# Fullertown Round 2 Wiki

## 1NC

### T USfg

#### Our interpretation is that the affirmative must demonstrate the desirability of the resolution either in totality or in a particular instance to meet the necessary win condition of being topical.

#### United States federal government means the three branches of government

USA.gov 13 "USA.gov is the U.S. government's official web portal" http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/federal.shtml

U.S. Federal Government - The three branches of U.S. government—legislative, judicial, and executive—carry out governmental power and functions.

#### Increase means to make greater.

Merriam-Webster ND

“increase,” Merriam-Webster Dictionary, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/increase

transitive verb

1: to make greater : AUGMENT

2obsolete : ENRICH

#### Interpretation: The core antitrust laws are only sections 1 and 2 of the Sherman Act and section 7 of the Clayton Act.

The Antitrust Division 07 – Law enforcement agency that enforces the U.S. antitrust laws

“Antitrust Division Statement Regarding the Release of the Antitrust Modernization Commission Report,” The Antitrust Division, Department of Justice, April 2007, https://www.justice.gov/archive/atr/public/press\_releases/2007/222344.htm

The AMC has made many specific recommendations in its report, and the Division is in the process of reviewing all of them. The Division commends the AMC for its three primary conclusions:

Free-market competition should remain the touchstone of United States' economic policy. The Commission's conclusion in this regard is a fundamental starting point for policy makers. Over a century of experience has shown that robust competition among businesses, each striving to be increasingly successful, leads to better quality products and services, lower prices, and higher levels of innovation.

The core antitrust laws—Sherman Act sections 1 and 2 and Clayton Act section 7—and their application by the courts and federal enforcement agencies are sound and appropriately safeguard the competitiveness of the U.S. economy.

New or different rules are not needed for industries in which innovation, intellectual property, and technological innovation are central features. Unlike some other areas of the law, the core antitrust laws are general in nature and have been applied to many different industries to protect free-market competition successfully over a long period of time despite changes in the economy and the increasing pace of technological advancement. One of the great benefits of the Sherman and Clayton Acts is their adaptability to new economic conditions without sacrificing their ability to protect competition.

#### “business practices” are a repeated pattern of conduct

Lucas 88 – Judge, California Supreme Court

Malcolm Millar Lucas, Cal. ex rel. Van De Kamp v. Texaco, 46 Cal. 3d 1147, Supreme Court of California, October 1988, LexisNexis

\*\* Italics in original.

The statute defines "unfair competition" to mean, as relevant here, "unlawful, unfair or fraudulent *business practice* . . . ." ( Bus. & Prof. Code, § 17200, italics added.) In so doing it effectively requires what the court variously described in the leading case of Barquis v. Merchants Collection Assn. (1972) 7 Cal.3d 94 [101 Cal.Rptr. 745, 496 P.2d 817], as "a 'pattern' . . . of conduct" ( id. at p. 108), "ongoing . . . conduct" ( id. at p. 111), "a pattern of behavior" ( id. at p. 113), and, "a course of conduct" (ibid.).

#### Prohibit means Affirmative teams must completely ban a type of anticompetitive business practices – they don’t

Feldman 86 – Member of Procopio's Native American Law practice

Glenn M. Feldman, On Appeal from the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians, 1986 U.S. S. Ct. Briefs LEXIS 1221, Supreme Court of the United States, 1986, LexisNexis

In arguing that California's bingo laws are prohibitory rat ther than regulatory, the appeallants have simply misunderstood the fundamental distinction between "prohibition" and "regulation" of conduct. As succinctly put by the Supreme Court of Washington more than 50 years ago, after noting that the prohibition and regulation of the sale of liquor are entirely different things: "To prohibit the liquor traffic implies the putting a stop to its sale as a beverage, to end it fully, completely, and indefinitely." In contrast, regulation "implies that the sale of intoxicating liquor shall go on within the bounds of certain prescribed rules, restrictions, and limitations." Ajax v. Gregory, 32 P.2d 560, 563 (Wash. 1934). Because regulation of conduct involves prescribing limitations, regulation, by definition, necessarily involves some degree of prohibition. Blumenthal v. City of Cheyenne, 186 P.2d 556, 566 (Wyo. 1947). The two concepts, however, are analytically distinct. Therefore, when courts have been faced with statutory schemes similar to California's bingo laws, they have consistently held them to be regulatory and not prohibitory.

#### We have Two impacts

#### 1. Fairness – absent a predictable stasis, the aff can determine the scope of the debate using an infinite amount of literature bases or experiences. That makes the scope of negative research too broad and makes it too easy to be aff. Fairness outweighs any other impact because debate is a competitive activity, and a skewed debate undermines the value of the energy and research that teams put into winning the competition. It makes the debates determined by a coinflip not research.

#### 2. Clash: defending your argument against a well-prepared opponent is key to any effective advocacy strategy or education obtained in debate – responding to negative arguments forced you to refine your arguments to the best possible version. Any other alternative means that we can’t improve our affirmatives after we break them which ruins the educational value of debate

#### That outweighs --- we’re cognitively biased to cling to preexisting beliefs, which breeds epistemic arrogance that culminates in Trumpism --- only submitting beliefs for reexamination by others and taking a risk of being wrong cultivates scrutiny.

Resnick 19

Brian Resnick, Science Writer for Vox, “Intellectual humility: the importance of knowing you might be wrong,” Vox. January 4, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/1/4/17989224/intellectual-humility-explained-psychology-replication>

\*\*\*Modified with a strikethrough – Raffi

It’s been fascinating to watch scientists struggle to make their institutions more humble. And I believe there’s an important and underappreciated virtue embedded in this process.

For the past few months, I’ve been talking to many scholars about intellectual humility, the characteristic that allows for admission of wrongness.

I’ve come to appreciate what a crucial tool it is for learning, especially in an increasingly interconnected and complicated world. As technology makes it easier [**to lie**](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/4/20/17109764/deepfake-ai-false-memory-psychology-mandela-effect) and spread false information [incredibly quickly](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/3/8/17085928/fake-news-study-mit-science), we need intellectually humble, curious people.

I’ve also realized how difficult it is to foster intellectual humility. In my reporting on this, I’ve learned there are three main challenges on the path to humility:

In order for us to acquire more intellectual humility, we all, even the smartest among us, need to better appreciate our cognitive ~~blind~~ [limitations] spots. Our minds are more imperfect and imprecise than we’d often like to admit. Our ignorance can be invisible.

Even when we overcome that immense challenge and figure out our errors, we need to remember we won’t necessarily be punished for saying, “I was wrong.” And we need to be braver about saying it. We need a culture that celebrates those words.

We’ll never achieve perfect intellectual humility. So we need to choose our convictions thoughtfully.

This is all to say: Intellectual humility isn’t easy. But damn, it’s a virtue worth striving for, and failing for, in this new year.

Intellectual humility is simply “the recognition that the things you believe in might in fact be wrong,” as [Mark Leary](http://people.duke.edu/~leary/), a social and personality psychologist at Duke University, tells me.

But don’t confuse it with overall humility or bashfulness. It’s not about being a pushover; it’s not about lacking confidence, or self-esteem. The intellectually humble don’t cave every time their thoughts are challenged.

Instead, it’s a method of thinking. It’s about entertaining the possibility that you may be wrong and being open to learning from the experience of others. Intellectual humility is about being actively curious about your blind spots. One illustration is in the ideal of the scientific method, where a scientist actively works against her own hypothesis, attempting to rule out any other alternative explanations for a phenomenon before settling on a conclusion. It’s about asking: What am I missing here?

It doesn’t require a high IQ or a particular skill set. It does, however, require making a habit of thinking about your limits, which can be painful. “It’s a process of monitoring your own confidence,” Leary says.

This idea is older than social psychology. Philosophers from the earliest days have [grappled](https://philosophynow.org/issues/53/Socratic_Humility) with the limits of human knowledge. Michel de Montaigne, the 16th-century French philosopher credited with inventing the essay, wrote that “the plague of man is boasting of his knowledge.”

Social psychologists have learned that humility is associated with other valuable character traits: People who score higher on intellectual humility questionnaires are more open to [hearing opposing views](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15298868.2017.1361861). They more readily seek out information that conflicts with their worldview. They pay [**more attention to evidence**](https://www.templeton.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Intellectual-Humility-Leary-FullLength-Final.pdf) and have a stronger self-awareness when they answer a question incorrectly.

When you ask the intellectually arrogant if they’ve heard of bogus historical events like “Hamrick’s Rebellion,” they’ll say, “Sure.” The intellectually humble are less likely to do so. Studies have found that cognitive reflection — i.e., analytic thinking — is [correlated](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51ed234ae4b0867e2385d879/t/5b43b48b03ce6471753c78ba/1531163796071/2018+Pennycook+Rand+-+Cognition.pdf) with being better able to discern fake news stories from real ones. These studies haven’t looked at intellectual humility per se, but it’s plausible there’s an overlap.

Most important of all, the intellectually humble are more likely to admit it when they are wrong. When we admit we’re wrong, we can grow closer to the truth.

One reason I’ve been thinking about the virtue of humility recently is because our president, Donald Trump, is one of the least humble people on the planet.

It was Trump who said on the night of his nomination, “I alone can fix it,” with the “it” being our entire political system. It was Trump who once said, “[I have one of the great memories of all time](http://digg.com/2017/trump-great-memories-of-all-time).” More recently, Trump told the Associated Press, “I have a natural instinct for science,” in [dodging](http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/10/trump-i-have-a-natural-instinct-for-science.html) a question on climate change.

A frustration I feel about Trump and the era of history he represents is that his pride and his success — he is among the most powerful people on earth — seem to be related. He exemplifies how our society rewards confidence and bluster, not truthfulness.

Yet we’ve also seen some very high-profile examples lately of how overconfident leadership can be ruinous for companies. Look at what happened to Theranos, a company that promised to change the way blood samples are drawn. It was all hype, all bluster, and it collapsed. Or consider Enron’s overconfident executives, who were often hailed for [their intellectual brilliance](https://awealthofcommonsense.com/2018/05/when-intelligence-fails-miserably/) — they ran the company into the ground with risky, suspect financial decisions.

The problem with arrogance is that the truth always catches up. Trump may be president and confident in his denials of climate change, but the changes to our environment will still ruin so many things in the future.

As I’ve been reading the psychological research on intellectual humility and the character traits it correlates with, I can’t help but fume: Why can’t more people be like this?

We need more intellectual humility for two reasons. One is that our culture promotes and rewards overconfidence and arrogance (think Trump and Theranos, or the advice your career counselor gave you when going into job interviews). At the same time, when we are wrong — out of ignorance or error — and realize it, our culture doesn’t make it easy to admit it. Humbling moments too easily can turn into moments of humiliation.

So how can we promote intellectual humility for both of these conditions?

In asking that question of researchers and scholars, I’ve learned to appreciate how hard a challenge it is to foster intellectual humility.

First off, I think it’s helpful to remember how flawed the human brain can be and how prone we all are to intellectual blind spots. When you learn about how the brain actually works, how it actually perceives the world, it’s hard not to be a bit horrified, and a bit humbled.

We often can’t see — or even sense — what we don’t know. It helps to realize that it’s normal and human to be wrong.

It’s rare that a viral meme also provides a surprisingly deep lesson on the imperfect nature of the human mind. But believe it or not, the great [“Yanny or Laurel” debate](https://www.vox.com/2018/5/16/17358774/yanny-laurel-explained) of 2018 fits the bill.

For the very few of you who didn’t catch it — I hope you’re recovering nicely from that coma — here’s what happened.

An audio clip (you can hear it below) says the name “Laurel” in a robotic voice. Or does it? Some people hear the clip and immediately hear “Yanny.” And both sets of people — Team Yanny and Team Laurel — are indeed hearing the

Hearing, the perception of sound, ought to be a simple thing for our brains to do. That so many people can listen to the same clip and hear such different things should give us humbling pause. Hearing “Yanny” or “Laurel” in any given moment ultimately depends on a whole host of factors: the quality of the speakers you’re using, whether you have hearing loss, your expectations.

Here’s the deep lesson to draw from all of this: Much as we might tell ourselves our experience of the world is the truth, our reality will always be an interpretation. Light enters our eyes, sound waves enter our ears, chemicals waft into our noses, and it’s up to our brains to make a guess about what it all is.

“THE FIRST RULE OF THE DUNNING-KRUGER CLUB IS YOU DON’T KNOW YOU’RE A MEMBER OF THE DUNNING-KRUGER CLUB”

Perceptual tricks like this ([“the dress”](https://www.vox.com/2015/2/27/8119901/explain-color-dress) is another one) reveal that our perceptions are not the absolute truth, that the physical phenomena of the universe are indifferent to whether our feeble sensory organs can perceive them correctly. We’re just guessing. Yet these phenomena leave us indignant: How could it be that our perception of the world isn’t the only one?

That sense of indignation is called naive realism: the feeling that our perception of the world is the truth. “I think we sometimes confuse effortlessness with accuracy,” [Chris Chabris](http://www.chabris.com/), a psychological researcher who co-authored a book on the [challenges of human perception, tells me](https://go.redirectingat.com/?id=66960X1516588&xs=1&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.amazon.com%2FInvisible-Gorilla-How-Intuitions-Deceive%2Fdp%2F0307459667%2Fref%3Dsr_1_1%3Fie%3DUTF8%26qid%3D1545250306%26sr%3D8-1%26keywords%3Dinvisible%2Bgorilla%2Bbook). When something is so immediate and effortless to us — hearing the sound of “Yanny” — it just [feels true](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/10/5/16410912/illusory-truth-fake-news-las-vegas-google-facebook). (Similarly, psychologists find when a lie is repeated, it’s more likely to be [misremembered as being true](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/10/5/16410912/illusory-truth-fake-news-las-vegas-google-facebook), and for a similar reason: When you’re hearing something for the second or third time, your brain becomes faster to respond to it. And that fluency is confused with truth.)

Our interpretations of reality are often arbitrary, but we’re still [**stubborn**](https://jov.arvojournals.org/article.aspx?articleid=2613309) about them. Nonetheless, the same observations can lead to wildly different conclusions.

For every sense and every component of human judgment, there are illusions and ambiguities we interpret arbitrarily.

Some are gravely serious. White people often perceive black men to be bigger, taller, and more muscular (and therefore [more threatening](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/4/19/17251752/philadelphia-starbucks-arrest-racial-bias-training)) than they really are. That’s racial bias — but it’s also a socially constructed illusion. When we’re taught or learn to fear other people, our brains distort their potential threat. They seem more menacing, and we want to build walls around them. When we learn or are taught that other people [are less than human](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/3/7/14456154/dehumanization-psychology-explained), we’re less likely to look upon them kindly and more likely to be okay when violence is committed against them.

Not only are our interpretations of the world often arbitrary, but we’re often overconfident in them. “Our ignorance is invisible to us,” David Dunning, an expert on human blind spots, says.

You might recognize his name as half of the psychological phenomenon that bears his name: the Dunning-Kruger effect. That’s where people of low ability — let’s say, those who fail to understand logic puzzles — tend to unduly overestimate their abilities. Inexperience masquerades as expertise.

An irony of the Dunning-Kruger effect is that so many people misinterpret it, are overconfident in their understanding of it, [and get it wrong.](https://www.talyarkoni.org/blog/2010/07/07/what-the-dunning-kruger-effect-is-and-isnt/)

When people talk or write about the Dunning-Kruger effect, it’s almost always in reference to other people. “The fact is this is a phenomenon that visits all of us sooner or later,” Dunning says. We’re all overconfident in our ignorance from time to time. (Perhaps related: Some 65 percent of Americans [believe](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0200103) they’re more intelligent than average, which is wishful thinking.)

Similarly, we’re overconfident in our ability to remember. Human memory is extremely malleable, prone to small changes. When we remember, we don’t wind back our minds to a certain time and relive that exact moment, yet many [of us think](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3149610/) our memories work like a videotape.

Dunning hopes his work helps people understand that “not knowing the scope of your own ignorance is part of the human condition,” he says. “But the problem with it is we see it in other people, and we don’t see it in ourselves. The first rule of the Dunning-Kruger club is you don’t know you’re a member of the Dunning-Kruger club.”

In 2012, psychologist Will Gervais scored an honor any PhD science student would covet: a [co-authored paper](http://science.sciencemag.org/content/336/6080/493) in the journal Science, one of the top interdisciplinary scientific journals in the world. Publishing in Science doesn’t just help a researcher rise up in academic circles; it often gets them a lot of media attention too.

One of the experiments in the paper tried to see if getting people to think more rationally would make them less willing to report religious beliefs. They had people look at a picture of Rodin’s [The Thinker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thinker) or another statue. They thought The Thinker would nudge people to think harder, more analytically. In this more rational frame of mind, then, the participants would be less likely to endorse believing in something as faith-based and invisible as religion, and that’s what the study found. It was [catnip](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-critical-thinkers-lose-faith-god/) for science journalists: one small trick to change the way we think.

“HOW WOULD I KNOW IF I WAS WRONG?” IS ACTUALLY A REALLY, REALLY HARD QUESTION TO ANSWER

But it was a tiny, small-sample study, the exact type that is prone to yielding false positives. Several years later, another lab attempted to replicate the findings with a [much larger sample size](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0172636), and failed to find any evidence for the effect.

And while Gervais knew that the original study wasn’t rigorous, he couldn’t help but feel a twinge of discomfort.

“Intellectually, I could say the original data weren’t strong,” he says. “That’s very different from the human, personal reaction to it. Which is like, ‘Oh, shit, there’s going to be a published failure to replicate my most cited finding that’s gotten the most [media attention](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/losing-your-religion-analytic-thinking-can-undermine-belief/).’ You start worrying about stuff like, ‘Are there going to be career repercussions? Are people going to think less of my other work and stuff I’ve done?’”

Gervais’s story is familiar: Many of us fear we’ll be seen as less competent, less trustworthy, if we admit wrongness. Even when we can see our own errors — which, as outlined above, is not easy to do — we’re hesitant to admit it.

But turns out this assumption is [false](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0143723). As [Adam Fetterman](https://www.utep.edu/liberalarts/psychology/people/adam-k-fetterman.html), a social psychologist at the University of Texas El Paso, has found in a [few](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0143723) [studies](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191886918305336), wrongness admission isn’t usually judged harshly. “When we do see someone admit that they are wrong, the wrongness admitter is seen as more communal, more friendly,” he says. It’s almost never the case, in his studies, “that when you admit you’re wrong, people think you are less competent.”

Sure, there might be some people who will troll you for your mistakes. There might be [a mob on Twitter that converges in order to shame you](https://www.vox.com/2016/2/29/11133822/internet-outrage-explained). Some moments of humility could be humiliating. But this fear must be vanquished if we are to become less intellectually arrogant and more intellectually humble.

Humility can’t just come from within — we need environments where it can thrive

But even if you’re motivated to be more intellectually humble, our culture doesn’t always reward it.

The field of psychology, overall, has been reckoning with a “[replication crisis](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/8/27/17761466/psychology-replication-crisis-nature-social-science)” where many classic findings in the science don’t hold up under rigorous scrutiny. Incredibly influential textbook findings in psychology — like the “[ego depletion”](https://www.vox.com/2016/3/14/11219446/psychology-replication-crisis) theory of willpower or the “[marshmallow test](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/6/6/17413000/marshmallow-test-replication-mischel-psychology)” — have been bending or breaking.

I’ve found it fascinating to watch the field of psychology deal with this. For some researchers, the reckoning has been personally unsettling. “I’m in a dark place,” Michael Inzlicht, a University of Toronto psychologist, [wrote](http://michaelinzlicht.com/getting-better/2016/2/29/reckoning-with-the-past) in a 2016 blog post after seeing the theory of ego depletion crumble before his eyes. “Have I been chasing puffs of smoke for all these years?”

