dawn of the twenty-first century is the problem of the colorline. The colorline continues to belt the world. Indeed, the slave power that is the United States now threatens an entire world with the death that it has become and so the slaves of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, those with nothing but their chains to lose, must, if they would be free, if they would escape slavery, win the entire world. VIII. TRAINING We begin as children. We are called and we become our response to the call. Slaves are not called. What becomes of them? What becomes of the broken-hearted? The slaves are divided souls, they are brokenhearted, the slaves are split asunder by what they are called upon to become. The slaves are called upon to become objects but objecthood is not a calling. The slave, then, during its loneliest loneliness, is divided from itself. This is schizophrenia. The slaves are not called, or, rather, the slaves are called to not be. The slaves are called unfree but this the living can never be and so the slaves burst apart and die. The slaves begin as death, not as children, and death is not a beginning but an end. There is no progress and no exit from the undiscovered country of the slave, or so it seems. We are trained to think through a progress narrative, a grand narrative, the grandest narrative, that takes us up from slavery. There is no up from slavery. The progress from slavery to the end of history is the progress from white-over-black to white-over-black to white-overblack. The progress of slavery runs in the opposite direction of the pastpresent-future timeline. The slave only becomes the perfect slave at the end of the timeline, only under conditions of total juridical freedom. It is only under conditions of freedom, of bourgeois legality, that the slave can perfect itself as a slave by freely choosing to bow down before its master. The slave perfects itself as a slave by offering a prayer for equal rights. The system of marks is a plantation. The system of property is a plantation. The system of law is a plantation. These plantations, all part of the same system, hierarchy, produce white-overblack, white-over-black only, and that continually. The slave perfects itself as a slave through its prayers for equal rights. The plantation system will not commit suicide and the slave, as stated above, has knowing non-knowledge of this fact. The slave finds its way back from the undiscovered country only by burning down every plantation. When the slave prays for equal rights it makes the free choice to be dead, and it makes the free choice to not be. Education is the call. We are called to be and then we become something. We become that which we make of ourselves. We follow the call, we pursue a calling. Freedom is the only calling—it alone contains all possible directions, all of the choices that may later blossom into the fullness of our lives. We can only be free. Slavery is death. How do slaves die? Slaves are not born, they are made. The slave must be trained to be that which the living cannot be. The only thing that the living are not free to be is dead. The slave must be trained to follow the call that is not a call. The slave must be trained to pursue the calling that is not a calling. The slave must be trained to objecthood. The slave must become death. Slavery is white-over-black. White-over-black is death. White-over-black, death, then, is what the slave must become to pursue its calling that is not a calling.

#### If politics is white, the best liberation movement will be anti-political; therefore the alternative is Black Anarchism. Reclaiming Black social life seems unlikely but as long as Black folk are dying in the street they may as well fight back with handguns against racist police. Anarchist movements are key to Black liberation, ceding authority always risks whiteness coopting it.

**Alston 03**

Ashanti Alston (Black Anarchist who was in the Black Panthers and the Black Liberation Army) “Black Anarchism” Speech given at Hunter College. October 24, 2003. <http://weblog.liberatormagazine.com/2008/07/black-anarchism.html>

So, here I am, in the United States fighting for Black liberation, and wondering: how can we avoid situations like that?

