# 1NC

## Off-Case

### 1NC---T

T: USFG

#### Affs should defend hypothetical implementation of antitrust law in alignment with the rez.

#### “Resolved” requires law

WP 64, (Words and Phrases, 1964, Permanent Edition)

Definition of the word “resolve,” given by Webster is “to express an opinion or determination by resolution or vote; as ‘it was resolved by the legislature;” It is of similar force to the word “enact,” which is defined by Bouvier as meaning “to establish by law”.

#### “USFG” means any of the three branches

US Code 88, 42 U.S. Code § 4914, “Development of low-noise-emission products,” <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/4914>)

(2) The term “Federal Government” includes the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Government of the United States, and the government of the District of Columbia.

#### “Core antitrust laws” are the Sherman, Clayon, and FTC Acts

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U.S. antitrust law is defined by federal and state statutes, as interpreted by the courts. The core federal statutes are the Sherman Act,1 passed by Congress in 1890, and the Federal Trade Commission2 and Clayton Acts,3 both passed in 1914. The United States Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and the Federal Trade Commission (“FTC” or “Commission”) (together the “agencies”) share enforcement of most areas of federal antitrust law but with some differences in the scope of their authority. The FTC has sole authority to enforce Section 5 of FTC Act, which prohibits (1) unfair methods of competition and (2) unfair or deceptive acts or practices. The FTC almost always pursues claims for anticompetitive conduct as unfair methods of competition and reserves charges of unfair or deceptive acts or practices for consumer protection violations. Though the FTC's authority to challenge unfair methods of competition goes beyond conduct prohibited by the Sherman and Clayton Acts, in practice the FTC brings most unfair methods of competition cases under the same standards that courts apply to Sherman Act claims. The most prominent exception is the invitation to collude offense, which falls outside the scope of the Sherman Act (if the invitation is not accepted, there is no agreement). The FTC challenges invitations to collude as so-called “standalone” violations of Section 5.4 The DOJ has sole authority to pursue criminal violations of the antitrust laws. Most states have their own state antitrust and unfair competition statutes. State law follows federal law to some extent, though as discussed below, may differ from federal law in meaningful ways that vary state to state. State attorneys general and private parties can also typically file suit to enforce both federal and state antitrust law.

#### Vote neg ⁠— fairness ⁠— a limited and predictable topic defines prep and research, while preventing the aff from skirting clash, moving to the fringes, and picking true arguments, which wrecks neg ground; this outweighs because debate’s a game ⁠— competition encourages research practices and innovation, which is a prerequisite to participation

#### Policy debates over antitrust are valuable

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IV. Antitrust in Civil Society