“IT’S BAD TO THINK OF PROBLEMS LIKE THIS LIKE A RUBIK’S CUBE: A PUZZLE THAT HAS A NEAT AND SATISFYING SOLUTION THAT YOU CAN PUT ON YOUR DESK”

What I’ve learned from reporting on the “replication crisis” is that intellectual humility requires support from peers and institutions. And that environment is hard to build.

“What we teach undergrads is that scientists want to prove themselves wrong,” says [Simine Vazire](https://www.simine.com/), a psychologist and journal editor who often writes and speaks about replication issues. “But, ‘How would I know if I was wrong?’ is actually a really, really hard question to answer. It involves things like having critics yell at you and telling you that you did things wrong and reanalyze your data.”

And that’s not fun. Again: Even among scientists — people who ought to question everything — intellectual humility is hard. In some cases, researchers have refused to concede their original conclusions despite the [unveiling of new evidence](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/6/28/17509470/stanford-prison-experiment-zimbardo-interview). (One famous psychologist under fire recently told me [angrily](https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/6/28/17509470/stanford-prison-experiment-zimbardo-interview), “I will stand by that conclusion for the rest of my life, no matter what anyone says.”)

Psychologists are human. When they reach a conclusion, it becomes hard to see things another way. Plus, the incentives for a successful career in science push researchers to publish as many positive findings as possible.

There are two solutions — among many — to make psychological science more humble, and I think we can learn from them.

One is that humility needs to be built into the standard practices of the science. And that happens through transparency. It’s becoming more commonplace for scientists to preregister — i.e., commit to — a study design before even embarking on an experiment. That way, it’s harder for them to deviate from the plan and cherry-pick results. It also makes sure all data is open and accessible to anyone who wants to conduct a reanalysis.

That “sort of builds humility into the structure of the scientific enterprise,” Chabris says. “We’re not all-knowing and all-seeing and perfect at our jobs, so we put [the data] out there for other people to check out, to improve upon it, come up with new ideas from and so on.” To be more intellectually humble, we need to be more transparent about our knowledge. We need to show others what we know and what we don’t.

And two, there needs to be more celebration of failure, and a culture that accepts it. That includes building safe places for people to admit they were wrong, like the [Loss of Confidence Project](https://lossofconfidence.com/).

But it’s clear this cultural change won’t come easily.

“In the end,” Rohrer says, after getting a lot of positive feedback on the project, “we ended up with just a handful of statements.”

We need a balance between convictions and humility

There’s a personal cost to an intellectually humble outlook. For me, at least, it’s anxiety.

When I open myself up to the vastness of my own ignorance, I can’t help but feel a sudden suffocating feeling. I have just one small mind, a tiny, leaky boat upon which to go exploring knowledge in a vast and knotty sea of which I carry no clear map.

Why is it that some people never seem to wrestle with those waters? That they stand on the shore, squint their eyes, and transform that sea into a puddle in their minds and then get awarded for their false certainty? “I don’t know if I can tell you that humility will get you farther than arrogance,” says [Tenelle Porter,](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/tenelle_porter) a University of California Davis psychologist who has [studied](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15298868.2017.1361861) intellectual humility.

Of course, following humility to an extreme end isn’t enough. You don’t need to be humble about your belief that the world is round. I just think more humility, sprinkled here and there, would be quite nice.

“It’s bad to think of problems like this like a Rubik’s cube: a puzzle that has a neat and satisfying solution that you can put on your desk,” says [Michael Lynch](https://michael-lynch.philosophy.uconn.edu/), a University of Connecticut philosophy professor. Instead, it’s a problem “you can make progress at a moment in time, and make things better. And that we can do — that we can definitely do.”

For a democracy to flourish, Lynch argues, we need a balance between convictions — our firmly held beliefs — and humility. We need convictions, because “an apathetic electorate is no electorate at all,” he says. And we need humility because we need to listen to one another. Those two things will always be in tension.

The Trump presidency suggests there’s too much conviction and not enough humility in our current culture.

“The personal question, the existential question that faces you and I and every thinking human being, is, ‘How do you maintain an open mind toward others and yet, at the same time, keep your strong moral convictions?’” Lynch says. “That’s an issue for all of us.”

To be intellectually humble doesn’t mean giving up on the ideas we love and believe in. It just means we need to be thoughtful in choosing our convictions, be open to adjusting them, seek out their flaws, and never stop being curious about why we believe what we believe.

### K Capitalism

#### The aff’s antiracist politics prioritizes self-creation at the expense of political organizing --- this ahistoricizes the social transformations made possible by commitment to revolutionary politics, decentering race from class politics

Reed 18

Adolph Reed, Professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, “The Trouble With Uplift.” The Baffler. September 4, 2018. <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/the-trouble-with-uplift-reed>]

Now I think I understand. I’ve long suspected that, to a certain strain of race-conscious or antiracist discourse, historical exploration in popular culture was less important than the propagation of tales of inspiration and uplift. These fables typically feature singular black heroes who have overcome crushing racist adversity against all odds. In recent years, a steady stream of films and other narratives have openly embraced that preference.

I have written elsewhere about several of them. Producer George Lucas touted his execrable, cartoonish depiction of World War II’s Tuskegee Airmen, Red Tails (2012), as a work spotlighting “real heroes” who would be “inspirational for teenage boys” and compared it favorably to “Glory, where you have a lot of white officers running those guys into cannon fodder.” And Quentin Tarantino’s 2012 race film Django Unchained reduced slavery and manumission to the antics of a spaghetti-Western-style hero who in fact never challenges slavery but fixates only on rescuing his wife. Ava DuVernay acknowledged that she intentionally falsified the history of the iconic voting-rights campaign in her 2014 film Selma to deny President Lyndon Johnson’s role because she “wasn’t interested in making a white-savior movie.” As a consequence, she also misrepresented the tensions between Martin Luther King, Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists in the campaign—which had precisely to do with King’s surreptitious negotiations with Johnson. The effect of omitting such a central tactical debate was to depict the civil rights struggle as a simple extrusion of King’s larger-than-life persona against a pandemic racism—as a struggle, in other words, with virtually no politics to speak of.

Nation Building

Nate Parker’s 2016 dramatization of the 1831 Virginia slave rebellion led by Nat Turner, The Birth of a Nation (which quite intentionally sets itself up as an answer to Griffith’s film from a century earlier), is an even more strident display of the inclination to subordinate the complexities of actual history to a narrative of black heroism in the face of universal and unremitting white supremacy and racism. As Kenneth W. Warren argues in the Los Angeles Review of Books:

For Parker . . . the point of history is not so much to figure out what really happened but rather to enable reparative and redemptive mythmaking. . . . A further entailment of Parker’s view of his achievement is that history, for him, must remain narrow—a conduit for inspiration or therapy, for bequeathing legacies, or for purveying information or misinformation to the present—and not much more. Parker’s understanding of what makes Turner heroic is that he resisted his oppression and that his act of resistance can serve as a model for the rest of us.

Warren readily concedes that Parker, though clearly knowing of them, had no obligation to broaden his narrative to include such entailments. Still, it’s far from inconsequential to note the political legacy of Turner’s 1831 uprising; in the state that would later serve as the capital of the Confederacy, whites launched a searching debate over the possibility of manumission. Warren quotes Stephen Oates’s The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner’s Fierce Rebellion (1975), which notes that “in the western part of the state, where antislavery and anti-Negro sentiment had long been stirring, whites held public rallies in which they openly endorsed emancipation—yes, the liberation of all of Virginia’s 470,000 slaves—as the only safeguard in these dangerous times.”

Of course, those discussions did not succeed in ending slavery in Virginia. However, as Warren notes, “they point to a truth rarely narrated about the South, namely, that it has never been as solidly pro-slavery or even as anti-black as popular imagination has depicted it”; he goes on to cite as a crucial case in point the rise of the interracial Readjuster Party, which wrested electoral power from planter elites and governed Virginia from 1879 to 1883—nearly two decades after the antislavery western counties seceded to form West Virginia.

“I’m not suggesting that Parker should be held responsible for incorporating these events into his story—there’s nothing wrong with keeping his lens trained on the Turner rebellion,” Warren writes. “But I am saying there’s no evidence that, in trying to think about what confronting the past might do for us, Parker ever looked beyond the obvious, both in terms of the story he told and the narrative techniques he employed to tell us.”

The film’s concluding scene drives home this point in unmistakable terms, dissolving away from a weeping black boy observing Turner’s execution into the Union soldier he will become, as if inspired directly by Turner’s sacrifice—sidestepping virtually all the actual history that Glory tries to reckon with.

Glory’s director Edward Zwick clearly intended it to be an historical film. How could it not feature white officers?

Warren also contrasts Parker’s vision to the one that animates Gary Ross’s underappreciated 2016 film, Free State of Jones, which was also widely dismissed on its release as just another white-savior narrative. The film’s narrative indeed centered on the character of Newton Knight, a white Mississippi farmer and Confederate deserter who, as Warren notes, “leads an interracial insurgency of runaway slaves and yeoman farmers against the Confederacy and its planter elites in southeastern Mississippi, where for a brief shining moment they establish the Free State of Jones.” Ross traces the surprisingly robust efforts of the Knight insurgency to institutionalize a new, egalitarian regime, and proceeds to chronicle its defeat during the period of Presidential Reconstruction, which restored the Mississippi planter class into power.

Still, just as with the early dismissals of Glory, the caricatures of Free State of Jones as a one-note study in white saviorship bears no resemblance to the film in question and its historically nuanced narrative. For example, Free State includes perhaps the only filmic representation ever of freedpeople’s self-organization via the Union League—a key chapter in early Southern postbellum efforts to create an anti-planter coalition of biracial workers’ parties that the chorus of kneejerk “white savior” dismissals tellingly overlooks. Knight and the members of his insurgency were actual historical figures, and Ross’s narrative is generally faithful to the actual history in which they were embedded and which they made. So, as in Glory, the only way to narrate the story without Knight as the central dramatis persona would be to abandon historical accuracy; doing so would require a fantasy more on the order of Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, perhaps replacing Lincoln with Frederick Douglass for good measure. (The “white savior” dismissal actually may have reached its apotheosis in the preposterous assertion that neither Lincoln, the Union army, nor Congress ended slavery but, rather, the slaves somehow “freed themselves”—to cite a frequent criticism of another film widely dismissed on white saviorship grounds, Steven Spielberg’s 2012 biopic Lincoln. The political sensibility underlying such an assertion betrays a hostility to institutional politics and the role of government that one would expect to find deep inside a survivalist bunker.)

Waiting for Superman

This year’s blockbuster, Ryan Coogler’s Black Panther, takes the further step of jettisoning history altogether and rendering the narrative of black heroism—in fact Superheroism—in the realm of pure fantasy. Coogler intends the mythical African nation of Wakanda to be black Americans’ “fairy tale version of Africa,” as he told an interviewer for Rolling Stone. “‘We were kings and queens, and we walked around and ate perfect food, and everyone was free.’” Revealingly, the Superhero from which the film (like the comic book from which it is derived) draws its name is a king, and the conflict with his supervillain antagonist is rooted in a struggle over monarchical succession. Everyone was only as free as the king would permit them to be, in other words.

Whatever Coogler’s auteurish intentions to render Black Panther a fable of American black empowerment, its release triggered an all-too-familiar torrent of hype that alchemizes the collective struggle for racial justice into still one more praise song hymning a hyperindividualist hero Challenging Stultifyingly Generic White Oppression and Overcoming It Against All Odds. Literature professor Salamishah Tillet, writing in the New York Times on the film’s release, approvingly quotes Jonathan Gray’s summary of the film’s fan-boy appeal:

Now there you have every black boy’s fantasy. He is richer than Bill Gates, smarter than Elon Musk, better looking than Denzel . . . He is the hereditary rule of the richest nation on Earth. The movie is about wish fulfillment. When you see Bruce Wayne, this dashing billionaire, where is the black version of that? You got T’Challa.

On the breathless extreme of the spectrum, commercial imperative and outsized political claims fuse into an indistinguishable unity; phony liberationist calls to respond to obvious marketing and merchandising tie-in ploys—e.g., guides for identifying and purchasing replicas of “African” artifacts and styles displayed in T’Challa’s kingdom and guides for “mapping Wakanda”—urge participation in the commercial hype machine as though it were a form of political engagement. Amid this marketing land rush, the irony scarcely registers that the separatist monarchy of Wakanda was invented by two white men, Stan Lee and Jack Kirbye—a considerable challenge to the race-first rhetoric of white-savior spotters.

Of course, Black Panther did not invent this conflation of Hollywood consumerism with racial uplift; it’s merely cashed in on it. This cynical maneuver has figured prominently in the promotion of a host of politically reactionary films like Waiting for “Superman” (2010), Won’t Back Down (2012), and Beasts of the Southern Wild (2012), each of which sold seeing the film and talking it up to one’s friends as something akin to political movement-building.

Parker’s and Coogler’s films are innovative in one sense, however; they each foreground the specific ideological program that arises out of the anti-historical celebration of individual black heroism. To be sure, their appeal conforms to a general formula of escapist entertainment that’s by no means limited to black cultural expression—the Hero Overcoming Against All Odds. And many black people, both autonomously and with the prod of cultural cues, no doubt derive a particular satisfaction from racial identification with themes and characters—however fleeting such pleasure may be in the frenzied marketing of images and brands in the American omni-entertainment state.

What sets the contemporary genre of inspirational black hero films apart is the way the fantasies they enact connect with the race-first sensibilities prominent among black and other professional-managerial strata. These race commentators share a body of ideological assumptions and material interests, deeply invested in parsing, interpreting, and administering inequality in terms of racial disparities. Specifically, this genre of critique typically looks to measure and remediate the exclusion of black professionals from traditionally white power elites. Identifying the tacit social agenda embedded in the “white savior narrative” charge brings us to the heart of the matter.

Dismissals of Glory and Free State of Jones, as well as DuVernay’s explanation for the historical falsifications at play in Selma, may give the impression that the detractors of white saviorship are voicing a populist sensibility, complaining that black people are represented as incapable of effective social action without a white person (usually a man) leading them. And there is ample precedent in the history of popular culture for suspicion in that regard. The Tarzan films are perhaps the crassest and best-known examples; my father often remarked sarcastically that Africans should be grateful for Tarzan’s presence, since otherwise they apparently would all have been eaten by lions and crocodiles. The 1988 film Mississippi Burningincongruously makes FBI agents (white, though does that really matter?) the heroes of the civil rights campaign. Richard Attenborough’s 1987 Cry Freedom describes the struggle against apartheid and the murder of Stephen Biko through the travails of his white friend, the journalist Donald Woods. And there are many more examples; it is in fact the long history of such narratives that makes what might otherwise be simple feel-good stories, presented with an interracial twist—Conrack (1974), Dangerous Minds (1995), and The Blind Side (2009), among many others—something more distasteful and pernicious than just a set of interchangeable thematic variations on the maudlin human-interest narrative of uplift and overcoming.

But “white savior” objections to Glory and Free State are a different matter. Those films hinge largely on the prominence of black agency, which race-first critics apparently deem irrelevant. Their objection is not that blacks’ agency is absent; it is rather about who is represented as leading their efforts. Decisions by blacks to support nonblack candidates or social policies not expressed in race-first terms are interpreted as evidence of flawed, limited, misguided, or otherwise co-opted black agency. The idea that blacks, like everyone else, make their history under conditions not of their own choosing becomes irrelevant, just another instance of insufficient symbolic representation.

The notion that black Americans are political agents just like other Americans, and can forge their own tactical alliances and coalitions to advance their interests in a pluralist political order is ruled out here on principle. Instead, blacks are imagined as so abject that only extraordinary intervention by committed black leaders has a prayer of producing real change. This pernicious assumption continually subordinates actually existing history to imaginary cultural narratives of individual black heroism and helps drive the intense—and myopic—opposition that many antiracist activists and commentators express to Bernie Sanders, social democracy, and a politics centered on economic inequality and working-class concerns.

Class Is Dismissed

The striking hostility to such a politics within the higher reaches of antiracist activism illustrates the extent to which what bills itself as black politics today is in fact a class politics: it is not interested in the concerns of working people of whatever race or gender. Indeed, a spate of recent media reports have retailed evidence that upper-class black Americans may be experiencing stagnant-to-declining social mobility—which is taken as prima facie evidence of the stubbornly racist cast of the American social order: Even rich professionals like us, elite commentators suggest, are denied the right to secure our own class standing. It is also telling that the study that provoked the media reports – Raj Chetty, et al., “Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective” – rehearses the hoary recommendation that “reducing the intergenerational persistence of the black-white income gap will require policies whose impacts cross neighborhood and class lines and increase upward mobility specifically for black men.” These include “mentoring programs for black boys, efforts to reduce racial bias among whites, or efforts to facilitate social interaction across racial groups within a given area.” That’s pretty thin gruel, warmed over bromides and all too familiar paternalism and no actually redistributive policies at all.

I’ve long suspected that, to a certain strain of race-conscious or antiracist discourse, historical exploration in popular culture was less important than the propagation of tales of inspiration and uplift.

In this context the pronounced animus trained on the figure of the “white savior” emerges as litmus test for the critical role of racial gatekeeper in respectable political discourse. The gatekeeping question has, for more than a century, focused on who speaks for black Americans and determines the “black agenda.” And the status of black leader, spokesperson, or “voice” has always been a direct function of contested class prerogative, dating back a century and more to Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and Anna Julia Cooper. Specifically, the gatekeeping function is the obsession of the professional-managerial strata who pursue what Warren has described as “managerial authority over the nation’s Negro problem.” How do “black leaders” become recognized? The answer is the same now as for Washington in the 1890s; recognition as a legitimate black leader, or “voice,” requires ratification by elite opinion-shaping institutions and individuals.

Gatekeeping hasn’t been the exclusive preoccupation of Bookerite conservatives or liberals like Du Bois. Even militant black nationalists and racial separatists like Marcus Garvey and the leaders of the Nation of Islam have pursued validation as black leaders from dominant white elites to support programs of racial “self-help” or uplift. From Black Power to Black Lives Matter, claimants to speak on behalf of the race have courted recognition from the Ford Foundation and other white-dominated nonprofit philanthropies and NGOs. And the emergence of cable news networks and the blogosphere have exponentially expanded the number and types of entities that can anoint race leaders and representative voices.

This new welter of platforms and voices seeking to promulgate and validate the acceptable terms of black leadership has made the category seem all the more beyond question, as black racial voices pop up all over the place all the time. So, for example, the self-proclaimed black voice Tia Oso was brought front and center in the 2015 Netroots Presidential Town Hall featuring Martin O’Malley and Bernie Sanders, where she proclaimed that “black leadership must be foregrounded and central to progressive strategies.” Likewise, the presumed moral authority of race leadership enabled Marissa Johnson and Mara Jacqueline Willaford to prevent Sanders from speaking at a Social Security rally in Seattle—as though the long-term viability of Social Security were not a black issue. The instant recourse to a posture of leadership is how random Black Lives Matter activists and a vast corps of pundits and bloggers are able to issue ex cathedra declarations about which issues are and are not pertinent to black Americans.