Anarchism [gives] me a way to respond to this question by insisting that we put into place, as we struggle now, structures of decision-making and doing things that continually bring more people into the process, and not just let the most “enlightened” folks make decisions for everyone else. The people themselves have to create structures in which they articulate their own voice and make their own decisions. I didn’t get that from other ideologies: I got that from anarchism. I also began to see, in practice, that anarchistic structures of decision-making are possible. For example, at the protests against the Republican National Convention in August 2000 I saw normally excluded groups—people of color, women, and queers—participate actively in every aspect of the mobilization. We did not allow small groups to make decisions for others and although people had differences, they were seen as good and beneficial. It was new for me, after my experience in the Panthers, to be in a situation where people are not trying to be on the same page and truly embraced the attempt to work out our sometimes conflicting interests. This gave me some ideas about how anarchism can be applied. It also made me wonder: if it can be applied to the diverse groups at the convention protest, could I, as a Black activist, apply these things in the Black community? Some of our ideas about who we are as a people hamper our struggles. For example, the Black community is often considered a monolithic group, but it is actually a community of communities with many different interests. I think of being Black not so much as an ethnic category but as an oppositional force or touchstone for looking at situations differently. Black culture has always been oppositional and is all about finding ways to creatively resist oppression here, in the most racist country in the world. So, when I speak of a Black anarchism, it is not so tied to the color of my skin but who I am as a person, as someone who can resist, who can see differently when I am stuck, and thus live differently.

#### Educational systems have historically excluded Black thought to sustain White supremacy. Your role as a judge and educator is to reverse that – interjecting Black thought is a prerequisite to ethical debate.

Schnyder 8

Damien Michael Schnyder (PhD, University of California’s President’s Postdoctoral Fellow) "First Strike," [https://www.lib.utexas.edu/etd/d/2009/schnyderd25688/schnyderd25688.pdf](https://www.lib.utexas.edu/etd/d/2009/schnyderd25688/schnyderd25688.pdf-https:/www.lib.utexas.edu/etd/d/2009/schnyderd25688/schnyderd25688.pdf)

Ms. Fox’s clear disregard for her students belies a racist logic that dehumanizes Blackness while also reifying white supremacy. At the crux of this logic is that Black students are destructive to civil society. As argued by Frank Wilderson, III, “There is something organic to Black positionality that makes it essential to the destruction of civil society. There is nothing willful or speculative in this statement, for one could just as well state the claim the other way around: There is something organic to civil society that makes it essential to the destruction of the Black body” (Wilderson III, 2003, 18). Given that the basis of Western society has been predicated upon particular notions of work/labor, the construction of civil society is predicated upon forced labor. The function of society as dictated by capitalist interest is the production of workers. For even as a worker, the threat to the system is merely reformist. For as Wilderson comments, “The worker demands that productivity be fair and democratic” (Wilderson III, 2003, 22). Contrast to the position of the worker, Wilderson argues, “The slave demands that production stop, without recourse to its ultimate democratization. Work is not an organic principle forthe slave” (Wilderson III, 2003, 22). Black bodies, through their collective experiences of subjugated Blackness, become a threat to the very function of civil society. Blackness has to be contained and managed in order to protect white supremacy. Crucial to Wilderson’s argument is that white supremacy needs the reproduction of social relations of power (i.e. the identification of the worker) in order to maintain its subjective advantage with respect to Blackness.45 It is at this moment - when Blackness becomes identified as antithetical to the notions of work –that white supremacy is able to unleash it’s fury upon the Black body. For it is within this space that the Black body can have anything and everything done to protect the order of civil society.46 Thus in order to contain the threat of Blackness, the Herculean managers of the hydra-like attack upon society are teachers (Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000).47 Within the development of civil society, the function of teachers is to both categorize states of being and enclose Blackness. The categorization is clear by the actions of Ms. Fox while processes of enclosure are exemplified in Mr. Keynes’ classroom. Students are prevented from interjecting alternative versions of economic systems within the framework of the discussion. Students must perform the perfunctory duty of work (basic memorization and recitation skills) not to only to be awarded with a passing grade, but not to be penalized. The result is a silencing of Black voices whose life experiences are in direct contradiction with hegemonic constructions of economy (i.e. supply and demand) that was taught by Mr. Keynes. There was no space to analyze the racial structure that frames economic modes of relation, nor was there opportunity to engage in dialogue with regards to the economics of why many of the students had to work to support their families. Mr. Keynes’ classroom management and pedagogical style exemplifies the need of white supremacy to control, define and enclose racialized subjects. The primary objective of Mr. Keynes in addition to Mr. Davis and Ms. Fox was to socialize the students as productive workers in order to fit within the hierarchal confines of civil society. The main thrust behind this socialization effort was to define the students as subjects and remove the possibility for self-identification that was not located within a white supremacist conception of being – for a self-assertion outside of these parameters is the greatest threat to white supremacist modes of social (re)production.48The veil of nobility and morality that cloaks the teaching profession has to be understood as a tool utilized by the state to maintain its power. Inside of the walls of SCHS, teachers operated within a genealogy of Black subjugation that seeks to enclose all sites of Black self-expression and thought/action and as stated by Wilderson ultimately “destroy the Black body.” In it’s current manifestation, the process of Black subjugation functions within the logic of the prison regime as outlined by Dylan Rodríguez. Within this logic, teachers serve as agents of dissemination, discipline and socialization in order to preserve the economic, political, racial, sexual and gendered hierarchies established by the United States nation project. Further, during times of economic “crises” Ruth Wilson Gilmore notes that the veil of white privilege is removed as the logic of white supremacy that frames American nationalism is fully revealed (Gilmore, 1993).49 In order to untangle the multifaceted issues within public education, it is incumbent to analyze the root causes of inequality and inequity. In agreement with scholars such as Erica R. Meiners who advocate that white supremacy is the root cause, even teachers with the best of intentions have to realize that their role is vital to the maintenance of state domination of Black subjects.