Competition issues are also part of the general civic discourse separate from the campaign rhetoric and legislative proposals offered by politicians. This is also a significant sign that antitrust has begun to be an important source of small “p” politics that engages substantial segments of the public at large. One example is the increased number of non-technical books intended for a lay audience that deal with the role of antitrust in a healthy economy and democracy. Recent and forthcoming books dealing with these themes include Tim Wu’s “The Curse of Bigness,”109 Matt Stoller’s “Goliath,”110 Maurice Stucke and Ariel Ezrachi’s “Competition Overdose,”111 Zephyr Teachout’s “Break ‘em Up,”112 and David Dayan’s “Monopolized.”113 On the academic side, there are a plethora of government and NGO studies of competition policy on digital competition114 and new works are flourishing which explore the broader ramifications of antitrust and competition in society.115 Long form and more mass-market journalism have also taken up the mantle of exploring the role of antitrust and competition policy. Such diverse magazines as The Atlantic,116 Time, 117 New Republic,118 American Prospect,119 Rolling Stone,120 New York Times magazine,121 Variety,122 National Review, 123 Foreign Policy,124 and other policy and opinion magazines have all run recent stories or profiles of individuals involved in antitrust issues. Before the COVID-19 pandemic effectively monopolized press coverage in the United States, there were thirty-three antitrust related stories on the front page of the New York Times or the front page of its business section over a three-month period in late 2019. 125 A majority of the stories focused on tech giants such as Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Facebook.126 In addition, the New York Times also covered stories about mergers, merger policy, local issues such as the Chicago taxi market, and various smaller industries.127 This is separate from coverage during the same period of campaign issues and candidate statements relating to the field. A similar increase in coverage during this same period can be observed anecdotally in more business-oriented publications like Forbes, Barron’s, Wired, and the Wall Street Journal; general newspapers like USA Today, Washington Post, and Huffington Post; more local newspapers; as well as radio and television.128 Web pages and social media accounts on these issues have similarly proliferated on all ideological perspectives.129 Lobbying and public policy groups are growing in number and influence. Beyond the traditional trade associations and general think tanks there are now a number of active groups with antitrust as a large part of their focus. These include the Open Markets Institute, 130 American Antitrust Institute, 131 Anti-Monopoly Fund,132 Institute for Self-Reliance,133 Public Citizen,134 Public Knowledge,135 Demos, 136 and the International Center for Law and Economics.137 At the more technical legal end of the debate, antitrust is similarly flourishing as a field. One sees increased law school hiring in the field for the first time in decades. Academic institutes and centers abound with a wide variety of perspectives ranging from libertarian to enforcement oriented.138 Most major antitrust cases now feature multiple amicus briefs from legal and economic experts on both sides of an issue both in the Supreme Court or the Courts of Appeals.139 Conclusion Antitrust has always been political in nature. Antitrust law provides broad legal commands dealing with how governments and private individuals can challenge different types of market behavior. In this way, antitrust has not changed. Antitrust will never take the place of sports, the Dow Jones index, or the weather for conversation at the breakfast table, but it has become a meaningful part of the political and policy debate for candidates, the legislature, and important segments of civil society. What has changed, however, is the degree that antitrust has reentered the political arena. Once mostly the domain of technocrats, antitrust issues have been proposed and debated by Presidential candidates, political parties, legislators, pundits, journalists, lobby groups, and voters alike. There are also a flurry of serious proposals and investigations that would make significant changes to the current system if adopted. This is all to the good. Even if none of the current proposals come to fruition, the antitrust debate is part of a broader engagement with political economy issues dealing with fundamental concerns such as economic concentration, globalization, income inequality, social and racial justice, and even recently the proper response to the COVID-19 emergency. The many proposals, initiatives, and pressure groups represent at a minimum the return of antitrust as part of the progressive agenda.

## Case

### Institutions---1NC

#### Intersectional approaches to law are key to enacting legal changes to prioritize lived experience and structural violence---starting points are always impartial and incomplete but making perfect the enemy of the good causes locks in perceptions of law as neutral

Nash 19, Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University. (Jennifer, “love in the time of death,” Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality, Chapter 4, 124-126, Duke University Press. 2019.)

If intersectionality embraces black women’s social location as a juridical starting point, it also advocates for tailoring law to address injuries in particular ways. In other words, it offers a vision of law that is rooted in flexibility and customization, in responding to particular lived experience. In her second article on intersectionality, “Mapping the Margins,” Crenshaw reveals not only that law ignores black women’s experiences of injury but also that intersectionality compels state interventions that more appropriately respond to black women’s particular experiences of injury. In the context of domestic violence, for example, Crenshaw shows that meaningful legal intervention requires an attention to race, gender, class, and immigration status, and thus state intervention might need to take different and multiple forms to produce substantive justice. Intersectionality, then, requires a commitment to witnessing, to empathic looking, that responds not with the messy bluntness that law so often deploys in the name of fairness and uniformity. Instead, intersectionality calls for imagining legal action that can be individualized, intimate, and rooted in lived experience. This work has been expanded by other scholars, especially those working in the context of domestic violence law, including Linda Mills and Elizabeth Schneider, who have considered how mandatory arrest/no-drop policies ignore the particular experiences of women of color who may have to weigh their own distrust of the state, the necessity of a partner’s income to survive, and the potential stigma, shame, or violence of calling law enforcement against a desire for bodily integrity and safety. As Mills suggests, a vision of legal intervention that is survivor-centered and survivor-guided, that recognizes the differently situatedness of each subject who engages with the state, is the only way to ensure justice, particularly in the context of intimate life. Similarly, Crenshaw’s work asks for law to witness violence as it unfolds and to respond contextually, to recognize that uniformity might not be the hallmark of fairness and equity. Ultimately, Crenshaw’s vision of the demands of intersectionality in the context of violence has underscored the importance of law as a tool that sees, witnesses, and even willingly inhabits the social locations of the multiply marginalized.