Voices in a Political Vacuum

The freelance black leader—and its more recent, superficially more pluralist incarnation, the black “voice”—is a legacy harking back to the era of massive black disfranchisement at the end of the nineteenth century. It also has drawn considerable staying power from the amorphous concept of “race relations,” according to which, in the judgment of historian Michael R. West in his 2006 study The Education of Booker T. Washington, “blacks and whites—or ‘black America’ and ‘white America’—are basic, indivisible units of political interest. . . . The race relations framework appealed to white elites because it sidestepped the troublesome fact of blacks’ constitutional claims to full and equal citizenship by proposing a focus on the evanescent issue of how the ‘races’ relate as an alternative to matters like denial of rights and equal protection under the law.” West also notes that “interests and aspirations of politicians and ministers, workers and businessmen, parents and teachers would no longer be expressed by way of the normal, if potentially messy, institutional channels through which Americans settled their conflicts and competition. Instead, they would be mediated through the good offices of ‘Negro leaders,’ ever mindful of where their mandate comes from and the requirement placed on them as a first principle ‘to cement the friendship of the two races.’” The warrant to cement the friendship of the races, of course, meant framing racial comity on terms acceptable to the dominant white elites who ratified claims to black leadership and decided which of those claims were “responsible” or “right-thinking.”

The race-relations mindset also shaped the ideological outlook of racial advocacy and uplift groups like the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Both groups, for example, were hesitant to support labor organization for black workers during the Great Depression since they relied on donations from liberal funders steeped in anti-union sentiments; also, apostles of racial uplift tended to come from a professional-managerial background themselves, again highlighting the extent to which there has always been a class dimension to black politics.

None of this is to suggest that claimants to race leadership even in the Bookerite era were dupes or supplicants who were not sincerely committed “race men” and “race women” in the parlance of the time. Rather, as Warren, West, and others have argued, the stratum of the black population that tended to incubate aspiring race leaders also cohered around views of proper racial agendas—what the “race” needed and how its position in the world could be advanced, i.e., what constituted “uplift”—that also reflected the priorities of philanthropic elites. These mutually dependent groups were likely to share a baseline sense of how American society should be structured—and specifically of how to manage existing class hierarchies so as to better navigate blacks’ place within them. That said, most racial advocates were doubtless more committed than their patrons to the pursuit of full equality of opportunity.

The Revolution Will Be Televised

The terms of this tacit social contract shifted with the victories of the civil rights movement and the cultural insurgencies of the 1960s and 1970s; suddenly, raw racial subordination no longer commanded uncritical assent from the liberal wing of the American power elite. At the same time, though, this civil rights revolution and its aftermath worked to obscure the striking continuity in the underlying socioeconomic dynamics that continue to validate race leaders, spokespersons, or representative voices. The open—or at least public—performance of supplication before powerful elites is no longer necessary or desirable for validation. Indeed, Black Power “militancy” and various cultural-separatist projects aligned with black nationalism supported new claimants’ discourse of authenticity—one that gained wider credence via assertive demands for equal power instead of humble requests for recognition.

On the surface, at least, it now appeared that the essentially dependent relation between white liberal arbiters or power and their black counterparts had morphed into something more radical. And this new assertive liturgy of dependence works to the benefit of both grantors and grantees of political legitimacy and economic largess—players who all shared a stake in projecting an appearance of the anointed’s racial authenticity.

Today, this liturgy is everywhere on display—along with the same power dynamics that sustain it. In academic institutions and programs, op-ed pages, magazines and blogs, and of course cable television newschat programs, we see a steady stream of racial voices and leaders plotting out the permissible boundaries of black authenticity and black leadership values. This surface accord within the charmed circle of soi-disant black leaders reinforces the illusion, just as was the case in the aftermath of the civil rights era, that they have all emerged from the grassroots.

Parker’s and Coogler’s films are innovative in one sense: they each foreground the specific ideological program that arises out of the anti-historical celebration of individual black heroism.

The increasing significance of the corporate newsfotainment industry means that things could scarcely seem otherwise to most casual viewers and audiences. The leading platforms of respectable black discourse—including the various internet platforms that encourage freelance chatter—reinforce the sense that those purporting to express the black point of view arise naturally from within the quasi-mythic “black community.” But of course the immediacy of all these venues, despite their many claims to have vanquished old-guard “gatekeepers” and “legacy media” forums, has rendered the selection processes behind the elevation of this or that leadership “voice” almost completely opaque. Not all points of view can gain a hearing, after all. Terms like “responsible” and “right-thinking” seldom slip into public discussion anymore because they evoke explicit subordination; nevertheless, sporadic calls for recognized black voices to distance themselves from “extremist” or otherwise unacceptable views expressed by other black “voices”—most recently via another predictably vile anti-Semitic utterance from Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan—reveal that such criteria are critical in setting the boundaries of public legitimacy for aspiring black leaders. Another telling instance of the same dynamic ocurred when Keith Ellison, the African American Muslim congressman from Minnesota, sought to chair the Democratic National Committee as a Sanders supporter; here again, the sensible centrist consensus counteroffensive depicted Ellison as simply too fringe and divisive a figure to command authority in the sacred political mainstream.

Alongside the close vetting of respectable black voices in the media mainstream there’s been a prolonged atrophy of popular political mobilization behind issues of economic equity for black Americans. Taken together, these trends have opened a shortcut path to broader public recognition for self-styled race leaders. For more than a decade, it has been common to encounter young people who enter graduate programs in order to prepare for careers as racial voices or “public intellectuals,” hoping to obtain a credential that can procure valuable space on the Huffington Post, the root.com, or MSNBC. In the quest for mediagenic legitimacy, some eager race pundits have launched organizations that are barely more than letterhead or résumé entries; these feints are likewise often accompanied by Potemkin-style protest activism, including many of the donor-driven groups aligned with Black Lives Matter, or glorified photo-ops intended to evoke mass agitation. Among this cohort of racial voices, the essential qualification for recognition seems to be inclination to declaim on the intractability of an undifferentiated, ahistorical racism as a fetter on all black Americans’ life chances across the sweep of the nation’s history. As a corollary, they’re required to insist that objection to generic racial disparities constitutes the totality of black political concerns.

Reduced and Abandoned

The politics thus advanced is profoundly race-reductionist, discounting the value of both political agency and the broad pursuit of political alliances within a polity held to be intractably and irredeemably devoted to white supremacy. This fatalistic outlook works seamlessly to reinforce the status of racial voices who emphasize the interests and concerns of a singular racial collectivity. Central to these pundits’ message is the assertion that blacks have it worse, in every socio-cultural context that might be adduced.

This refrain is also consistent in two important ways with the reigning ideology of neoliberal equality. First, the insistence that disparities of racial access to power are the most meaningful forms of inequality strongly reinforces the neoliberal view that inequalities generated by capitalist market forces are natural and lie beyond the scope of intervention. And second, if American racism is an intractable, transhistorical force—indeed, an ontological one, as Ta-Nehisi Coates has characterized it—then it lies beyond structural political intervention. In other words, Coates and other race-firsters diminish the significance of the legislative and other institutional victories won since Emancipation, leaving us with only exhortations to individual conversion and repentance as a program.

This is why, for example, Coates and other proponents of reparations seem unconcerned with the strategic problem of piecing together the kind of interracial popular support necessary to actually prevail on the issue. Such problems do not exist for them because the role of the representative black leader or voice is precisely to function as an alternative to political action. Instead, the order of the day is typically to perform racial authenticity in a way that doubles as an appeal for moral recognition from those with the power to bestow it. Winning anything politically—policies or changes in power relations—is not the point. That is why the jeremiads offered by contemporary racial voices so commonly boil down to calls for “conversations about race” or equally vapid abstractions like “racial reckoning” or “coming to terms with” a history defined by racism.

The black leadership role was always at best an accommodation to disfranchisement, going back to its first modern incarnation with Booker T. Washington and his cohort of racial advocates. It is a politics of elite transaction. That is not in itself necessarily a bad thing—President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “black cabinet,” or Federal Council of Negro Affairs, advised him on matters related to black Americans. But unlike today’s freelance racial voices, they were administration functionaries, and most had standing in racial advocacy, education, labor, and government institutions prior to joining the “cabinet.” The backdoor dealings between King and Johnson during the Selma campaign that DuVernay found too messy to include in her portrait of King’s heroic persona were also part of mundane political maneuvering, the inside-outside game of institutional politics. King and the SCLC, like FDR’s black cabinet, had constituencies that underwrote their standing as representatives of racial interest—which in turn gave them leverage to make political demands and pursue policy agendas. A. Philip Randolph used the March on Washington Movement to pressure President Roosevelt in 1941 to issue “Executive Order 8802,” prohibiting racial discrimination in the national defense industry. Randolph, Bayard Rustin, the Negro American Labor Council, and others organized the 1963 March on Washington as part of an inside-outside strategy to build support for a jobs program and passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

All this painstaking political effort could not be farther from the careerist pursuits of contemporary racial voices, whose standing depends entirely on the favor of powerful opinion-shaping elites in corporate media and elsewhere. Thus, for example, Touré Neblett and others in MSNBC’s stable were unceremoniously expunged from the lineup of talking heads when the network reconfigured its marketing priorities. More dramatically, Melissa Harris-Perry, apparently believing that her viewing audience gave her leverage, openly rebuffed the network’s demand to reorient her program to fit in with its election coverage. In short order, she and her program vanished without a trace from its schedule. Such incidents, and scores of others like them, make it indelibly clear where the lines of authority run when it comes to winning elite-media recognition as a black voice.

For Their Own Good

The race voices I’ve discussed express a particular class perspective among black Americans, one that harmonizes with left-neoliberal notions of justice and equality. That harmony may help explain why those racial voices—like the black political class in general—are so intent on disparaging the social-democratic politics associated with Bernie Sanders, even though a 2017 Harvard-Harris survey found that Sanders was far more popular with African Americans than with any other demographic category except declared Democrats. He boasted a 73 percent favorable rating among black voters—higher than his approval numbers among Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and considerably higher than those for whites or even 18-34 year-olds.

This disjunction between popular opinion and the priorities of the black chattering class underscores the extent to which the racial programs and priorities advanced by those recognized black voices remain much as they were in the Age of Washington. Now as then, we have a leadership stratum dedicated to the class-skewed pursuit of “managerial authority over the nation’s Negro problem.” And the net effect of this top-down model of black discourse is to tether a politics of racial representation to the ruling-class agendas that generate and intensify inequality and insecurity for working people across American society, including among the ranks of black Americans.

Black Clintonites, like Congressmen John Lewis (D-GA), James Clyburn (D-SC) and Cedric Richmond (D-LA), all clearly displayed this commitment during the 2016 Democratic primaries when they attacked Sanders as “irresponsible” in calling for non-commodified public goods in education, health care, and other areas. Richmond’s rebuke was especially telling in that he couched it in terms of his role as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus and the group’s “responsibility to make sure to know that young people know that” a social-democratic agenda is “too good to be true.” Richmond’s invocation of civic instruction for the young may be revealing in another way. Lurking beneath that piety is the deeply sedimented common sense of underclass ideology, which posits a population mired in pathologies and hemmed in by an overwhelming racism, and the corollary of interventions aiming to enhance capabilities for individual mobility. (It is, indeed, this same tacit rhetoric of permanent crisis that fuels the notion that black young people must be raised on a diet of inspirational movies.)

This vision of unyielding black pathology is yet another testament to the harmony of antiracist and neoliberal ideologies—and it, too, harks directly back to the origins of the black leadership caste at the dawn of the last century. Washington and Du Bois, together with Garvey and other prominent racial nationalists, envisioned their core constituency as a politically mute black population in need of tutelage from their ruling-class-backed leaders. Touré F. Reed persuasively argues that the mildly updated version of this vision now serves as an essential cornerstone of the new black professional-managerial class politics. Underclass mythology grounds professional-class claims to race leadership, while providing the normative foundation of uplift programs directed toward enhancing self-esteem rather than the material redistribution of wealth and income.

Exhortations to celebrate and demand accolades, career opportunities, and material accumulation for black celebrities and rich people—e.g., box office receipts for black filmmakers or contracts and prestigious appointments for other well-positioned black people—as a racial politics are consistent with the sporadic eruptions of “Buy Black” campaigns since the 1920s and 1930s. Such efforts stood out in stark contrast to more working-class based “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaigns that demanded employment opportunities in establishments serving black neighborhoods. Like “Buy Black” campaigns, which seem to have risen again from the tomb of petit-bourgeois wishful thinking, projections of successes for the rich and famous as generic racial victories depend on a sleight-of-hand that treats benefits for any black person as benefits for all black people. This brings to mind comedian Chris Rock’s quip that he went to his mailbox every day for two weeks after the not guilty verdict in the O.J. Simpson murder trial looking for his “O. J. prize,” only to be disappointed.

Pain and Proprietorship

At times, this tendency to absorb the plural into the singular can be strikingly crude and transparently self-interested. The torrent of hostility directed at Rachel Dolezal for having represented herself as black rested on groundless—sometimes entirely made up—claims that she had appropriated jobs, awards, and other honorifics intended for blacks. In addition to the annual contretemps over whether blacks win enough of the most prestigious Oscars, recent racial controversies in the art world illustrate how easily the narrowest guild concerns can masquerade as burning matters of racial justice. The Brooklyn Museum’s hiring of a white person as consulting curator of African art sparked objections that the hire perpetuated “pervasive structures of white supremacy in the art field.” The 2017 furor over the Whitney Biennial’s display of Dana Schutz’s “Open Casket”—inspired by the infamous 1955 photograph of Emmett Till’s brutalized body—reduced to a question of ownership of “black suffering,” or more accurately, of the right to represent and materially benefit from the representation of black suffering. The protesters’ objection, as Walter Benn Michaels put it succinctly, was that “black pain belongs to black artists.”

It’s worth noting that one of the leading critics of the painting and its display was Hannah Black, who contended that “non-black people must accept that they will never embody and cannot understand” the gesture Till’s mother, Mamie, made in insisting on an open-casket funeral. Black, who not only called for the painting to be removed from display, but also offered an “urgent recommendation” that it be destroyed, is a Briton who lives in Berlin. From a different standard of cultural proprietorship, one might argue that Schutz, as an American, has a stronger claim than Black to interpret the Till story. After all, the segregationist Southern order and the struggle against that order, which gave Till’s fate its broader social and political significance, were historically specific moments of a distinctively American experience. In fact, most claims of cultural ownership and charges of appropriation are bogus. While sometimes they provide an instrumental basis for tortious claims, as in pursuit of restitution for Nazi and other imperialists’ looting of artifacts, more often they posit a dead-end conflation of fixed and impermeable racial identity with cultural expression. As Michaels has argued for more than twenty-five years, the discourse of cultural ownership stems from the pluralist mindset that treats “culture” as a key marker of social groups and thereby inscribes it as racial essentialism.

In order to legitimate what Michaels describes as “racial rent-seeking,” a curiously inflexible brand of race-first neoliberalism has taken root in American political discourse, proposing a trickle-down model of racial progress, anchored in the mysticism of organic black community. Against this exoticized backdrop, neoliberal race leaders stage the beguiling fantasy that individual “entrepreneurialism” is the key path to rising above one’s circumstances—i.e., the standard American social myth that obscures the deeper need to combat systemic inequalities. The most tragic, and pathetic, expressions of this faith are the versions of the “gospel of prosperity,” which fuse pop self-realization psychology and a barely recognizable Christianity to exploit desperation and the desire for life with dignity and respect among their black-majority congregations. The false hopes of the prosperity gospel encourage already vulnerable people to fall prey to all sorts of destructive get-rich-quick schemes; they are the “sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions” channeled through a market-idolatrous Protestant psychobabble. Black ministers and other proponents of entrepreneurialist ideology as racial uplift also played a largely unrecognized role in pushing subprime mortgages, and even payday loans, in black communities.

The racial trickle-down success myth is partly a vestige of an earlier era, during which individual black attainments could be seen as testaments to the race’s capacities—and a refutation of the white-sanctioned view of black people as generally inferior. Even then, however, this model of black uplift was enmeshed in the race theory of the time—notably the belief that a race’s capacities were indicated by the accomplishments of its “best” individuals—and it was always inflected with the class perspectives of those who saw themselves as such individuals. The class legacies of this foundational moment in modern black politics may well contribute to the firm insistence among today’s “black voices” that slavery and Jim Crow mark the transcendent truth of black Americans’ experience in the United States—and that an irreducible racism is the source of all manifest racial inequality. That diagnosis certainly masks class asymmetries among black Americans’ circumstances as well as in the remedies proposed to improve them.

Nevertheless, we continue to indulge the politically wrong-headed, counterproductive, and even reactionary features of the “representative black voice” industry in whatever remains of our contemporary public sphere. And we never reckon with the truly disturbing presumption that any black person who can gain access to the public microphone and performs familiar rituals of “blackness” should be recognized as expressing significant racial truths and deserves our attention. This presumption rests on the unexamined premise that blacks share a common, singular mind that is at once radically unknowable to non-blacks and readily downloaded by any random individual setting up shop as a racial voice. And despite what all of our age’s many heroic narratives of individualist race-first triumph may suggest to the casual viewer, that premise is the essence of racism.

#### Their theory actively misreads history --- whiteness was invented out of contingent class relations, and viewing it as transhistorical is weaponized to fracture the working class --- this also answers the case.