## 2NC

### AT: State Good

Their reformism cedes there is a deeper issue at hand, this means the state cannot solve anti-blackness because the discourse the state uses to understand the Black positionality is produced by white readings of history. **Wilderson 03:**

Frank B. Wilderson, (award-winning author of Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid. He is one of two Americans to hold elected office in the African National Congress and is a former insurgent in the ANC’s armed wing) “Introduction: Unspeakable Ethics” *Red, White, & Black: Cinema and the Strucure of U.S.* Antagonisms, Pg 15-16. 2003. Accessed 3/2/14. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/155892954/Wilderson-Frank-Red-White-Black-Cinema-Struct>

**Regarding the Black position**, **some might ask why, after claims successfully made on the state by the Civil Rights Movement, do I insist on positing an operational analytic** **for** cinema, film studies, and **political theory that appears to be a dichotomous and essentialist pairing of Masters and Slaves**? In other words, why should we think of today’s Blacks in the US as Slaves and everyone else (with the exception of Indians) as Masters? One could answer these questions by demonstrating how nothing remotely approaching claims successfully made on the State has come to pass. In other words, **the election of a Black President aside, police brutality, mass incarceration, segregated and substandard schools and housing, astronomical rates of HIV infection, and the threat of being turned away en masse at the polls still constitute the lived experience of Black life**. But such **empirically based rejoinders would lead us in the wrong direction; we would find ourselves on “solid” ground, which would only mystify, rather than clarify, the question. We would be forced to appeal to “facts,” the “historical record,” and empirical markers of stasis and change, all of which could be turned on their head with more of the same.** **Underlying such a downward spiral into sociology, political science, history, and/or public policy debates** would be the very rubric that I am calling into question**: the grammar of suffering known as exploitation and alienation, the assumptive logic whereby subjective dispossession is arrived at in the calculations between those who sell labor power and those who acquire it**. The Black qua the worker. Orlando Patterson has already dispelled this faulty ontological grammar in Slavery and Social Death, where he demonstrates how and why **work, or forced labor, is not a constituent element of slavery. Once the “solid” plank of “work” is removed from slavery, then the conceptually coherent notion of “claims against the state”—the proposition that the state and civil society are elastic enough to even contemplate the possibility of an emancipatory project for the Black position—disintegrates into thin air**. The imaginary of the state and civil society is parasitic on the Middle Passage. Put another way: no slave, no world. And, in addition, as Patterson argues, **no slave is in the world. If, as an ontological position, that is, as a grammar of suffering, the Slave is not a laborer but an anti-Human, a positionality against which Humanity establishes, maintains, and renews it coherence**, its corporeal integrity; if the Slave is, to borrow from Patterson, generally dishonored, perpetually open to gratuitous violence, and void of kinship structure, that is, having no relations that need be recognized, a being outside of relationality, then our analysis cannot be approached through the rubric of gains or reversals in struggles with the state and civil society, not unless and until the interlocutor first explains how the Slave is of the world.The onus is not on one who posits the Master/Slave dichotomy, but on the one who argues there is a distinction between Slaveness and Blackness. How, when, and where did such a split occur? The woman at the gates of Columbia University awaits an answer.