-Infinite differentiations within identity, no reason race/whiteness is master trope

-Irish faced racism before label of whiteness even existed – answers ruse of analogy

-Enlightenment ideas excluded Black people to justify using them as slaves

-Weaponize past failures: say that all anti-cap movements are white to discourage mass mobilization

-Divides working class by focusing on individual injuries and policing language allows right wing fill-in

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We will set aside what appears to be a lack of familiarity with the history of American popular music. What is significant is the equation of skin color, the category of “race,” and discrete groupings of human beings. With this equation, white guilt reproduces the founding fiction of race: that there is a biological foundation, expressed in physical phenotypes, for separate groups of human beings who have separate cultures and forms of life. The “white race” as a specific historical formation is obscured by the metaphor of the knapsack. McIntosh writes: “White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”3 The knapsack is carried by an individual navigating an entirely open social field. It contains tools that enable the individual to navigate this field with greater effectiveness than those whose knapsacks are comparatively empty. The resources contained in the knapsack constitute whiteness as privilege, because the knapsack is carried by an individual who belongs to the white identity. If the knapsack of privileges is carried by an individual already identifiable as white, then whiteness must necessarily be understood as a biological trait. The falseness of this notion is evident: the people who are currently described as white have a wide and complex range of genetic lineages, many of which were previously considered to be separate “races” of their own. As Nell Irvin Painter points out in her revelatory The History of White People, “For most of the past centuries—when race really came down to matters of law—educated Americans firmly believed in the existence of more than one European race.”4 We might conclude that there has only been a minor error of description: in reality, whiteness itself is constituted by the contents of the knapsack. The constitution of whiteness as identity and its constitution as privilege are simultaneous: the knapsack’s provisions confer not only advantages but also identity upon its bearer. But how do we know, then, that the content of the identity conferred has something to do with “whiteness”? Surely, in addition to the specific items conferring a privilege, one would find in any knapsack of identity an infinity of arbitrary details: hair length, gait, dietary preference, computer skills, etc. That is, in order to describe an individual’s identity, the knapsack would have to contain everything constituting the this-ness of that particular individual. It would offer us no insight as to the organizing principle that constitutes these traits as something which can be called “white.” There would be no way to distinguish “white” characteristics from human ones, Pennsylvanian ones, or heavy-metal ones. This is the failure of liberal thought. A political formation such as whiteness cannot be explained by starting with an individual’s identity—the reduction of politics to the psychology of the self. The starting point will have to be the social structure and its constitutive relations, within which individuals are composed. And it is too often forgotten that decades before McIntosh’s knapsack, the term white privilege originated with such a theory. The theory of “white-skin privilege” was advanced by members of an early antirevisionist split-off from the Communist Party USA (the Provisional Organizing Committee), and would come to have an enormous influence on the New Left and the New Communist Movement. A series of essays by Theodore Allen and Noel Ignatiev, collected as the pamphlet White Blindspot, offered the initial formulation. Ignatiev and Allen’s argument was that the legacy of slavery was the imposition of white supremacy by the ruling class as an instrument of class division and social control. But this was a political theory, not a cultural or moral one, and it held that “white chauvinism” was actually detrimental to white workers, preventing unity with black workers. So fighting against white supremacy was in fact a central part of a political program that favored the self-organization of all workers. Ignatiev argued vehemently that “the ending of white supremacy is not solely a demand of the Negro people, separate from the class demands of the entire working class.” It could not be left to black workers to fight against white supremacy as their own “special” issue, while white workers did little more than express sympathy and “fight for their ‘own’ demands.” The fight against white supremacy was central to the class struggle at a fundamental level: The ideology of white chauvinism is bourgeois poison aimed primarily at the white workers, utilized as a weapon by the ruling class to subjugate black and white workers. It has its material base in the practice of white supremacy, which is a crime not merely against non-whites but against the entire proletariat. Therefore, its elimination certainly qualifies as one of the class demands of the entire working class. In fact, considering the role that this vile practice has historically played in holding back the struggle of the American working class, the fight against white supremacy becomes the central immediate task of the entire working class.5 As this language was taken up by the New Left, however, it went through considerable ideological transformations. The manifesto, “You Don’t Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” circulated at the turbulent Students for a Democratic Society conference of 1969, proposed a politics centered on white guilt rather than proletarian unity. The Weather Underground used the language of “privilege” to reject the working class as a force for revolutionary change, writing, “Virtually all of the white working class also has short-range privileges from imperialism, which are not false privileges but very real ones which give them an edge of vested interest and tie them to a certain extent to the imperialists.”6 In practice, this meant that the Weather Underground equated political struggle with vanguard groups like itself, who attacked their own privilege by adopting a revolutionary lifestyle. What this amounted to was the self-flagellation (with explosives) of white radicals, who substituted themselves for the masses and narcissistically centered attention on themselves instead of the black and Third World movements they claimed to be supporting—reducing those movements to a romantic fantasy of violent insurrection. In other words, the project of black autonomy and self-liberation—which implied the overall self-liberation of the poor and the working class—was effectively ignored by the Weather Underground’s race thinking. Ignatiev ruthlessly attacked the Weatherman problematic in a paper called “Without a Science of Navigation We Cannot Sail in Stormy Seas,” which is today a jarring discovery: White supremacy is the real secret of the rule of the bourgeoisie and the hidden cause behind the failure of the labor movement in this country. White-skin privileges serve only the bourgeoisie, and precisely for that reason they will not let us escape them, but instead pursue us with them through every hour of our life, no matter where we go. They are poison bait. This view of white supremacy entailed a very different conception of the politics of white privilege, as Ignatiev elaborated: To suggest that the acceptance of white-skin privilege is in the interests of white workers is equivalent to suggesting that swallowing the worm with the hook in it is in the interests of the fish. To argue that repudiating these privileges is a “sacrifice” is to argue that the fish is making a sacrifice when it leaps from the water, flips its tail, shakes its head furiously in every direction and throws the barbed offering.7 Today’s privilege politics cannot possibly permit a position of this kind. We are instead left with endless variations on the Weatherman position, though without the appeals to armed struggle, bank robberies, and Lenin’s theory of imperialism. When contemporary white liberals adapt the Weatherman position, they often end up claiming that a new wave of “pro-white” socialists has arisen to defend the “white working class.” But their caricature obscures the important point, made by black revolutionaries throughout American history, that the project of emancipation requires overcoming the ideology of race. Although he characterized the material advantages of whiteness as a “psychological wage,” W.E.B. Du Bois did not reduce whiteness to an effect of individual psychology. In fact, immediately preceding the passage on the psychological wage, Du Bois wrote: The theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest.8 When Du Bois suggested that white and black workers have “practically identical interests,” he was not making an appeal to some mythical “white working class.” Still less was he guilty of some kind of “class reductionism,” which decides in the abstract that class is more fundamental than race. Of course, some people really do make this argument—and they play right into the hands of identitarian liberals, who ask how the young woman seeking an abortion and the evangelical protester, the undocumented immigrant and the salaried worker, can possibly have the same “interests.” But this challenge is afflicted by the same condition it claims to diagnose. It mistakes the casual description of a shared trait for a claim about identity. We all have numerous interests that are related to our identities but also to where we work and where we live. To say that these different spheres of life interact and intersect is a banal truism which explains neither how our society is structured and reproduced nor how we might formulate a strategy to change this structure. Du Bois was recognizing the lived reality of the working class, which contains white people and people of color, people of all genders and sexualities, the employed and the unemployed—a multitude of people irreducible to any single description. A meaningful common interest between them does not somehow exist by default. We cannot reduce any group of people and the multitudes they contain to a single common interest, as though we were reducing a fraction. A common interest is constituted by the composition of these multitudes into a group. This is a process of political practice. White supremacy is the phenomenon whereby the plurality of interests of a group of people is reorganized into the fiction of a white race whose very existence is predicated on the violent and genocidal history of the oppression of people of color. The self-organized struggles of oppressed people against white supremacy have managed to significantly undermine, though by no means eliminate, this kind of organization. It was no accident that these struggles ultimately put forward the insight that it was necessary to constitute a common interest through class organization, which extends to an opposition to the whole capitalist system—because it is the structure of the capitalist system that prevents all people who are dispossessed of the means of production, regardless of their identities, from having control over their own lives and thus from pursuing whatever interests they may have, in all their particularity. This does not mean, however, that a “class reductionist” argument is a viable position. As long as racial solidarity among whites is more powerful than class solidarity across races, both capitalism and whiteness will continue to exist. In the context of American history, the rhetoric of the “white working class” and positivist arguments that class matters more than race reinforce one of the main obstacles to building socialism. Allen and Ignatiev turned to this question in their further research, inspired by the insights of Du Bois. In the process they presented an exemplary model of a materialist investigation into the ideology of race, one that went from the abstract to the concrete. This work emerged alongside that of Barbara Fields and Karen Fields, David Roediger, and many others as a body of thought devoted to exposing race as a social construct. All of this research, in varying ways, has examined the history of the “white race” in its specificity. The guiding insight that must be drawn from it is that this racial phenomenon is not simply a biological or even cultural attribute of certain “white people”: it was produced by white supremacy in a concrete and objective historical process. As Allen put it on the back cover of his extraordinary vernacular history The Invention of the White Race: “When the first Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619, there were no white people there.” At the most immediate level, Allen was pointing to the fact that the word white didn’t appear in Virginia colonial law until 1691. Of course, this doesn’t mean that there was no racism before 1691. Allen’s argument was to show that racism was not attached to a concept of the white race. There were ideas of the superiority of European civilization, but this did not correspond to differences in skin color. The clearest example is that of the Irish, whose racial oppression by the English precedes their racial oppression of Africans by several centuries. Today white nationalists distort this history, attempting to use the racial oppression of the Irish to try to dismiss the history of white supremacy. Yet this example actually demolishes their entire framework. What the example of the Irish illustrates is a form of racial oppression that is not based on skin color and that in fact precedes the very category of whiteness. Indeed, the early forms of English racial ideology represented the Irish as inferior and subhuman, and this ideology was later repeated word for word to justify both the genocide of Indigenous people in the Americas and the enslavement of Africans. Nor was it only a matter of words: the very practices of settler colonialism, land seizures, and plantation production were established in Ireland. Allen demonstrates this with reference to specific laws: If under Anglo-American slavery, “the rape of a female slave was not a crime, but a mere trespass on the master’s property,” so, in 1278, two Anglo-Normans, brought into court and charged with raping Margaret O’Rorke were found not guilty because “the said Margaret is an Irishwoman.” If a law enacted in Virginia in 1723, provided that, “manslaughter of a slave is not punishable,” so under Anglo-Norman law it sufficed for acquittal to show that the victim in a slaying was Irish. Anglo-Norman priests granted absolution on the grounds that it was “no more sin to kill an Irishman than a dog or any other brute.”9 So racial oppression arises in the Irish case without skin color as its basis. We are forced to ask how we end up with a racial ideology revolving around skin color that represents African people as subhuman and that considers both Irish and English to be part of a unitary “white race.” The historical record quite clearly demonstrates that white supremacy and thus the white race are formed within the American transition to capitalism, specifically because of the centrality of racial slavery. However, we have to resist the temptation, imposed on us by racial ideology, to explain slavery through race. Slavery is not always racial. It existed in ancient Greece and Rome and also in Africa, and was not attached specifically to a racial ideology. Slavery is a form of forced labor characterized by the market exchange of the laborer. But there are various forms of forced labor, and its first form in Virginia was indentured labor, in which a laborer is forced to work for a limited period of time to work off a debt, often with some incentive like land ownership after the end of the term. The first Africans to arrive in Virginia 1619 were put to work as indentured servants, within the same legal category as European indentured servants. In fact, until 1660 all African American laborers, like their European American counterparts, were indentured servants who had limited terms of servitude. There was no legal differentiation based on racial ideology: free African Americans owned property, land, and sometimes indentured servants of their own. There were examples of intermarriage between Europeans and Africans. It was only in the late seventeenth century that the labor force of the American colonies shifted decisively to African slaves who did not have limits on their terms of servitude. As Painter points out in The History of White People, these forms of labor and their transformations are fundamental in understanding how racial ideology comes about: Work plays a central part in race talk, because the people who do the work are likely to be figured as inherently deserving the toil and poverty of laboring status. It is still assumed, wrongly, that slavery anywhere in the world must rest on a foundation of racial difference. Time and again, the better classes have concluded that those people deserve their lot; it must be something within them that puts them at the bottom. In modern times, we recognize this kind of reasoning as it relates to black race, but in other times the same logic was applied to people who were white, especially when they were impoverished immigrants seeking work.10 “In sum,” Painter writes, “before an eighteenth-century boom in the African slave trade, between one-half and two-thirds of all early white immigrants to the British colonies in the Western Hemisphere came as unfree laborers, some 300,000 to 400,000 people.”11 The definitions of whiteness as freedom and blackness as slavery did not yet exist. It turns out that defining race involves answering some unexpected historical questions: How did some indentured servants come to be forced into bondage for their entire lives rather than a limited term? How did this category of forced labor come to be represented in terms of race? Why did the colonial ruling class come to rely on racial slavery when various other regimes of labor were available? The first economic boom of the American colonies was in Virginia tobacco production in the 1620s, and it was based on the labor of primarily European indentured servants. African Americans were only about a fifth of the labor force: most forced labor was initially European, and the colonial planter class relied on this forced labor for its economic growth. But they couldn’t just rely on European indentured labor because it was based on voluntary migration, and the incentive to participate in a life of brutal labor and die early was not sufficient to generate a consistently growing workforce. As Barbara Fields puts it, “Neither white skin nor English nationality protected servants from the grossest forms of brutality and exploitation. The only degradation they were spared was perpetual enslavement along with their issue in perpetuity, the fate that eventually befell the descendants of Africans.”12 African Americans, on the other hand, had been forcibly removed from their homelands. So the ruling class began to alter its laws to be able to deny some laborers an end to their terms of servitude, which they were only able to accomplish in the case of African laborers. What really changed everything was Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676. This began as a conflict within the elite planter class, directed toward a brutal attack on the Indigenous population. But it also gave rise to a rebellious mob of European and African laborers, who burned down the capital city of Jamestown and forced the governor to flee. The insurrectionary alliance of European and African laborers was a fundamental existential threat to the colonial ruling class, and the possibility of such an alliance among exploited peoples had to be prevented forever. Here we see a watershed moment in the long and complex process of the invention of the white race as a form of social control. The ruling class shifted its labor force decisively toward African slaves, and thus avoided dealing with the demand of indentured servants for eventual freedom and landownership. It fortified whiteness as a legal category, the basis for denying an end to the term of servitude for African forced labor. By the eighteenth century the Euro-American planter class had entered into a bargain with the Euro-American laboring classes, who were mostly independent subsistence farmers: it exchanged certain social privileges for a cross-class alliance of Euro-Americans to preserve a superexploited African labor force. This Euro-American racial alliance was the best defense of the ruling class against the possibility of a Euro-American and African American working-class alliance. It is at this point, Nell Painter concludes, that we see the “now familiar equation that converts race to black and black to slave.”13 The invention of the white race further accelerated when the Euro-American ruling class encountered a new problem in the eighteenth century. As the colonial ruling class began to demand its independence from the divinely ordained executives and landed wealth of the English nobility, they made claims for the intrinsic equality of all people and the idea of natural rights. As Barbara Fields puts it: Racial ideology supplied the means of explaining slavery to people whose terrain was a republic founded on radical doctrines of liberty and natural rights, and, more important, a republic in which those doctrines seemed to represent accurately the world in which all but a minority lived. Only when the denial of liberty became an anomaly apparent even to the least observant and reflective members of Euro-American society did ideology systematically explain the anomaly.14 In other words, the Euro-American ruling class had to advance an ideology of the inferiority of Africans in order to rationalize forced labor, and they had to incorporate European populations into the category of the white race, despite the fact that many of these populations had previously been considered inferior. This racial ideology developed further as the new American nation encountered the phenomenon of the voluntary migration of free laborers from Europe, many of whom came from populations that were viewed as distinct European races: the Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Jews, but especially the exemplary case of the Irish, whose emigration to the US spiked with the famines of the mid-nineteenth century produced by English colonialism. The Irish, among the most oppressed and rebellious groups in Europe, were offered the bargain that had protected the American ruling class. Frederick Douglass pointed this out very clearly in 1853, at the anniversary meeting of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in New York: The Irish, who, at home, readily sympathize with the oppressed everywhere, are instantly taught when they step upon our soil to hate and despise the Negro. They are taught to believe that he eats the bread that belongs to them. The cruel lie is told them, that we deprive them of labor and receive the money which would otherwise make its way into their pockets. Sir, the Irish-American will find out his mistake one day.15 Douglass had gone to Ireland to avoid being returned to slavery and said he was for the first time in his life treated as an ordinary person, exclaiming in a letter to the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, “I breathe, and lo! the chattel becomes a man … I meet nothing to remind me of my complexion.”16 Of course, this was not because of some intrinsic kindness of the Irish. It was rather because, at this stage in history, there were no white people there. This was clear to Douglass because he arrived during the Great Famine. Writing in his memoirs of the songs sung by slaves on the American plantations, he added: “Nowhere outside of dear old Ireland, in the days of want and famine, have I heard sounds so mournful.”17 But what Irish immigrants realized after immigrating to the United States is that they could ameliorate their subjugation by joining the club of the white race, as Ignatiev has recounted.18 They could become members of a “white race” with higher status if they actively supported the continuing enslavement and oppression of African Americans. So the process of becoming white meant that these previous racial categories were abolished and racialized groups like the Irish were progressively incorporated into the white race as a means of fortifying and intensifying the exploitation of black laborers. It was the great insight of Frederick Douglass to describe this as the Irish-American’s mistake. Douglass clearly emphasized the novelty of the very description of people as white: “The word white is a modern term in the legislation of this country. It was never used in the better days of the Republic, but has sprung up within the period of our national degeneracy.”19 Let us be clear on what the invention of the white race meant. It meant that Euro-American laborers were prevented from joining with African American laborers in rebellion, through the form of social control imposed by the Euro-American ruling class. In exchange for white-skin privilege, the Euro-American workers accepted white identity and became active agents in the brutal oppression of African American laborers. But they also fundamentally degraded their own conditions of existence. As a consequence of this bargain with their exploiters, they allowed the conditions of the Southern white laborer to become the most impoverished in the nation, and they generated conditions that blocked the development of a viable mass workers’ movement. This is why the struggle against white supremacy has in fact been a struggle for universal emancipation—something that was apparent to African American insurgents. As Barbara Fields points out, these insurgents did not use a notion of race as an explanation for their oppression or their struggles for liberation: It was not Afro-Americans … who needed a racial explanation; it was not they who invented themselves as a race. Euro-Americans resolved the contradiction between slavery and liberty by defining Afro-Americans as a race; Afro-Americans resolved the contradiction more straightforwardly by calling for the abolition of slavery. From the era of the American, French and Haitian revolutions on, they claimed liberty as theirs by natural right.20 However, this was not always recognized by socialist movements. Early American socialists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sometimes failed to recognize that the division between white and black workers prevented all workers from successfully emancipating themselves. We should not oversimplify this point or use it to discredit the whole history of the labor movement. The early socialist parties were largely composed of immigrants who were often not yet fully incorporated into the white race, and there were very significant black socialists—including, for example, Hubert Harrison, who played an important role in connecting black nationalism to socialism at the beginning of the twentieth century. The majority of the early American socialists were not racists, and in fact openly and vigorously opposed racism. However, most of these early socialist organizations failed to recognize that there was anything unique about the demands of black workers. They were also willing to work with craft unions that discriminated against black workers, and they did not attempt to recruit black members. Without an analysis of white supremacy, these socialist organizations did not address the fact that black workers were often excluded from jobs available to whites, that they were subjected to racist violence beyond the workplace, and that they could not expect racist employers to extend increasing wages to them. The cost of this indifference to race was that socialism was always competing for recruitment with whiteness. New European immigrants were often very radical and prepared to join militant labor struggles. But they were also being invited to join the white race. Once again, in the case of the Irish, this meant finally leaving behind the racial oppression that had become familiar to them in Europe. This began to change with the reconfiguration of American socialists into the Communist Party in 1919. By the 1920s the CP had incorporated not only many immigrant socialists but also the clandestine organization called the African Blood Brotherhood, which included many important black Communists, such as Cyril Briggs, Claude McKay, and Harry Haywood. These black Communists were absolutely central to Communist organizing, because they argued that the party would have to directly attack whiteness if it wanted to build a labor movement. As a result of their work, the CP threw itself into antiracist organizing in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This meant, first of all, placing a heavy emphasis on educating white members to reject white chauvinism, and organizing some of the only interracial social events that were held in the segregated US. The party worked to eliminate the influence of whiteness from the ranks of the party itself. But it also sent its organizers down South and into the black neighborhoods of Northern cities to work on political projects. These included unions for sharecroppers, tenant farmers, miners, and steelworkers; armed defense against lynching; legal defense for black victims of the racist justice system; and movements against unemployment, evictions, and utility shut-offs. Robin D.G. Kelley describes some of these initiatives in Hammer and Hoe: Representatives of the unemployed councils often dissuaded landlords from evicting their tenants by describing the potential devastation that could occur once an abandoned house became a free-for-all for firewood. When a family’s electricity was shut off for nonpayment, activists from the unemployed council frequently used heavy-gauge copper wires as “jumpers” to appropriate electricity from public outlets or other homes. Council members also found ways to reactivate water mains after they had been turned off, though the process was more complicated than pilfering electricity. And in at least one instance, a group of black women used verbal threats to stop a city employee from turning off one family’s water supply.21 Unfortunately, the complicated history of political disputes within the CP, along with the state repression of the Communist movement, led to this work being cut short. As an increasingly conservative party leadership distanced itself from the project of black liberation, white chauvinism was on the rise in the CP. It had previously been most effectively combated through mass antiracist organizing: by joining different people and disparate demands in a common struggle. But now that this practice had been abandoned, the party launched what Harry Haywood called a “phony war against white chauvinism.” In Haywood’s analysis, this phony war only ended up strengthening the material foundations of white chauvinism, now uprooted from its structural foundations and seen as a free-floating set of ideas. Instead of mass organizing, opposing white chauvinism was now seen as a matter of policing the language of those who were ostensibly comrades, thus strengthening the party bureaucracy and introducing a climate of paranoia and distrust among members. As Haywood wrote: It was an atmosphere which was conducive to the development of a particularly paternalistic and patronizing form of white chauvinism, as well as to a rise in petty-bourgeois narrow nationalism among blacks. The growth of the nationalist side of this distortion was directly linked to the breakdown of the basic division of labor among communists in relation to the national question. This division of labor, long ago established in our party and the international communist movement, places main responsibility for combating white chauvinism on the white comrades, with Blacks having main responsibility for combating narrow nationalist deviations.22 In other words, in the absence of mass organizing, racial ideology rushes to the fill the vacuum. And without the political division of labor that Haywood describes, the struggle against racism is reduced to the redress of individual injuries. Of course, this is why reactions to the critique of identity politics can be so abrasive. When there is no other practical organizational effort to combat racism, any questioning of the framework of identity seems like an attempt to deny the validity of the antiracist struggle. In fact, it goes even deeper than this—questioning racial ideology itself seems to be a denial of the agency of the oppressed. In his landmark book Against Race, Paul Gilroy describes how this defensive reaction emerges from the ambivalent relationship oppressed people form with their identities: People who have been subordinated by race-thinking and its distinctive social structures (not all of which come tidily color-coded) have for centuries employed the concepts and categories of their rulers, owners, and persecutors to resist the destiny that “race” has allocated to them and to dissent from the lowly value it placed upon their lives. Under the most difficult of conditions and from imperfect materials that they surely would not have selected if they had been able to choose, these oppressed groups have built complex traditions of politics, ethics, identity, and culture. By classifying these traditions within the categories of “race,” their role in the formation of our global modernity has been marginalized, relegated “to the backwaters of the primitive and prepolitical.” Claiming and defending these traditions reinforces racial ideology but also provides a form of defense and protection. The experiences of “insult, brutality, and contempt” are “unexpectedly turned into important sources of solidarity, joy, and collective strength.” This reversal, as Gilroy goes on to explain, is a powerful factor in the tenacity of racial ideology: “When ideas of racial particularity are inverted in this defensive manner so that they provide sources of pride rather than shame and humiliation, they become difficult to relinquish. For many racialized populations, ‘race’ and the hard-won, oppositional identities it supports are not to be lightly or prematurely given up.”23 But this dynamic is not only a matter of the conscious self-defense of the oppressed. It is rooted in the unconscious, as ideology always is, and it takes us back to the paradoxical relation between subjectivation and subjection that Judith Butler has shown is so central to ideology and the modern forms of politics. A fundamental aspect of this paradox of the subject, Butler argues, is that it is tied up with a “passionate attachment” to power. This is the kind of attachment that children display toward their parents, who are an arbitrary repressive authority but also the models of selfhood and the first sources of recognition, and therefore the objects of love. We are constituted as subjects within the individualization that is characteristic of state power; we are activated as political agents through the injuries that are constitutive of our identity. Consequently, our identities attach us to this power in a basic and foundational way. This complicated and unconscious aspect of our political experience is what Butler tries to capture: Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially. The self-colonizing trajectory of certain forms of identity politics are symptomatic of this paradoxical embrace of the injurious term.24 As we try to understand the specific form of passionate attachment to racial identity, we have to pass into the nebulous terrain of the unconscious—the terrain of poetry, fantasy, and illusion.

#### Neoliberalism guarantees extinction through poverty, inequality, and ecological destruction

David McCoy 17, Professor of Global Public Health at the Centre for Primary Care and Public Health at Queen Mary University London, “Critical Global Health: Responding to Poverty, Inequality and Climate Change,” Int J Health Policy Manag 2017, 6(9), 539–541

According to the World Bank, the number of people living in extreme poverty has more than halved since 2001 and is now believed to represent about 10% of the world’s population.3 This suggests some progress in poverty reduction, notwithstanding some analysts arguing that the Bank’s methods for standardising ‘purchasing power’ across different countries and currencies under-estimates the true number of people living in extreme poverty.4

However, Benatar argues that any reasonable commitment to eradicating poverty should account for all who live in poverty, and not just those in extreme poverty. Although the question of how one defines and measures poverty has exercised economists, political scientists and philosophers for decades, it is hard to imagine anyone disagreeing with the view that anyone living on an income of less than $10/day is poor. And yet, a staggering 71% of the world’s population live below this income line.5 By this measure, poverty has been growing across the world, not shrinking. The tendency to focus on the prevalence of extreme poverty directs attention away from this fact.

A more important point made by Benatar is that a celebration of reductions in extreme poverty has the effect of directing attention away from the more fundamental issue of increasing inequality and widening disparities in wealth and power. This is important because the prevalence of global poverty is largely a consequence of the inequitable distribution of resources and of various forms of structural violence that simultaneously produce wealth and privilege on one hand and poverty and disempowerment on the other.6Fraser argues that the term ‘the global poor’ should be replaced with the term ‘the globally exploited’ or ‘the globally excluded’ so as to explicitly acknowledge the social causes of poverty.7 Doing so would leave the global community feeling much less self- satisfied with the limited reductions in the number of people living on less than $2/day.

Some may suggest that Benatar is being overly negative and unappreciative of the fact that levels of extreme poverty have fallen. It may also be pointed out that the global poor have enjoyed other gains, including improvements in health and reductions in mortality rates.8 It is also often claimed that the poor have benefited from advancements in democracy and freedom. For example, it is not infrequent for mainstream news journals to celebrate the rising number of parliamentary democracies in Africa,9 or to suggest that the internet and new mobile technologies have empowered the global poor,10 or that economic globalisation has extended economic freedom and opportunities to all people.11 In short, the global poor are not just better off, but also healthier and freer.

Many who work in ‘global health’ tend to share this positive, ‘glass half-full’ picture of human progress. Positive optimism and the celebration of selective indicators of health improvement are distinct features of narratives projected by actors such as the Gates Foundation, the World Bank and the Global Fund. In particular, technological developments in health are lauded as being both cost-effective and capable of transforming the lives of the poor.

But Benatar is not suggesting a pessimistic outlook - rather he is calling for a more critical perspective that challenges those narratives that lead away from any discussion of the socially determined maldistribution of wealth (poverty) and health (disease and illness), or which have the effect of concealing the structural violence and injustice that underpins global poverty, even while health indicators are improving for the global poor. There are good reasons for doing so.

As already mentioned, it is arguable that poverty is actually increasing worldwide. Additionally, while there may be a greater number of representative forms of national democracy, the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth and power has created the basis for democratic structures and processes to be corrupted or captured by wealthy elites in many countries. Neoliberal globalisation, including the rise in power of transnational corporations and global finance, and the consequent weakening of national sovereignty (especially in poor countries), have also impinged the ability of the majority poor to enjoy the theoretical benefits of the expansion of democratic elections across the world.

In terms of the reductions in mortality rates, a more critical perspective is warranted if we recognise the fragility of recent global health gains and the threats posed by climate change and ecosystems collapse, anti-microbial resistance, and the prospect of growing levels of violence and armed conflict across the globe. In other words, the predominantly biomedical approach that prevails in global health and which has undoubtedly improved our ability to keep people alive for longer in conditions of poverty, may eventually fail in the medium to long term if we neglect the social determinants of both human health and environmental degradation.

Finally, notwithstanding the reductions in mortality, the fact that such large proportions of the world’s population live in social, economic and environmental conditions that are inconsistent with a good life also suggests a need for a more critical approach that places equity at the heart of how we measure progress.

Nature and the Planet

Benatar also calls for a more urgent recognition of the dangers posed by climate change and ecological degradation, and for humanity to abandon its human-centred model of development in favour of one that places the planet and nature at the centre of our imaginations. Many of us already know that global warming, climate and weather changes, biodiversity loss and ocean acidification present an existential threat to humanity. High profile Lancet publications of reports from a Commission on Climate Change and Health and a Commission on Planetary Health, together with Margaret Chan asserting that climate change is ‘the defining issue’ of the 21st century, 12 would suggest that the health community is responding adequately to the problems of excessive greenhouse gas emissions and consumption patterns that are degrading the planet’s capacity to sustain organised human life.

The reality, however, is that many of us still live beyond our fair share of the planet’s capacity and do not yet see unsustainable consumption and lifestyles as a form of ‘ecologically-mediated’ structural violence that is destroying the prospects of future generations and harming the lives of hundreds of millions of mostly poor people who are already experiencing the consequences of climate change. Although we are, to some degree, trapped within a system built around fossil fuel and the idea of perpetual ‘economic growth,’ we also choose to exceed our fair share of the world’s carbon budget by, for example, flying more than we need to, or choosing diets that are patently ecologically unsustainable.

There may be several reasons for this apparent paradox between what we know and what we do. It may be that the scale of danger posed by climate change is under-appreciated, enabled in part by vast amounts of manufactured disinformation that has been generated by the fossil fuel industry and climate denialists. Similarly, it may represent a cognitive-behavioural dissonance that results from an effective and ubiquitous advertising industry that drives a demand for unsustainable material consumption. It may also be that we feel a degree of entitlement from our work to improve the health of the global poor that excuses us from changing our lifestyles. Or we may hope that technological solutions will save us from having to change the way we live. Or we may simply lack hope in the ability of humanity to avoid self-destruction.

It is the grave threat posed by climate change and ecological degradation that points to the need to better understand the paradox between what we know and what we do. Unless we do so, the full potential for the global health community to use its unique mandate and authority to catalyse the wider systemic changes that are required may be left unrealised. Once again, the argument for a more critical approach seems justified.

What to Do?

Benatar’s article throws up a range of large and complex challenges to which there are no simple solutions. But if the argument is accepted that the global health community needs to adopt a more critical approach, what might this mean in practice? Here I suggest three broad steps that should be taken.

First, the global health community needs to engage more fully with a range of under-represented disciplines and subject areas such as economics, international relations, trade, finance, law, geography and the earth sciences. While some public health scholars have been highlighting the importance of these subject areas to global health, the scholarship and efforts that have been rooted in an understanding of the structural, social and ecological determinants of health must no longer be a minority interest, siloed away from the larger part of the global health community that is focused on the science and practical challenges of individual diseases, their proximal causes and their treatment.

The appeal of ‘pragmatic’ technological and technocratic interventions to save lives and promote incremental improvements in population health is undeniably strong when compared to the messy, unpredictable and conflictual world of politics, economics and climate change. It is understandable that health actors are drawn towards ‘fights’ against disease and illness. But ultimately, a vision of global health that is rooted in both justice and sustainability requires the global health community to develop a broader knowledge base and skills set.

But this by itself is not enough. A second requirement is that we engage politically and confront the politics of global health itself. The latter includes understanding the political dimensions of neoliberal theories and assumptions that have dominated thinking over the past fifty years or so and examining how this shapes health and development policy. Of relevance, for example, is Ron Labonté’s argument in this journal that the SDGs are fundamentally flawed because they assume “that the same economic system, and its still-present neoliberal governing rules, that have created or accelerated our present era of rampaging inequality and environmental peril can somehow be harnessed to engineer the reverse.”13 This also includes understanding the way unequal power shapes our global health architecture and policy approaches. The many global health partnerships that have emerged over the past two decades, for example, have worked effectively to reconcile the mission of global health actors (from civil society, academia and the United Nations [UN]) with the interests of powerful private actors. Similarly, the emphases within global health on charity and technology as solutions for the afflictions of the global poor, or more recently on ‘health security,’ need to be assessed politically in terms of transformatively redistributing power and wealth, or affirming social justice as a foundation for health and wellbeing.

Finally, a more critical global health community would recognise the need to achieve global outcomes through local action. New economic models and re-democratisation, for example, are vital ingredients to the systemic change that is required – but these ingredients will only be provided in sufficient quantity if communities, municipalities and other local groupings are actively engaged in their generation. Adequate systemic change, enabled by policy and legislation, will only occur if shaped and driven by demands from the ground. At the same time, systemic change can be catalysed by smaller-scale changes and developments involving communities at the local level. The large number of health professionals and workers who operate at the local level should be central to these endeavours, and those of us working in global health should look to enable our local health counterparts to create progressive change from the bottom up.

#### The alternative is to adopt historical materialist analysis – this is central to the organization and aims of black radicalism

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(Stephen C., *Philosophy of African American Studies: Nothing Left of Blackness*, Palgrave Macmillan, September, Google Books)

Materialist Philosophical Inquiry and Black Studies

In any academic discipline, there exist varying, oftentimes even conflicting, conceptual frameworks, theoretical approaches, and methods. Black Studies is no different. In light of the theoretical works prominent today, however, a number of students in AAS might easily conclude that philosophical idealism is the only school of thought.

To the contrary, Black Leftist activists were significant players during the early period of Black Studies. The first introductory textbooks in African American Studies were written by Marxist/socialist scholars and activists; for instance, Peoples College's Introduction to Afro-American Studies and Clarence Munford's Production Relations, Class and Black Liberation: A Marxist Perspective in Afro-American Studies. Communist like Jack O'Dell and Robert Rhodes taught African American Studies courses at the Antioch College branch campus in Washington, D. C. And pioneering Black historian and "antibourgeois gadfly" Earl Thorpe - chair of the history department at North Carolina College - was recruited to teach courses on "Marxism and Black Liberation" for the Black Studies program at Duke University.23 However, today, Leftist thought is marginal to the politics and philosophy of Black Studies.

Socialism and Marxism-Leninism are integral parts of African American history and culture. Of course, Marxist scholar/activists contributed to African American intellectual history and culture long before what is, in more formal terms, considered the advent of Black Studies during the late 1960s. In the tradition of Hubert Harrison, Susie Revels Cayton, Maude White Katz, Richard B. Moore, Paul Robeson, Oliver Cox, Eugene Holmes, Abram Harris, Claudia Jones, Walter Rodney, Angela Davis, and John McClendon, there is a need to bring the Black working-class-men and women-back into AAS.

A materialist philosophy inquiry into Black Studies is grounded on three presuppositions. A materialist conception of epistemology and ontology presumes that there is a reality independent of our consciousness. A materialist ontology asserts the primacy of material reality over consciousness. And a materialist epistemology posits that this reality is knowable and knowledge or what is cognitive (social consciousness) corresponds to and thus ideally approximates this material reality. Lastly, a materialist philosophy presupposes that the social world is a stratified ontology of which class relations (i.e., social relations of production) form the ground for understanding social processes.

The call for a materialist conception of science and epistemology should not be seen as a call for an essentialist ascription of AAS, wherein it is viewed only as a social scientific enterprise devoid of cultural studies. The current popularity of cultural studies, often in collaboration with various species of historicism and postmodernist trends, fosters a separation between cultural studies and social relations of production. As a school of thought, it gives less attention to the material conditions that give rise to African American culture and relativizes the objective character of the Black experience.

In my estimation, the Black working-class has become lost in the whirlwind of cultural idealism. Contemporary Black cultural theory – under the spell of poststructuralism and Afrocentricity – has declared: class is dead! All that exists is intersectionality and a "matrix of domination," in which everyone is oppressed – women, men, capitalist, workers, children, ad infinitum. And there is a tendency in Black Studies to transform the Black workingclass into some obscure gray matter known as the consumer, the multitude, or – my favorite from the "friends of the poor" – the Black underclass.24

The relevance and importance of the Black working-class must be brought to the forefront of Black Studies.25 This would entail discarding analytical notions such as "cultural deprivation," "human capital," "culture of poverty," "nihilism," "feminization of poverty," "intersectionality," "underclass," "cultural pathology," and "menticide" that have served to explain the contemporary and historical crisis that confronts the Black working-class. We must discard the cultural idealism of Maulana Karenga, Corne! West, Jawanza Kunjufu, Marimba Ani, Patricia Hill Collins, Molefi Asante, and William Julius Wilson who perceive the "Negro Question'' as an ideological or axiological crisis, for example, as alienation from ancient African values, the loss of a "love ethic," or the lack of human capital. When we view the “Negro Question” as preeminently ideological, moral, or cultural, we ultimately discount the determinate role of material contradictions rooted in class contradictions. As Robert Allen astutely noted, " ... the question is not politics or no politics; rather it is which politics? Whom will Black Studies serve? Will it be truly democratic in its intellectual and political vision, or will it become 'apolitical' and acquiesce to a narrow, elitist and bourgeois view of education?"26

Black Studies and the Question of Western Civilization Revisited

C. L. R. James wrote what could be considered a Marxist manifesto for Black Studies in 1969. Speaking at Federal City College, James argues, at the level of theory, that Black Studies should be anti-racist and anti-imperialist in character, but not anti-white. From James's perspective, there is no intellectual space in Black Studies for philosophies of Blackness in which ancient African civilizations, values, and cultural perspectives constitute a "presuppositionless beginning" for Black Studies.27 He parts company with Black nationalists and their contemporary progeny (e.g., Afrocentrists) who argue that every culture rests on a metaphysical, permanent substratum that gives rise to a particular system of thought. He cogently proclaims:

We need a careful systematic building up of historical, economic, political, literary ideas, knowledge and information, on the Negro question ... Because it is only where we have Bolshevik ideas, Marxist ideas, Marxist knowledge, Marxist history, Marxist perspectives, that you are certain to drive out bourgeois ideas, bourgeois history, bourgeois perspectives which are so powerful on the question of the races in the United States.28 [Italics Added]

For James, the antithesis between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology is essential to the development, direction, and aim of Black Studies.

James is often viewed as someone who was head-over-heels in love with Western culture and/or civilization. Yet, it is important to note that dialectical and historical materialism (or Marxism-Leninism) constitutes the conceptual and theoretical framework for his assessment of "The Fate of Humanity." In a 1939 article, "Revolution and the Negro" James boldly avows, "What we as Marxists have to see is the tremendous role played by Negroes in the transformation of Western civilization from feudalism to capitalism. It is only from this vantage-point that we shall be able to appreciate (and prepare for) the still greater role they must of necessity play in the transition from capitalism to socialism."29 James's classic works such as The Black ]acobins and A History of Pan-African Revolt are ardently attentive to the fact that slavery, colonialism, and imperialism are part and parcel of capitalism. Moreover, the revolutionary resistance of people of African descent ostensibly indicates the critical role of Black people as actors or subjects of history and the dialectical development of Western civilization. In unswerving disapproval of Hegel's views about Africans and their place outside of world history, James meticulously documents and effectively demonstrates that-far from being removed from world historical event-African people and their descendants in the diaspora transformed the landscape of world history in a monumental fashion.31

Yet, James's historiography is not some form of racial vindicationism, which claims that ancient African civilization is the real source of Black historic magnitude and ultimately collective identity. Rather James offers insights into the Black struggles against slavery and colonialism as manifestations of the antagonistic contradictions within the modern (bourgeois) stage of world history. Cultural idealism has no place within James's worldview and consequently his philosophy of history. James's philosophy of history is not anti-European, anti-Western, or anti-white; his philosophy of history is stridently anti-slavery, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anticapitalist.31

James introduces a conceptual distinction between what is European and what is Eurocentrism. Moreover, he did not accept the abstract concept of the West as monolithic, devoid of internal class relations and contradictory class interests. Black sociologist Alex Dupuy points out that James's dialectical analysis takes into consideration the tremendous value of European culture and its influence on the African diaspora, and vice versa.32 Dupuy argues, "James was redefining the meaning of Western culture away from its Eurocentric understanding. For [James], West Indians were a modern and Western people, though they were not European, a point [James] made in many of his writings, e.g., his semiautobiography, Beyond a Boundary (1963)." 33 James resolutely rejected any outlook that requires Black Studies to be grounded on a uniquely formulated Black perspective (e.g., Senghor's Negritude or Karenga's Kawaida or Asante's Afrocentricity). Dupuy points out that James does not "reject African culture in favor of Western culture." 34 Rather, James's analysis is based on "a historical materialist understanding of culture" and the recognition that "the predominant influences in the Caribbean were those of Western Europe."35 As Dupuy insightfully notes, "The Black ]acobins remains ... one of the most succinct critiques of the barbarism of Western European imperialism but also of the promise of bourgeois civilization."36 Any philosophy of AAS worth its salt should follow in the "Giant Steps" of C. L. R. James. Embracing an ethnophilosophy that is anti-European is as fruitful as masturbation. It may be pleasurable, perhaps even therapeutic, but it won't give birth to a scientific approach to Black Studies.