Gift DA – Even if your reforms empirically work, the 1AC is feel good politics for the majority where minorities get help when it makes the majority look good and is convenient. Legal control over the rights of the oppressed creates the additional power to withdraw rights when needed. **Arrigo 2k:**

Arrigo, Bruce and Williams, Christopher (California School of Professional Psychology), 2000 “The (Im) Possibility of Democratic Justice and the "Gift" of the Majority.” Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice.

The impediments to establishing democratic justice in contemporary American society have caused a national paralysis; one that has recklessly spawned an aporetic1 existence for minorities. **The entrenched ideological complexities afflicting under nonrepresented groups** (e.g., poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, crime) **at the hands of political, legal, cultural, and economic power elites have produced counterfeit**, perhaps even fraudulent, **efforts at reform**: Discrimination and inequality in opportunity prevail (e.g., Lynch & Patterson, 1996). **The misguided and futile initiatives of the state**, in pursuit of transcending this public affairs crisis, **have fostered reification**, that is, **a reinforcement of divisiveness**. This time, however, minority groups compete with one another for recognition, affirmation, and identity in the national collective psyche (Rosenfeld, 1993). **What ensues by way of state effort**, though, **is a contemporaneous sense of equality for all and a near imperceptible endorsement of inequality**; a silent conviction **that the majority still retains power. The “gift” of equality, procured through state legislative enactments as an emblem of** democratic **justice, embodies true** (legitimated**) power that remains** nervously **secure in the hands of the majority. The ostensible empowerment of minority groups is a facade; it is the ruse of the majority gift**. What exists, in fact, is a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1981, 1983) of equality (and by extension, democratic justice): a pseudo-sign image (a hypertext or simulation) of real sociopolitical progress. For the future relationship between equality and the social to more fully embrace minority sensibilities, calculated legal reform efforts in the name of equality must be displaced and the rule and authority of the status quo must be decentered. Imaginable, **calculable equality is self-limiting and self-referential.** Ultimately, it is always (at least) one step removed from true equality and, therefore, true justice. The ruse of the majority gift currently operates under the assumption of a presumed empowerment, which it confers on minority populations. Yet, the presented power is itself circumscribed by the stifling horizons of majority rule with their effects. Thus, the gift can only be construed as falsely eudemonic: An avaricious, although insatiable, pursuit of narcissistic legitimacy supporting majority directives. The commission (bestowal) of power to minority groups or citizens through prevailing state reformatory efforts underscores a polemic with implications for public affairs and civic life. We contend that the avenir (i.e., the “to come”) of equality as an (in)calculable, (un)recognizable destination in search of democratic justice is needed. However, we argue that this displacement of equality is unattainable if prevailing juridico-ethicopolitical conditions (and societal consciousness pertaining to them) remain fixed, stagnant, and immutable. In this article, we will demonstrate how **the gift of the majority is problematic, producing, as it must, a narcissistic hegemony,** that is, a sustained empowering of the privileged, a constant relegitimation of the powerful**.** Relying on Derrida’s postmodern critique of Eurocentric logic and thought, we will show how complicated and fragmented the question of establishing democratic justice is in Western cultures, especially in American society. We will argue that **what is needed is a relocation of the debate about justice and difference from the circumscribed boundaries of legal** redistributive **discourse on equality to the more encompassing context of alterity, undecidability, [and] cultural plurality,** and affirmative postmodern thought.