"And that Black Fist becomes a Red Spark"

Black Studies and Black Working-Class Studies37

In a post-Cold War world, the "spectre of communism" has apparently been exorcised and laid to rest. There is the widespread belief that we have witnessed the death-knell of Marxism. So, why argue for the legitimacy of and necessity for Marxism in Black Studies? No doubt this has been a hotly debated question both in the Black Liberation movement and in Black Studies for a considerable time. I tend to agree with Brian Lloyd: "I presume that we are witnessing, not the death of Marxism, but the end of the first period during which Marxists managed to seize and, for a time, wield state power. That it has fewer adherents at the end than during other phases of this period, and that as many of them can be found in universities as in factories or fields, is neither disheartening as is imaged by some of its proponents nor as amusing as is supposed by all of its detractors."38

It has become the custom to summarily dismiss Marxism as a viable methodological approach and philosophical perspective for Black Studies. Most of the adversarial postures toward Marxism-Leninism in Black Studies have discounted the value of a materialist dialectical philosophy of liberation, class analysis, class struggle, proletarian internationalism, and the scientific socialist principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Despite the sharp divergence of their political views, Harold Cruse, Cedric Robinson, Cornel West, Marimba Ani, Patricia Hill Collins, and Charles Mills have condemned Marx and Marxism for everything from economic determinism to class reductionism to historical teleology and any number of other "conceits." We even find Asante making such puerile statements such as the following: "In fact, we have no history of a communist movement in the United States where communists put their bodies and l.ives on the line as African Americans did."39

Contrary to Asante's claim, scholars such as Mark Naison, Ted Vincent, Erik S. McDuffie, Gerald Horne, Carole Boyce Davies, Robin Kelley, Minkah Makalani, and Mark Solomon in addition to autobiographies by Harry Haywood, Hosea Hudson, and Michael Hamlin offer a much more nuanced picture of communism, socialism, and Marxism-Leninism in Black life and culture. Over the years, scholarship in labor studies and Black Studies has revealed the historical legacy of Black worker militancy. As we travel through the annals of Black history, we unearth Peter Clark's crucial involvement in the Great Railway Strike of 1877, Lucy Parsons's unflinching engagement in the Haymarket Square struggle, the heroic efforts of Ralph Gray, Tommy Gray, Eula Gray, Al Murphy, and scores of Black sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and agricultural laborers to organize the predominantly Black underground organization the Share Croppers Union, A. Philip Randolph's tireless efforts with rhe Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, Ferdinand Smith's vanguard role in the National Maritime Union and Paul Robeson's monumental efforts to use folk music to entertain Spanish Civil War loyalists and striking workers as he gave support to international socialist solidarity. We could mention the steadfast leadership of Velma Hopkins and Moranda Smith in the 1947 strike at the Reynolds Tobacco Company in Winston Salem, North Carolina. There were Black postal workers like Cleveland Morgan, a member of New York Branch 36 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, who played a seminal role in the nationwide 1970 postal wildcat strike. We could also mention the historic efforts of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers to organize wildcat strikes in Detroit, Michigan. And, in more recent times, we could mention working-class Black women who have fought against the attack on public services, such as public housing and welfare. We should not ignore the fact that many of these activists were socialists, and quite a few were Marxist-Leninist in their ideological outlook.

The scholarship of Clarence Lang, John Arena, Adolph Reed, Barbara Ransby, Rhonda Y. Williams, and Joe Trotter has demonstrated the historic importance of the Black working-class to African American history and culture. They bring to light the centrality of class struggle and conflict as determinate features of what makes up the Black working-class. World capitalism gave birth to the Black working-class. The initial accumulation of large sums of capital, which in turn, was invested in the exploitation of European workers, derived from the slave trade and the plantation system in the so-called New World. In volume one of Capital, Marx so famously wrote "capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."40 The ruthless exploitation of Black bodies, in a manner of speaking, became the proverbial goose that lays golden eggs, possessing the magical ability to increase the magnitude of capital. Incidentally, the profitability of the "proverbial goose" prompted slaveholder Thomas Jefferson to remark, "it would never do to destroy the goose."41 Leaving the decks of the slave ship, "In the Name of Jesus," large numbers of Wolof, Mande, Fulani, and Mandingo were bound together by chains, from neck to neck and wrist to wrist.42 Out of the diversity of African ethnic groups a new synthesis was formed under the brutal system of capitalist slavery, giving birth to African Americans. The incessant "demand for Black labor" by Northern industrial capital and the plantation bourgeoisie fueled world capitalist development. Black slaves toiled in textile mills, shipyards, sawmills, and coalmines from Virginia to Mississippi. Black women labored on tobacco fields in the Carolina piedmont and picked cotton on plantations along the coast of Georgia. Black men like Tom Molineaux and Black women like Sylvia DuBois were given release time from slave labor in order to engage in athletic labor (as boxers) to bring entertainment and profits to slaveholders and the larger white Southern community. 43 From the seventeenth century to the twenty-first century, from slave plantations to auto factories, Black women, men, and children labored under the hard times of capitalist exploitation. The brutal forces unleashed by the capitalist drive for surplus value laid the foundation for the development of African American life and culture, from religion to music.44

Presently, we are witnessing, from New York to North Carolina to Missouri to Wisconsin to California, concerted attacks on public sector workers in order to resolve the economic crisis ravaging US capitalism. We cannot ignore the fact that Black people are prominent in the leadership as well as in the rank and file in a great number of these mass demonstrations. In cities throughout the country, working-class men and women, Black, white, and Latino, are being blown away by police officers who are ultimately protected by the rule of law. In the aftermath of the murders of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Aiyanna Jones, Yvette Smith, Rekia Boyd, and Eric Garner, Black working people are not silently standing by while the "Lords of Capital" via their "special bodies of armed men'' – with military weapons and tanks – confront them in the streets. This seminal point is lost on Black critics of Marxism during the past 90 years.

As numerous studies in AAS have demonstrated, the working-class is not one-dimensional, exclusively composed of white people. The working-class is composed of women, men, and children, in addition to being multinational in character. Marxist studies of Black working-class life and culture are needed now more than ever because in the souls of the Black working-class the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy. As Karl Marx so famously put it, "The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses."45

Philosophy of African American Studies, I hope, wilt serve a prolegomena to the Herculean task of developing a philosophy of AAS from the standpoint of materialism. How well I have backed up this reaffirmation of philosophical materialism and revolutionary socialism with good arguments I leave it to my readers to judge. But the attempt to do so provides an answer-satisfactory to me at least-to justify writing this book.

### K Anti-domination

#### The United States federal government should replace the consumer welfare standard with a standard that orients antitrust towards breaking up concentrations of political and economic power.

#### It’s a sufficient condition to vote neg – they’ve said the resolution is inherently bad. If we win it’s good, it’s a rejoinder to the aff.

#### Research about anti-trust is a crucial aspect of grassroots organizing to secure progressive gains

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Jeremie Greer and Solana Rice, “Anti-Monopoly Activism: Reclaiming Power Through Racial Justice,” *Liberation in a Generation*, March 2021, pp. 18-26, https://www.liberationinageneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Anti-Monopoly-Activism\_032021.pdf.

As illustrated in section 3, the federal government has many laws and regulations to rein in corporate concentration. Some advocates work to ensure that current regulations are being enforced; other advocates work to identify new regulations and even agencies to respond to the ways that corporate concentration has dominated our economy. We believe that the movement—within research and advocacy spaces especially—should embolden grassroot leaders of color to deliver antiracist policy solutions aimed specifically to curtail monopoly power. Below, we provide considerations for future action that are not policies or regulations or campaigns in and of themselves, but ideas that could transform the anti-monopoly movement in ways that require it to reimagine itself and approach the work through a racial justice lens. Develop More In-Depth, Intentional Research Part of the impetus for writing this document is that Liberation in a Generation believes that the power to change our economic systems rests with the organizers of color who are (re)building the political strength of communities of color. The research and advocacy to limit monopoly power needs to better quantify, center, and reflect the ways that people of color are being harmed. This means conducting research that centers the impact of monopoly power on people of color (as workers, consumers, community members, and participants in our democracy). The research and advocacy need to be relevant to the organizers who are indeed experiencing and fighting many of these forces on the ground, and it should inform solutions that they develop, nurture, and advance through activism. The research and advocacy must use less jargon and abstraction, focusing less on markets, firms, or efficiencies, and it should talk more about the impact of corporate decisions on people, their lives, and their futures. The tent of advocates working on anti-monopoly needs to widen as well. Bringing in the people most impacted is essential to shaping and accomplishing the path forward. Draw Connections Between Monopoly Power and Current Movement Priorities As discussed earlier in this paper monopoly power has enormous impact on other movement priorities led by leaders of color, such as environmental justice, worker justice, housing justice, police and prison abolition, closing the racial wealth gap, and demcratic disenfranchisement. Anti-monopoly policy can be a powerful tool to accomplish existing movement priorities, including the Green New Deal, a Homes Guarantee, a federal jobs guarantee, and Medicare for All. In order to fully utilize it as a tool, anti-monopoly advocates must support—mainly in the background—grassroots leaders of color in integrating anti-monopoly policy and advocacy strategies into the existing campaigns they are leading. By following their lead, and by working together to curb corporate power, we as a collective progressive movement can accomplish an array of movement priorities and move the US closer to liberation for people of color.

### Case

#### Using the tools of the state is an effective strategy – their demand for methodological purity is myopic

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(Simon, “Politics, power and the state: a Marxist response to postanarchism,” Journal of Political Ideologies)

The fourth and final criticism of classical anarchism that postanarchism makes is that it has a naive view of politics: conflating politics with the state, it believes that politics itself can be abolished. For postanarchists, **this is mistaken**: politics is both **necessary and interminable**: necessary because even anarchists must have some level of political organization and strategizing, however minimal; interminable because there is no ‘natural’ social order, but only contingent and inherently political articulations of the social. This critique of classical anarchism’s naive understanding of politics is to a large extent anticipated by Marxism. Indeed, for classical Marxists this was the key disagreement: when Marx, Engels and Lenin attacked anarchists it was not so much for their faulty approach to the party or revolution but, much more broadly, **for their attitude towards politics.** For Marxists, the anarchist abstention from politics is ill-advised,hypocritical andultimately impossible. The classical anarchists believed that all forms of political action would necessarily entail compromise with the state and so could lead only to dictatorship or social-democratic reformism.74 As such, they ruled out all forms of political action: not merely the use of the state as a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, but also standing for or voting in government elections, lobbying the state for improved conditions (e.g. a shorter working day), and the formation of political parties. As the Russian anarchist Alexander Berkman put it: ‘so-called political “action” is, so far as the cause of the workers and of true progress is concerned, worse than inaction’.75 For Marxists, the anarchist rejection of political action is at once confused and naive. By dogmatically proscribing political action, anarchism **denies the oppressed classes the** most effective means of carrying out their struggle.76 Contrary to anarchist claims, political action does not entail acceptance of the status quo:‘It is said’, writes Engels in response to anarchist demands for political abstention, ‘that every political act implies recognition of the status quo. But when this status quo gives us the means of protesting against it, then to make use of these means is not to recognise the status quo’.77 To deny the working class the use of political action on the grounds that such action recognizes the state is, according to Marx, as foolish as claiming that a strike in the name of higher wages is illegitimate because it ‘recognises’ the wage system.78 In order to challenge the status quo, one must necessarily engage with it: to claim that all political action reinforces the dominant order is to slip into abstraction and to fail to discriminate between different types of political action.

#### Antitrust exemplifies the value of engagement in policy institutions– it’s a critical tool for reformulating economic structures to meet the aff’s goals

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Anthony Pahnke, “The Revolutionary Potential of Food Sovereignty: Applying Lenin’s Insights on Dialectics, the State, and Political Action,” Rethinking Marxism, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2021, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/08935696.2021.1935551

Where theorists of radical democracy have trouble working with sovereignty and the state, Lenin sees their capacity to forge a transformative political project. In discussions of food sovereignty, Lenin’s insights are relevant to engaging the state to initiate revolutionary transformations concerning private property, public policy, and territory. When considering these issues in movement debates, Lenin’s work speaks to general questions of mobilization and strategy.

Lenin’s discussions on socializing property and the state are insightful when considering the nature of private property in its relation to food sovereignty. For Lenin, not merely redistribution is paramount but also the eventual abolition of private property. The direct-action practices of social movements such as the Brazilian Landless Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, or MST), which engages in land occupations to demand agrarian reform (Stronzake and Wolford 2016), can be promoted in this regard. Specifically, acquiring and then redistributing large plantations or farms to individuals or families is a way to democratically redistribute surplus product and/or revenue. Occupations are critical, but the point is that they can lead to positive alternative forms of community that aim to promote collective, democratic forms of territorial control. Moreover, central questions on territory need not revolve around access or ownership but may instead focus on how its use leads to more direct-producer control and surplus distribution.

Promoting public policies also cannot be dismissed from discussions of strategy within food-sovereignty debates. In this regard, some researchers note how new laws in the United States have freed farmers from governmental oversight and regulation (Bellinger and Fakhri 2013). Where food has been declared a right—for instance, when food sovereignty was enshrined in the Ecuadorian constitution of 200810—state agencies, legislative committees, and nongovernmental organizations have sought to promote local food systems (Peña 2016). On a more limited scale in the United States, the Outreach and Technical Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program attempts to provide historically marginalized farmers with technical assistance and subsidized loans. Again, if activists dismiss the state outright, then engagement with such policies—perhaps even how to expand them or take them over to build alternatives—is omitted.

Another potential policy is the use of antitrust legislation in the United States. Organizations such as the NFFC have listed such efforts, especially demands around the need for governments to address price fixing and corporate power, among its central pillars.11 While often considered a way to break up large firms in order to help small ones—in effect, to save capitalism from itself12—challenging agribusiness firms can also lead to innovative new reorganizations of economics. Lenin would encourage activists not to forget the state in confronting corporations. Private property and the capitalist state are necessarily related, particularly when we understand the state as a relation of forces that promote certain systems of ownership. Antitrust promotion is a possible way to challenge such systems by directly targeting firms. This would check—not necessarily abolish—private property by limiting the ability for owners to appropriate and distribute surplus as they see fit. And while breaking up large firms into smaller ones is a possibility through antitrust legal action, promoting state intervention can also potentially grant movements the chance to redistribute assets and resources so that they can be governed democratically. In this way, actively promoting antitrust actions can make private property part of a process of constructing alternative economic relationships.

#### The aff’s totalizing rhetoric belies their benign clarification – society’s problems are specific and definable social phenomena – grouping them under the non-defined concept of “whiteness” is counterproductive

Annalee Newitz, journalist, Ph.D., UC Berkely, 1997, White Trash: Race and Class in America, White Savagary and Humiliation, or a New Consciousness in the Media, p. 149-150

Rather than offering a way of understanding whiteness as a form of identity powerfully effected by oppressive social practices, the new abolitionists propose "abolition" (i.e., destruction) of an undefined white self-hood, and "treason" to it, as a solution to the problems of social injustice. Because whiteness remains undefined in this equation, one is left wondering whether to abolish white people themselves, or the social practices associated with white racism and social domination.We are asked to demonize whiteness rather thantodeconstruct it. Although critics like Theodore Allen and Alexander Saxton have both described the way "whiteness" as a racial category was invented during the nineteenth century in order to consolidate American nationalism and pro-slavery agendas,20 "whiteness" in the new abolitionism becomes the source (rather than an effect) of all that is wrong with American society. Abolishing whiteness which seems to mean eliminating both whites and white power suggests social problems are best solved through prejudicial destruction, rather than critical self-consciousness or progressive reconstruction. The strategy of new abolitionism resembles nothing so much as indie rock's "underground man," for its theorists themselves become "superior" at their critical work on the basis of their ability to critique themselves before anyone else does.

The new abolitionism offers a suggestive account of racist society, but its solution is no more helpful than indie rocker Beck's ironic request that he be killred, or images of white-on-white torture. Social problems like unequally distributed resources, class privilege, irrational prejudice, and tyrannical bureaucracy which we associate with whiteness are just that associated with whiteness, particularly at this point in history. They are not essential to whiteness itself, any more than laziness and enslavement are essential to blackness, or any more than smarminess and incoherence are essential to femaleness. Informing whites that their identities are the problem, rather than various social practices, makes it sound like whites should die rather than that white racism should. The ideologies of white power which make some white people socially destructive are the symptoms of American inequality and injustice, not its principle causes. There is, in the end, an alarming sense of hopelessness, brutality, and nihilism in any political strategy like the new abolitionism that takes as its fundamental goal the destruction of a highly generalized, demonized "enemy." interestingly, even Noel Ignatiev seems to be acknowledging this possibility in his first book, *How the Irish Became White*, which is an historical treatment of how Irish immigrants to the U.S. were gradually assimilated into a racist U.S. nationalism.21 Here he is clearly sensitive to the changing historical meanings of whiteness and its status as a contestable, constructed identity.

Ultimately, I am concerned that the new abolitionism may offer whites a way of having their cake and eating it too, at least within the context of anti-racism. For there is a danger that reading about or enacting the new abolitionismmight function something like the spectacle of The Sadist does for a white audience.White self-representations which emphasize white self-punishment and degradation white abolition, if you will absolve whites of their guilt without explicitly suggesting that they do more than criticize themselves. After all, we might ask, what would be the "praxis" of the new abolitionism? Its proponentsleavethe "practice" part of "praxis" pretty open-ended in their writings. I am not denying that anti-racist consciousness can change the world for the better. But is the new abolitionism the theory by which we want to conceive of our anti-racist acts? Oftentimes, it seems to suggest that the only progressive task available to white anti-racists is a kind of contemplative self-destruction. Such a strategy will invite whites to confess publicly to historical and present misdeeds often in a way which creates a spectacle of their humiliation but little more.In a worst-case scenario, as many have pointed out, the spectacle of white humiliation in new abolitionist criticism might invite whites to continue their condescension towards non-whites, since non-whites can't criticize whites nearly as fast as whites can. In a luckier scenario, it may leave whites so humiliated that they become incapable of forging the kinds of interracial bonds of solidarity, friendship, and love necessary to abolish racist practice.

#### Don’t take self-understanding as an incontrovertible truth – we don’t perfectly know ourselves and have a lot to gain by making our beliefs subject to external criticism

**McBride 3** –Professor of Government @ London School of Economics

(Cillian, “Self-transparency and the possibility of deliberative politics,” Journal of Political Ideologies, 8.3)

ABSTRACT I argue against the notion of self-transparency which underwrites the politics of presence. This connects situation, identity, and perspective in such a way as to be **incompatible** with deliberative politics and treats self-understand- ing as authoritative, rendering it **insensitive** to the possibility that our self-under- standings may be **distorted**. I propose a hermeneutic, narrative, conception of selfhood on which we **relate** to our lives as authors, constructing our identities by employing the linguistic and narrative resources which our respective situations make available to us. This admits the possibility that **others may provide us with superior interpretations of our lives**, which is a **precondition** of deliberative politics. Given the possibility that our self-understandings may be distorted, deliberative citizens have a **duty** to challenge **problematic self-under- standings**. Anchoring criticism to public deliberation, together with the her- meneutic premise that a measure of self-opacity is universal, secures such challenges against the charge of authoritarianism levelled at traditional ideol- ogy-critique.¶ I want to focus here on the challenge posed to dialogue-centred politics by a particular discourse connecting situation, identity and politics, which Anne Phillips has termed the ‘politics of presence’.1 While apparently providing a particularly firm basis for arguments for the inclusion of hitherto marginalized groups within the democratic process, this discourse embodies highly problem- atic views about political dialogue and the nature of the self. I hope to build on an analysis of these flaws to clarify the ontological preconditions of deliberative politics and, furthermore, to draw some conclusions about the nature of the obligations of parties to deliberation.¶ The politics of presence rests on a model of the self as transparent to itself, but not to others, with the consequence that a person’s self-understanding, at the very least, must be acknowledged to be authoritative, or incorrigible. This model of the self cannot, however, be made to cohere with a plausible account of communication, and consequently it **must be discarded** in favour of a broadly hermeneutic model of selfhood as situated in and constituted through a network of language and interpretative traditions. While this self is inevitably opaque to itself in certain respects, reflection on this opacity lends a point to dialogue which it cannot have on the assumption of self-transparency. A dialogic politics, which is sensitive to the possibility of distorted self-understanding and aims at facilitating the transformation of perspectives and self-interpretations, must acknowledge as a fundamental premise the **provisional character** of self-under- standing. This, in turn, provides a basis for viewing deliberative citizens as having obligations, in certain circumstances, to **challenge rather than defer to the self-understandings of others**.

#### You should accept the possibility that others can formulate a discourse of concern more effectively than you can – otherwise we get stuck in a feedback loop of narcissistic self-confirmation - this undercuts bargaining power that CAN shape institutions and achieve gains

**McBride 3** –Professor of Government @ London School of Economics

(Cillian, “Self-transparency and the possibility of deliberative politics,” Journal of Political Ideologies, 8.3)

This view is, however, not only philosophically suspect, but it also presents insuperable difficulties for a specifically deliberative politics. This is not imme- diately apparent when we focus simply on the issue of representation, but only when we turn our attention to the point of a more inclusive style of politics. While including the marginalized may affect decision-making simply by altering the parliamentary arithmetic, at least some of those who argue for inclusion also think that inclusion is a precondition of a communicative, or deliberative politics.13 The hope is not simply that the bargaining power of the marginalized groups may be increased, but that if they are **present** to articulate their interests, then others may **reassess** the accuracy and legitimacy of their own policy preferences in the light of these exchanges. Even assuming that those wielding power are committed to formulating policies which are aimed at benefiting the marginalized, if these policies are constructed without talking to those at whom they are directed, but only by talking about them to various experts, etc., then¶ 292¶ crucial information may be overlooked.14 Inclusion is not, therefore an end in itself: we are not concerned simply with the equal opportunity of members of marginalized groups to become parliamentary representatives, but with improv- ing the quality and, crucially, the legitimacy of decisions by promoting dialogue between all of those potentially affected.15¶ How can such a dialogue, involving not only articulation of views, but also their modification, get off the ground on the assumption of self-transparency and authority? If differently situated others cannot become properly ac- quainted with my standpoint, how can I communicate with them? The argument for representation exploits the inaccessibility of experience at the cost of communication and deliberation. On the one hand, the experience and self-interpretation of group members is unique and inviolable, but on the other hand it is also the case that this assumption **traps** each of **us** within the **circle of our own subjectivity.** Even if the claim is weakened to allow for commu- nicability, as long as it retains incorrigibility then we must still fall short of genuine dialogue, substituting for it the mere exchange of testimony.16 This is not to say that testimony has no place in deliberation, but it cannot supplant the mutual adjustment of conversation, which does not require passive listen- ing to the other but an active engagement with their views and the exposure of one’s own certainties to potential revision in the light of this engagement. A genuine dialogue, as Gadamer points out, is premised not simply on the authority of the speaker but on the assumption that one may have something to learn from one’s interlocutor, and that through engaging in dialogue one enlarges one’s own understanding.17 On this view, the possibility of dialogue is premised on the recognition of the limited, incomplete nature of one’s own understanding, including one’s understanding of oneself. What is required here is not authority, but rather a measure of humility in the light of one’s own finite nature.¶ If we are to have a deliberative politics, we shall have to surrender the idea of authoritative self-interpretation which must prevent genuine dialogue from taking place through removing my understanding of myself and my interests from the agenda. Surrendering this idea does not require us to surrender the idea that we are situated beings, who may view the world in different ways, depending on our particular situations. The pluralizing significance of situation and the demand for inclusive politics to which it gives rise can be retained, even if it must be re-conceptualized. In place of the idea that experience necessarily renders my situation transparent to me, we would do better to adopt the hermeneutic view that my situation and myself must be to some extent opaque to me, as deliberative politics cannot be made to cohere with the former view. The need to adopt such a view is not explained, of course, by the fact that such a view just happens to fit better with a preference for deliberative politics. Once we frankly acknowledge the **imperfect nature** of our self-understandings, then we will be sensitive to the possibility that these understandings may be distorted or deficient in significant ways, and it is our interest in acting autonomously and escaping the influence of those aspects of our situation which threaten our autonomy which drives our concern to engage in potentially **transformative dialogue** and to **participate in** a **politics** which **fosters such exchanges**.18

#### Tearing down norms is not a good strategy for psychological healing – just invites spur of the moment ethics

Ruti, professor of Critical Theory at the University of Toronto, ‘15

(Mari, *Between Levinas and Lacan: Self, Other, Ethics*, Bloomsbury Publishing, pg,164-166)

I do not here wish to revisit the details of these critiques of Habermas. which I mostly agree with, but merely to point out that the problem of power discrepancies may be even more pronounced in Badiou's paradigm, where the event is supposed to produce a generic truth **without any of the** checks and balances **of democratic deliberation.** Though the event, like the Lacanian act, can be a private revelation—one of Badiou's examples is the amorous event as an experience of unconditional lover—its ethical valences are most clearly discernible in the context of **collective situations** where participants are supposed to arrive at a shared truth through a miraculous galvanization of their passions. Ethics becomes a matter of the kind of leap of faith—the kind of inspired moment of certainty (and even of madness)—**that does not recognize any** grounding principle **external to itself**. What matters is the strength of conviction and the capacity to rally others behind this conviction, with the consequence that those with charismatic or forceful personalities **are likely to** overpower **more reticent ones**. **The heat of the truth-event, i**n other words, **favors those who** do not hesitate to dominate. It may be true that the resolutions that result from a democratic process are no more objective than those that are extracted from a specific situation through the irruption of the event, **but at least they have the advantage of** being open to challenge. And while it is undoubtedly true that **a priori norms that sustain unjust social systems are oppressive**, **so are, potentially at least,** ethical decisions based on spur-of-the-moment evaluations **that** carry a mystical, quasi-theological force. I understand why Badiou does not want to determine the content of good and evil a priori, ahead of the specific necessities of a given situation, for in his view, this effectively precludes the possibility of any genuinely new, surprising, or unprecedented perspectives.

Jamieson Webster explains the matter beautifully when she claims chat Badiou's ethical vision—what she describes as an "ethics of that which is not yet in being"—can be likened to the position of the analyst who does not seek to fix the truth of the analysand's desire ahead of time bur rather **waits for this truth to reveal itself through the** gradual exploration **of the unconscious."** As Webster specifics, the ideal ethical actor, in Badiou's sense, would aspire to the stance of the analyst as someone who chooses to be "without memory" (/,D 108), who starts from scratch with every new patient, without assuming that the desire of a new patient has anything to do with the desire of her previous patients. Badiou's situation-specific ethics, Webster claims, demands a similar clean slate, a similar lack of a priori judgments.

I can see how, conceptually, this comparison is seductive. But using the analyst's position to explain Badiou's ethics also reveals the limitations of this ethics. It may make sense for the analyst to be "without memory," but this posture would be disastrous in relation to historical events **such as American slavery, the Holocaust, Vietnam, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Congo, Sudan, or Syria** (to name just a few of the most obvious examples). The impulse to let sociopolitical atrocities fall into oblivion, or even to deliberately hide them, is already so strong that the aspiration to be "without memory" in relation to them hardly seems like the appropriate response. Furthermore, in the clinical encounter, there is time and space to linger in the specificity of desire. **In contrast, in the domain of world politics,** being able to act swiftly**—on the basis of** predetermined codes of conduct**—is sometimes the** only way to prevent violence from escalating. Saying that we should approach ethics with the same attitude of unknowingness and refusal of precedent as the analyst takes in relation to each new patient is a bit like saying that, the next time Jews start being rounded up and shipped off to undisclosed locations, we should assume that the past can teach us nothing **and that we need to consequently enter into a** lengthy process of seeing how things will unfold**. I am sure that this is not what Webster—or even Badiou—means to suggest**. But it is a matter worth contemplating. What, in Badiou's model, is to guarantee that an ethics that arises from a particular situation does not serve the interests of those who happen to be powerful in that situation? **It seems to me that an** a priori set of ethical principles **would have a much better chance of handling this dilemma successfully**.

## 2NC

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#### Exclusive experiential focus reinforces essentialism and weakens the struggle against oppression – especially where competition is involved.

Aouragh 19 – second-generation Dutch-Moroccan, Reader at the university of Westminster School of Media Arts & Design, London and author of Palestine *Online: transnational- ism, the internet and the construction of identity*

Miriyam, “‘White privilege’ and shortcuts to anti-racism.” Institute of Race Relations, Vol. 61(2) 3–26. SagePub.

Racism, as a global phenomenon of oppression and exploitation, has specific local configurations with particular processes of othering and marginalising. Important structuring principles have been obscured through the tendency to exception- alise subjective skin-colour, or fixed geographic references as a code for oppres- sion. The increase in references to experientially grounded claims that are focused on skin colour differences have given primacy to anti-blackness, which has in turn reinforced essentialist definitions of race.

The invoked ranking of oppression has implications – firstly, it assumes an incre- mental logic from black to brown to white; secondly, the consequent hierarchies affect solidarities. We see this in certain applications of the term ‘non-black people of colour’ (code for ‘brown’, interchangeable with Arabs, North Africans, Asians, Latinx), where NBPoC either manifests the dropping of the collectivist PoC or highlights a specificity of blackness through ‘black people of colour’(BPoC). While this incrementalism grows into an ontology (a hierarchy that relies on (ascribed) racialised/geographic features), the specification also coincides with a critique of coalition politics that was underwritten by the term PoC that was, ironically, put forward by black feminists. Because ‘anti-black’ oppression also relies on the degree of closeness to ‘white’, such an order carries political meaning: a default complicity in anti-blackness. In practical usage, this ‘NBPoC’ does not refer to a collective group but rather produces the assumption that the individual is the collective- writ-small. Therefore, the NBPoC should not speak about or for (real) black struggles but is told to deal with anti-blackness in their own communities.

There are two immediate objections to this reasoning. First, it is strange to hold individuals accountable for varied (historic) injustices through a subjective demarcation regardless of other categories or conditions. hence, no one is immune if held accountable for what other members of their community do, let alone its general alliance with oppressive forces.27 Secondly, while ‘NBPoC’ indi- viduals (such as Turks or Moroccans in the Netherlands) are criticised somewhat out of proportion, white ‘allies’ remain unchallenged and white supremacy as a social reality, which impacts on all PoC, remains untouched. The idea that, for instance, a Dutch-Moroccan is more privileged than a Dutch-Surinamese or a Dutch-ugandan is mainly a result of a reactionary interpretation. In addition, ‘blackness’ is linked to an Africa romanticised as a continent and understood in an ahistorical way. Africa is divided by a biological hierarchy of skin colour and facial features – as if there are no cultural, linguistic, or religious differences between East, West, South, North and Central Africa.

Noting differentiations between groups is necessary to understand patterns of oppression and the multi-layered status of marginalisation is an important reason to take experiential knowledge seriously. Such internal differences can be over- looked by projecting standardised categories. Racism is generously distributed across a whole range of victims of anti-refugee politics, anti-blackness, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, etc. But this state of affairs is also used to undermine ‘political black- ness’ or even the collective sense behind PoC. This complexity requires a nuanced approach towards racism; we cannot sweep all kinds of racism into one. The term ‘black’, when used politically, was not meant as a pigment marker. It denoted unity in struggle; a guideline for revolutionaries of colour who saw in the (racist) state a mutual enemy. So, organising in mixed groups together, uniting against police bru- tality, helps nail the lie of biological and essentialist notions of colour/race. Such a praxis actually allows one to raise the issue of prejudice within groups. Moreover, transformative awareness about, and radical commitment to, combating internal oppression is a crucial, if underestimated, possibility offered by unifying struggles. Across western metropoles, during particular eras a political outlook was shaped by struggles informed by internationalism and confidence. For them, the term black was a unifying radical denominator, a context in which activists were involved in an optimistic progressive politics within and across their respective communi- ties. This approach is exhibited in neither the current WP approaches nor the inven- tion of ‘NBPoC’. That this is easily overlooked confirms the difference between analytical and descriptive tools.

Much of my understanding of political blackness, and its breaking down by state policies of ethnicism, originates in the critical work of Sivanandan about multiculturalism and diversity in the uK.28 It is outside the scope of this article to offer a detailed account and compare the different contexts, but we can see how the bases on which state funds are allocated validate ethnic claims. Anthropologist Francio Guadeloupe has demonstrated this dynamic in a detailed account of the role of blackness and Afrocentricity for Dutch artists and activist scenes. The alignment of ethno-racial categorisation with state aims and funding regimes leads, according to him, to ‘strategic essentialism’.29A white versus black descrip- tor in line with uS usage does not actually have the same historic lineage in the Netherlands. This is where a ‘politics of fulfilment’ began to matter, and in turn, this accommodates a practice that encourages material and conceptual rivalries, or a ‘hyper commercialized meta identity’.30 unsurprisingly, this does not sit well with progressive politics. It indicates that the meanings of Africa, Afro, black are adapted and/or conflated as part of the larger re-interpretation of anti-racism. An international black nationalism grounded in a supposed sub-Saharan kinship is very unconvincing. This myth of a unified black identity (in the North American sense of the term) supposedly functions as the enduring reality of how race is understood by all peoples of sub-Saharan African descent, with a clear-cut divi- sion of human beings into black, brown, and white, as Guadeloupe notes.31 In this metanarrative, black identity is the prerogative of persons with what are consid- ered classic sub-Saharan features: dark skin, coiling or curling hair, and genetic ancestry in sub-Saharan Africa. ultimately, this supposed genetic ancestry (an updated version of the ontology of blood) is an invention where ‘Black identity belongs to sub-Saharan people . . . this [is a] metaphysical understanding of colo- nial history by which blood, skin, bone, and genetic ancestry slips in through the backdoor of [the] social constructivist avowal of race’.32 Taking a similar approach to Guadeloupe, olaloku-Teriba identifies a pattern where there is ‘on one hand, the exceptionalisation of a thing referred to as “anti-blackness”; and on the other, the mobilisation of this charge against “non-black people of colour” who attempt to draw comparison between black struggles and their own’.33 The ‘tension between the presumptions of this universalising analysis of racial categories and the as-yet unresolved question of blackness, what it is and who possesses it, plagues anti-racist politics and organising’.34

A problem emerges when emphasising ‘racism denial’, or utilising ‘brown privilege’, nurtures competition between ethnic minority groups. Naturalising differences among oppressed groups gives political currency to the wrong anti- racism. Any criticism of this view by non-black anti-racists is labelled anti-black, and hence, delegitimised. In this outlook, a radical holistic and material analysis of racism is opportunistically coded as ‘erasure’. Just like white people who mainly carry responsibility and will not ‘know’ what racism is, NBPoC will never ‘really’ know what it is like to be black since realising this can only come from personal experience. But what stops this logic from expanding to every subjective group? Men will never know what it is like to be women. Cis women will never know what it is like to be trans. Able LGBTQ women will never know what it is like to be a disabled LGBTQ woman. When political responsibility becomes invested in personal accountability or subjective characteristics outside of genu- ine coalition work, the space for transformative change narrows down. While it can work in a complementary way, replacing social reality with subjective experi- ence and a universal political vision of emancipation with cultural- or colour- based analysis weakens the struggle against oppression rather than strengthening it, as examples in the next section show.

## 1NR

#### 2] Poetics – the 1AC operates on a register of individual creation – it presumes that a strategy of artistic analysis is capable of black liberation – that becomes a cover for economic exploitation at the level of subjectivity

Gräbner and Wood 10 (Cornelia – Lecturer of European Languages and Cultures at Lancester University, and David – Researcher at the Institute for Aesthetic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, “Poetics of Resistance: Introduction,” Cosmos & History 6(2):2-19, accessed 2-5-15)