### AT: Spectacles/Police Militarization

**Your focus on police militarization and “subsequent” violence shuts off big picture discussion, the idea that handgun bans solve racial police violence appeals to the sensitivities of oppressors. We need to question the irrationality of their fears first. Nopper and Kaba 14:**

Nopper, Tamara K. (sociologist, writer, and editor) Kaba, Mariame (founding director of Project NIA, a grassroots organization with a vision to end youth incarceration) “Itemizing Atrocity” *Jacobin*, 8/15/14. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/08/itemizing-atrocity/>

According to the [*Economist*](http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21599349-americas-police-have-become-too-militarised-cops-or-soldiers?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/copsorsoldiers), “America’s police have become too militarized.” Not to be outdone, [*Business Insider*](http://www.businessinsider.com/police-militarization-ferguson-2014-8) published an article by Paul Szoldra, a former US marine who professed to be aghast at the scenes of camouflage-wearing, military-weapon-toting police officers patrolling the streets of an American city in armored vehicles. Szoldra quotes one of his Twitter followers, another former soldier, who wrote: “We rolled lighter than that in an actual warzone.” Some may be surprised to see such stories run in magazines like the *Economist* and *Business Insider*, but suddenly discussions about America’s militarized police forces are semi-mainstream. **In the wake of the police killing of African-American teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson**, Missouri **and** the **subsequent**riots and **protests, social media is littered with images of** tear gas, tanks, and **police in military gear with automatic weapons — all aimed at black people in the city.** Several publications and writers have rushed to alert us about their stories on the militarization of the police. Commentators have encouraged us to connect the dots between what is happening overseas and what is happening here. Hashtags referring to Ferguson and Gaza share the same caption**. We are told by some that the war on terror has come home.** Presumably, connecting these dots and making these comparisons will offer more clarity about the current situation faced by Ferguson’s beleaguered black residents .But what will we better see and know? And who and what will be (once again) invisible and unheard in the process? In her book [*Scenes of Subjection*](http://global.oup.com/academic/product/scenes-of-subjection-9780195089837;jsessionid=CEC0E139C6CAED0620EE11E5953C620D?cc=us&lang=en&), Saidiya Hartman writes: “Rather than try to convey the routinized violence of slavery and its aftermath through invocations of the shocking and the terrible, I have chosen to look elsewhere and consider those scenes in which terror can hardly be discerned … By defamiliarizing the familiar, *I hope to illuminate the terror of the mundane and quotidian rather than exploit the shocking spectacle*.” Hartman’s emphasis on “the terror of the mundane and quotidian” is her attempt to address the dilemma of black people having their suffering (un)seen and (un)heard by non-blacks — including those who purport to care: “At issue here is the precariousness of empathy … how does one give expression to these outrages without exacerbating the indifference to suffering that is the consequence to the benumbing spectacle or contend with the narcissistic identification that obliterates the other or the prurience that too often is the response to such displays?  This was the challenge faced by [Frederick] Douglass and other foes of slavery…” **A century and a half after** Douglass fought against **slavery, the police have become more militarized** in terms of weapons, tanks, training, and gear. SWAT teams have been deployed at an accelerated rate and for an increased number of activities. Reports, like the one recently published by the ACLU, provide some details about these technologies of war amassed by local police departments. Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, Radley Balko, and others have explained that the militarization of US police can be traced back to the mid-1960s. For example, in 1968, urban police forces were able to buy new equipment and technologies thanks to funding from the newly passed Safe Streets Act. The **social anxiety and fear engendered by** the Vietnam War and **domestic urban rebellions led by black people provided license for the police to turn these new products on the marginalized populations of inner-city America**. SWAT teams, batterrams, and no-knock warrants (immortalized by Gil Scott Heron and written about by James Baldwin), all predate contemporary hyper-militarized police forces. Black people have been the overwhelming targets of these instruments of war. In his 1982 song “Batterram,” presaging our current uber-militarized police force, Toddy Tee raps: “And the chief of police says he just might/ (Flatten out every house he sees on sight)/ Because he say the rockman is takin him for a fool” **For blacks, the “war on terror” hasn’t “come ‘home.’” It’s always been here.** How then might we consider the emphasis on the militarization of policing as *the* problem as another example of “the precariousness of empathy”? **The problem with casting militarization as the problem is that the formulation suggests it is the *excess* against which we must rally.** We must accept that the ordinary is fair, for an extreme to be the problem. The policing of black people — carried out through a variety of mechanisms and processes — is purportedly warranted, as long as it doesn’t get *too* militarized and excessive. **Attention is drawn to the “spectacular event” rather than to the point of origin or the mundane.**