The title of this special issue, poetics of Resistance, is also the name of a network of scholars and cultural producers. The network was founded in 2007 with the purpose of developing new analytical approaches for an understanding of the relationship between creativity, culture, and political resistance, in the context of neoliberal globalization, and from a perspective of committed scholarship. The founding members of the network felt that global neoliberal politics had created a situation in which the relationship between these three categories—creativity, the impact of neoliberalism, a committed position—became increasingly difficult to translate into practices of committed research and cultural production. This difficulty seemed to derive from a variety of reasons. one was that the term ‘cultural resistance’ seemed to hold rhetorical rather than analytical or descriptive power. In his introduction to the Cultural Resistance Reader, stephen Duncombe unravels some of the diverse meanings that the term can take on. he suggests that we think of cultural resistance in terms of ‘scales of resistance’, which he equates with ‘political engagement’. Duncombe suggests the existence of three scale measures: political self-consciousness, the social unit engaged in cultural resistance, and the results of cultural resistance.2 While Duncombe’s model of scales can be a productive approach if one wishes to analyse a great variety of practices in light of their resistant function(s), it does raise the question of which cultural practices are not at least potentially acts of political resistance, and what descriptive power the term ‘resistance’ still holds if it can be equally applied to shopping and to anti-consumerist culture jamming, for example. as Duncombe himself points out, the concept ‘culture’ is partially the source of such an excess of meaning:3 here i’m referring to culture as a thing, there as a set of norms, behaviors and ways to make sense of the world, and in still other places, i’m describing culture as a process. … The term ‘cultural resistance’ is no firmer. in the following pages i use it to describe culture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure. but cultural resistance, too, can mean many things and take on many forms. Combining ‘resistance’ with ‘poetics’ limits the scope of the practices under discussion. ‘poetics’—as distinct from ‘culture’—encourages a focus on individual creativity rather than on the wider category of cultural practices. Those are still discussed; however, in the contexts discussed here this is usually done in relation to poetic practices. The register of individuality and subjectivity that is linked with the term poetics, and the evocation of collectivity and community through the term resistance, places the practices and works under discussion in a tension between these categories. it encourages an analytical approach that considers the relationship between the work of art, the subjectivities of its creator(s) and of its recipients, and the social movements or political ideologies with which it is linked. The place of the work of art in the tension field between the subjective and the collective, and the relationality that the existence of this tension field necessarily entails, has emerged as one of the most important foci of the work of members of the network. The term ‘resistance’, in the way it is used by the network, needs further explanation. We use it with specific reference to neoliberalism, as one recent form of capitalism, while also maintaining an interest in practices of creative resistance to pre-neoliberal regimes of capital. This focus was chosen to facilitate the response to a very particular situation which is characterized by the implementation of a specific set of ideologically based policies while, at the same time, the existence of the ideological dimension is disavowed by policy makers. as eagleton points out, proponents of conservatism (we may apply this more concretely to neoliberalism) are wary of acknowledging its own ideological status, since ‘to dub their own beliefs ideological would be to risk turning them into objects of contestation’.4 neoliberalism thus pretends to be pragmatic rather than ideological; interested in policy rather than ideology. This pretence is made easier by neoliberalism having originally emerged as an economic theory. David harvey writes:5 neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. … but beyond these tasks the state should not venture. This ‘theory of political economic practices’ does, however, have ideological underpinnings which are crucially important to an understanding of neoliberalism’s impact on the arts, and also on scholarship. Those ideological underpinnings have become ever more obvious as the economic theory proves to be flawed, inadequate, and destructive. since the crisis of 2008, it has become ever more necessary for neoliberalism’s proponents to maintain the appearance of its overall coherence and effectiveness. ideology is indispensable for this. Other actors—not politicians—have to step in and provide the justification for the continuity of neoliberal politics. This justification draws on the previous ‘construction of consent’, as harvey calls it, and this draws increasingly on the pretension that ‘there is no alternative’. Culture in the widest sense plays a part in translating the ideological points outlined by harvey into more generalized assumptions, discursive figures, and commonly held beliefs. Thus, neoliberalism creates imaginaries that can then inform the creative imagination or that, conversely, are projected through works of art without this necessarily being the intention of the artist. The potentially complicit functions of art and scholarship and their co-optation, are important areas of interest of the members of the network. at the same time—and this interest is more prominently represented in the articles collected in this issue—the members of the network explore how works of art can effectively resist the imposition of neoliberal ideology and the absorption of art by neoliberal politics, either by creating alternative imaginaries or by contributing to and interacting with political projects that stand in opposition to the neoliberal model. This sometimes implies seeking spaces of artistic praxis ‘outside’ neoliberalism, but frequently involves entering into discursive, and sometimes financial, negotiation with neoliberallyinformed social, cultural and educational structures. for those of us working in higher education, as we will see below, such negotiation is an everyday reality. ConCepTualizinG ResisTanCe The decision to focus specifically on neoliberalism, and on poetics rather than culture, requires a re-conceptualization of resistance and, with reference to scholarship, a re- thinking of the critical approaches to the relationship between creativity and resistance. a brief discussion of influential theoretical works on poetry as a practice of resistance highlights why it is difficult to use these approaches to understand the work of art in times of neoliberalism. John beverley and Marc zimmerman’s analysis of poetry in the Central american revolutions was able to draw on a revolutionary and ideological practice that informed literature; barbara harlow in Resistance Literature establishes a connection between resistance in literature and anti-colonial liberation struggles; and Carolyn forché in Against Forgetting argues that the act of witnessing as an act of resistance against enforced oblivion translates into an act of political resistance. however, the insidious and gradual insertion of a supposedly non-ideological neoliberal imaginary into cultural imaginaries is not as easily identifiable as an act of oppression or persecution. The neoliberal imaginary does not explicitly endorse or justify violence, and therefore is more complex to resist or to contest. hardt and negri’s concepts of the global state of war and the global state of exception capture this elastic presence of violence and oppression. 6 The conceptualization of resistance is tied in with two further complexities: the place of the work of art in relation to resistance struggles, and the effectiveness of resistant works of art. both points are addressed in most essays in this issue, though authors come to different resolutions. The bearers of resistance struggles in the political sphere are some governments—for instance, those that form part of the bolivarian alternative for the americas (alba)—and a great variety of social movements. The emergence of new social movements as bearers of resistance struggles has opened up the question about the place of art and culture in relation to these movements. hardt and negri’s approach has been influential in this respect, and it is also exemplary of an approach with which members of the network struggle. in Empire, hardt and negri argue for an approach to culture that emphasizes its economic power:7 The various analyses of ‘new social movements’ have done a great service in insisting on the political importance of cultural movements against narrowly economic perspectives that minimize their significance. These analyses, however, are extremely limited themselves because … they perpetuate narrow understandings of the economic and the cultural. Most important, they fail to recognize the profound economic power of the cultural movements, or really the increasing indistinguishability of economic and cultural phenomena. on the one hand, capitalist relations were expanding to subsume all aspects of social production and reproduction, the entire realm of life; and on the other hand, cultural relations were redefining the production processes and economic structures of value. A regime of production, and above all a regime of the production of subjectivity, was being destroyed and another invented by the enormous accumulation of struggles.

#### 3] Individualism – eschewal of collective politics in favor of individual artistic analysis is depoliticizing – it puts the locus of self-improvement on individuals rather than the state

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Kriistina Brunila and Päivi Siivonen, “Preoccupied with the self: towards self-responsible, enterprising, flexible and self-centred subjectivity in education,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, vol. 37, no. 1, pp. 66-67, https://sci-hub.tw/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01596306.2014.927721

Adult education as a survival game?

I have had emotional problems and all kinds of problems, but this project has taught me how to survive. (Pasi)

Some time ago I did not know if I would survive but I have learned to get rid of old survival models and to use new ones, better ones. (Teppo)

During their interviews, Pasi and Teppo positioned themselves as students who had become in touch with their real selves, free from previous emotional and psychological chains by becoming survivors. Davies (2005) has argued that the neoliberal discourse has shifted in a significant way towards survival being seen as an individual responsibility. This is a crucial element of the neoliberal order – the removal of dependence on the social combined with the dream of wealth and possessions for each individual who gets it ‘right’. According to Davies, vulnerability is closely tied to individual responsibility. Workers are disposable and there is no obligation on the part of the ‘social fabric’ to take care of the disposed. As well as success, the individual remains responsible for any failure and its negative effects.

Kenneth McLaughlin (2011) has written how political claims today are being increasingly made on the basis of experienced trauma and inherent vulnerability while the previous political demand for recognition has resulted in therapeutic solutions. In his view, the survival discourse is a consequence of the therapeutic ethos (McLaughlin, 2011). Moreover, in several educational programmes the discourse of survival is already central (Brunila, 2014) in the way that the therapeutic discourse of vulnerabilities and emotional problems is able to find a powerful expression in the position of the victim, and the solution is to become a survivor.

In the therapeutic and enterprising discourses above, students such as Pasi and Teppo comply with such demands in order to be recognised as ‘properly’ flexible, active, self-disciplined and responsible. The ideal subjectivity is built on ideas of what is desirable, what is possible, and how to be heard. These extracts describe how young adults’ existence is shaped, and how as a consequence they begin to position themselves as survivors (see, also, Brunila, 2014; McLaughlin, 2011). The position of a survivor appears to be seductive. The survivor concept allows for a flattering representation of the emotional self, for it suggests that despite intense pain and suffering, these individuals have survived. This makes survivor status all the more authoritative and remarkable, as Furedi (2004) has written. The problem here is that in order to be heard, the young person must play the role of a victim. The position from which people are heard is established through recognising their vulnerabilities, injuries and emotional problems including low self-esteem, anxiety and stress. The assumed identity is one of victimhood or traumatisation; it is the therapeutic identity required for recognition (see, also, McLaughlin, 2011). This risks depoliticising the problems people face in society such as unemployment, lack of education and poverty.

Conclusion

We have argued that therapisation including both the therapeutic and enterprising discourses is effective in linking political rhetoric and regulatory programmes to the ‘selfsteering’ capacities of the subjects themselves (cf. Rose, 1998). The removal of dependence on the social is combined with the dream of empowerment, wealth and possessions for anyone who gets it ‘right’. However, instead of autonomous and rational individuals, what therapisation actually produces is vulnerable and fragile as well as imperfect and incapable subjectivities. When vulnerability is tied to individual responsibility, there is no obligation on the part of the ‘social fabric’ to take care of the disposed. Failure as well as success is up to each individual to bear.

In an era of individualisation and the decline of wider collective identities (Furedi, 2004), people are forced to rely on their own resources. Understanding one’s self becomes crucial. The vocabulary of both enterprising and therapeutic discourses offers a means to self-discovery. The ideal therapeutic discourses offer to free each of us from our psychic and emotional chains so that we can become enterprising and take control of ourselves and our lives. In practice, the result seems to be a ‘vicious circle’ where the individual is constantly obliged to improve his/her ever fragile and vulnerable self in perpetual competition with others. The risk of not achieving what is expected is therefore ever present. This shows how choice stems from the condition of possibility.

#### Class is a better analytic for the nature of black women’s oppression – their analysis particularizes oppression, which solidifies the status quo

Ferguson 15

Stephen FERGUSON, PhD in Philosophy from University of Kansas, Associate Professor at North Carolina A&T State University “Philosophy of African American Studies: Nothing Left of Blackness,” 2015, p. 178-182

In this section, I examine how the production of knowledge is tied to the exercise of power in Black Feminist Thought. Collins's standpoint theory owes much to the French social theorist Michel Foucault. 79 Power is discursive in nature for Collins. So, social relations of production and social structures are greatly discounted in her social analysis. I argue that her idealist conception of power has dire political consequences, that is, political quietism.

From his studies of prisons, sexuality, and medical discourse, Foucault spent a considerable amount of time analyzing the relationship between knowledge and power. From a Foucaultian perspective, the analysis of power cannot start with the state apparatus, society's legal structures or the dominance of one class over and against others. Rather, as Foucault often says, modern power is a capillary form of domination. 80 That is, power does not emanate from some central source, bur circulates throughout the body politic via a plurality of everyday micropolitics. This regime of power/knowledge comprises "microtechniques," institutional practices, regimes of knowledge, forms of social and political constraint that are local, continuous, capillary, and exhaustive. The fullest account of the disciplinary origins of modern power can be found in volume one of Foucault's History of Sexuality. In this work, he discusses the modern macrostrategy of "bio-power," the management of the production and reproduction of life in modern society. Here Foucault turns his gaze on such issues as population, health, urban life, and sexuality, which are to be administered, repressed, and controlled. He also gives us his most succinct discussion of power. To correctly understand power, he argues, we have to focus on the "multiplicity of relations of force." Foucault argues:

The condition of possibility of power ... should not be sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique space of sovereignty whence would radiate derivative and descendent forms;... Power is everywhere: not that it engulfs everything, but that it comes from everywhere.Kl

Power is everywhere, and so ultimately nowhere. In the realm of political philosophy, Foucault argues, we need to displace our conception of power from any notion of the State, social relations, or social institutions. This approach forces us to focus on discourse (i.e., the attitudes and beliefs people hold) rather than the social structural relations that produce and reproduce power. This conception of power opens up the door for a focus on "identity politics" vis-a-vis class struggle as the basis for political struggle.82

Despite the "omnipresence of power" Foucault informs us: "Resistance is integral to power." 83 By disconnecting power from its social basis in capitalist exploitation, where an essential division between the powerful and powerless is materially determined, I agree with Stephen Tumino who astutely notes, Foucault's theory becomes "part of the dream of a perfectly governed utopia, albeit with the spectacle of resistance but, just the same, with no social revolutions." 84 Foucault's concept of power leads us down the intellectual road of political quietism and inertia; for the ultimate conclusion to Foucault's political odyssey was stoicism, that is, a subjectivist passivity in the wake of objective crisis.85

At no point in Black Feminist Thought does Collins suggest that Black women can be empowered by taking control of the bourgeois state apparatus or overthrowing capitalism. For Collins, class production relations cannot adequately explain power. Power is discursive in nature for Collins. Perhaps, this explains Collins's eagerness to erase Black women who are socialist/Communist from Black women's thought and practice. In fact, little value is placed on the diversity of ideological and political perspectives among Black women. The Black philosopher Joy James posits:

Unfortunately, Black Feminist Thought also elides black female radicals. Reconstructing historical radicals as liberals, it deradicalizes militant women to generalize movement women activists as wedded to liberal politics. Collins redefines most forms of black women's anti-racist work, including social work, as "radicalism." In so doing, her text serves as a primary example for the erasure of the black women radical... Collins implicitly defines as revolutionary all black women who survive and thereby resist oppression, even if they do not engage in public activism or confrontation with the state.81'

Collins's depiction of Black women's thought and practice is rather generic. By implication, all political and ideological tendencies among Black women are seen as radical or revolutionary. However, socialist and/or communist women arc excluded from "Black feminist thought" precisely because of their focus on empowering Black women by taking control of the bourgeois state apparatus or overthrowing capitalism.

Joy James highlights a crucial issue in determining the plausibility of Collins's project. If Black women's experiences constitute the ground for Black feminist thought, is Collins guilty of erasing the differences within Black feminist thought? Moreover, if it is recognized that there are various, and sometimes necessarily contradictory, “women's standpoints,” how do we decide which one is the “real” Black women's standpoint? Collins's version of standpoint theory is problematic because it implies a misplaced essentialism in assuming that all Black women will necessarily have a shared standpoint, that is, a "Black feminist consciousness."

In the spirit of Foucault, Collins develops the notion of "matrix of domination" to underscore that one's position in society is made up of multiple standpoints as opposed to one essential standpoint. Taking a poststructural turn, Collins emphasizes the "interlocking" nature of the wide variety of social positions or identities (e.g., race, class, gender, nationality, sexual orientation) that make up our standpoint and, by extension, our oppression. The intcrsectionality of race, class, and gender is supposed to be analogous to the autonomous structures of racism, sexism, and "classism." So, our standpoint emerges from our fragmented identities that are, consequently, shaped by racism, sexism, and "classism." But what interests Collins the most is the manner in which intersectionality gives rise to different kinds of lived experiences, social realities, and power relations. Collins sees intersectionality working in tandem with a matrix of domination. In line with Foucault, she stresses that where there are sites of domination, there are also potential sites of resistance. Given the rival sets of experiences that constitute the subject, our experiences are often times contradictory rather than complementary.

The concept of "intersectionality" is antithetical to a Marxist (class) analysis of racism and sexism. The supposed economic determinism of Marxism is replaced by a "politics of difference." Although class is included in the triumvirate of "race, class and gender," class is really displaced as another "difference." In such formulations, race and gender identities – as separate and autonomous spheres – are severed from the material context of class formation, capitalist social relations, class exploitation, and, ultimately, class struggle. A class analysis does not reduce all forms of oppression to class or "classism." Instead, it is a mode of analysis that renders capitalism as context and grounds for the explanation of racism and sexism on a materialist basis. Racism is not reducible to class relations. But, we cannot begin to understand the mechanism of racism and ultimately eradicate it without understanding and transforming its material and ideological grounds in capitalism. 87 This is born out in such works as *Class Struggle in France,1848-1850*, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. The same can be said of works by Black historians in the tradition of Marx, Engels, and Lenin such as C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobin* and Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.88

In order to change the relations of domination (i.e., the oppression and exploitation which structure bourgeois civil society and our lives) we must understand how power works, and thus we need a viable theory of power.

In class societies – it should be obvious but let me say it anyway – power is not distributed equally. Power is a structural relationship (usually mediated by way of the State) based on the "difference" between those who own the means of production (as a class) and those who do not own these means of production and, consequently, must sell their labor power in order to survive. Power, from this standpoint, functions to reproduce oppression and exploitation. To argue otherwise, as Collins does, results in blurring the fundamental (but not only) contradiction under capitalist societies.

Exploitation, from the standpoint of Marxism, derives from one's objective relations to the means of production where power is attached to owning the means of production. Because the working-class is not in possession of the means of production, they are subject to exploitation in the sphere of production. Black, Asian, Latino/a, and white – whether male or female – workers are exploited under capitalism. 89 But, not all Black people or people of color are subject to exploitation in the Marxist sense. Some Black people as a result of their relationship to the means of production are exploiters and oppressors. Here we could mention Kenneth I. Chenault (Chairman and CEO of American Express), Ursula Burns (CEO of Xerox), Rosalind G. Brewer (President and CEO of Sam's Club, a division of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.), Carl Horton (former CEO of the Absolut Spirit Company Inc.), or Robert Parsons (former CEO of AOL Time Warner). 9° Can we seriously claim that Powell, Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice, Susan E. Rice, or even Oprah Winfrey are oppressed with respect to a white working-class male?

Rather than employ a materialist (structural) analysis of oppression and exploitation, with Collins, we are left with a culturalist narrative that reduces "such difference to a question of knowledge/power relations which can be 'dealt with' (negotiated) on a discursive level without a fundamental change in the relations of production." 91 We have an "ersatz politics" aimed at intervening at the level of ideas, that is, the sphere of cultural representation as an end in itself.92 As John McClendon observes:

[Collins'] epistemological position ushers in nothing less than a politics of compromise. Ostensibly the suggestion is a most debilitating political proposal, viz., pursue the politics of recognition. Moreover, the upshot of this epistemology of dialogical truth is not a politics of liberation but an ethics of reconciliation between the oppressed and the oppressors. In ideological terms, we are left with inept liberal moralism serving as a surrogate for political struggle, that is to say, political struggle guided by revolutionary theory and scientific epistemology.93

#### Separate our theory from misapplications of it --- we can find bad advocates of any theory, and their weaponization of past failures to discount a Marxist pedagogy is an independent link.

Harrison and Briond 17 Da’Shaun Harrison is a Black Queer Abolitionist, and Josh Briond is a Writer for Medium. “Josh and Da’Shaun: A Conversation between Black Queer Leftists Exploring Queerness, Socialism, and Decolonization.” Medium. August 4, 2017. <https://medium.com/@joshbriond/josh-and-dashaun-a-conversation-between-black-queer-leftists-exploring-queerness-socialism-and-e2a2b7add0a4>

Da’Shaun: Josh, as you know, there’s not a ton of literature detailing the narratives of Black queer leftists (socialists, communists, marxists, respectively). So, seeing that much of the opposition to socialism seemingly comes from the fact that Karl Marx was a racist and that some countries that have adopted socialist ideologies (re: USSR, Cuba) have murdered LGBT people, how do you, as a Black queer socialist, reconcile race and sexuality relations with socialism?

Josh: I learned about socialism before I knew about the atrocities that have happened to LGBTQ+ folks under socialist leaders and during socialist revolutions. I would like to start off by saying there is no excuse for those atrocities, and I condemn them. However, even if I had known about the atrocities committed to people who look like me or love the way I do, it wouldn’t have changed my opinion on socialism vis-a-vis its ideologies, its principles, or socialism as a system of governing. Kwame Ture once made this point about how we don’t judge Christianity by Christians, we judge it based off its principles, but if we were to judge Christianity by Christians, most would agree that the religion should have been disbanded centuries ago, and I thoroughly agree with that sentiment. Therefore, I think we should judge socialism based off its principles and not individual socialists, or even individual acts committed under socialist governments. Unlike capitalism, socialist principles contradict bigotries of all forms, while capitalism cannot exist without them. With that being said, brutality against the marginalized and most vulnerable is a common occurrence, historically speaking. One that has taken place under a plethora of economic systems. I think it’s vital that we are critical of socialist regimes and revolutions of the past and the present, but also recognizing even our revolutionary heroes were human, they made mistakes, just as we do, and as we will throughout the struggle. I think that applies to Karl Marx, as well. We can be critical of the man while recognizing that Marxism, as a science and an economic and political theory, is sheer brilliance. It’s important to note that there is an inextricable link between racism and capitalism. We must recognize that the same cannot be said about socialism, which never ceases to amaze me because the only time I’ve ever heard the, “Karl Marx was a racist” or “Fidel Castro killed gay people” arguments are when they’re being used to contradict the legitimacy of socialism.

By all means, these are valid concerns that we should definitely discuss, just not when they’re being weaponized to refute the legitimacy of Marxism, socialism, in our analysis of anti-capitalism