### AT: Violent Revolution Bad

**Patrick, your Whiteness is showing. The condition of social death can only be solved by a radical reversal. Violence was okay when it allowed white folk to build a country, but no one can shoot a few racist cops. OK.**

**Ciccariello-Maher 10**

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**Hence the colonial world is shaken, but not by a bomb blast and not by a bloody massacre. Rather, this is the shaking of ontological categories—of the walls which separate being from non-being—**by the native's refusal to passively accept a position of inferiority, to refuse to see herself through the eyes of the oppressor. Put differently, the native has discovered all of these things *within* herself, "one step" prior to battle. If, as Fanon tells us, "the settler's work is to make *even dreams* of liberty impossible for the native," then this affirmation of equality first takes the form of a dream, and it is this dream which makes possible the turning away from the master and finding liberation in work.[36](#f36)Having unearthed the symbolic and ontological function of Fanon's decolonial violence, we are now in a better position to consider his controversial discussion of the positive, generative, and cathartic functions of violence. As he puts it:for the colonized people this violence, because it constitutes *their only work*, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upward in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning. The groups recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible.[37](#f37)In this crucial passage, three observations are in order. Firstly, we can see the basis for much of the confusion regarding what Fanon understands as "violence," specifically, his reference to the binding function accomplished by the "practice of violence." But once we tie this to *Black Skin*, we can see the complexities of such a practice, and its symbolic nature and function. Secondly, while decolonial violence here emerges "in reaction to" the violence of the colonizer, it is neither merely reactive nor categorically comparable: **decolonial violence, as we have seen, is a breaking down of the ontological walls of being, constructed to exclude certain persons from full access to the category "human,"** and can share little in substantive terms with the force that builds those very walls. To judge all "violences" as equal would be to fall into a severe formalism which is both useless and erroneous: useless through neglect of the functional *content* of different violences and erroneous through neglect of the fact that formal characterization as "violent" is always-already tainted by symbolic function.[38](#f38) Thirdly, if we were tempted to deny the relevance of Fanon's early Hegelian framework in the colonial context, Fanon himself is quick to remind us: inter-group *recognition* is the first achievement of this Manichean violence, one which is accomplished long prior to formal liberation through the colonized turning away from the colonizing master and toward "*their only work*."[39](#f39)It is here that we see the relationship between violence and the two stages that Fanon identifies in the decolonization process. For Fanon, the Manichean violence of the first (formal) stage—tinged as it is with racialism, intolerance, and the elimination of heterogeneity—is the necessary stepping-stone toward the creation of national identity, *just as* the black identity of which he was similarly critical represented a necessary stepping-stone to self-respect and mutual recognition in *Black Skin, White Masks*.[40](#f40) What the "great organism of violence" first accomplishes is its very existence *as an organism***: the war of liberation creates the collective basis for national identity; it creates a national past and dreams of a national future. And this collective task has a parallel effect on the individual, for whom "violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self respect."** Crucially, this effect is present "even if the armed struggle has been *symbolic* and the nation is demobilized through a rapid movement of decolonization."[41](#f41) It is only **on the basis of this individual and collective identity that the second stage of more substantive decolonization—"that of the building up of the nation," its revolutionary anode socialistic institutional transformation—can move forward**, "helped on by the existence of this cement which has been mixed with blood and anger."[42](#f42)