If it is easy to dismiss Williams’s embrace of rights as overly optimistic in the face of ample description of law’s failures, it is all too easy to treat Crenshaw as an inclusionist, one who imagines intersectionality as a strategy that grants black women entry into the problematic logics of antidiscrimination law. Yet in my reading of intersectionality, Crenshaw’s vision is not one of including black women in existing legal doctrine, or simply expanding legal doctrine to make space for black women’s particular experiences of discrimination. Indeed, Crenshaw ends “Demarginalizing the Intersection” with a personal account that underscores her deep commitment to unsettling inclusionary politics. She describes an experience in which, as a law school student, she was invited to a prestigious Harvard men’s club, one that was formerly all white, to celebrate the end of first-year exams. Upon her arrival, her friend—a member of the club—quietly mentioned that he had forgotten to share an important detail: Crenshaw would have to enter the club through the back door because she was a woman. She and her friends had long assumed that it was their blackness that would bar them from the club, but it was her womanhood that required her to use the back door if she wanted entry into the club. Crenshaw ruminates on this experience as emblematic of the importance of intersectional analysis, noting that “this story does reflect a markedly decreased political and emotional vigilance toward barriers to Black women’s enjoyment of privileges that have been won on the basis of race but continue to be denied on the basis of sex.”39 Yet what interests me about this account, and how it animates the end of the article, which borrows from Paula Giddings’s work to conclude “when they enter, we all enter,” is that intersectionality is not a tool Crenshaw uses to advocate access and entry. In other words, she does not suggest that an intersectional analysis demands her inclusion—and all black women’s inclusion—in a structure constructed around black women’s exclusion. Instead, the story reveals that battles for entry are always imperfect, exclusionary, and problematic. To be granted entry to a space because of blackness and to be barred entry to that same space because of womanhood speaks to the flimsiness of entry as a form of politics, precisely because inclusion always hinges on a system of exclusion, hierarchy, and valuation. Ultimately, intersectionality reveals both the limits of juridical projects and the possibility of mobilizing law to exceed law’s own critical desires. In Crenshaw’s hands, intersectionality invites a legal project that takes seriously black women’s witnessing (and black women as witnesses, something crucial in a juridical system that continues to disbelieve black women), that invites an attention to a literal, material space—the intersection, the basement—that black women know, experience, and inhabit.

In this section, I ask what might happen if black feminists treated intersectionality’s legal roots not as an embarrassment but as a crucial site of the analytic’s transformative potential. Indeed, in reading Crenshaw’s conception of intersectionality alongside Williams’s work on rights, and in emphasizing intersectionality’s roots in critical race theory, I treat intersectionality as an analytic that radically occupies law, takes hold of legal doctrine and refuses its conceptions of neutrality and uniformity as performance of justice. It is, then, a strategy of demanding that law move otherwise, that it center witnessing and vulnerability, that it encourage forms of relationality and accountability that jettison logcs of contract and property. My reading insists that black feminists refuse well-rehearsed dismissals of intersectionality as an inclusionary project (dismissals that are all the more possible to rehearse because this is how intersectionality so often circulates in the university) that seeks to insert black women’s bodies into otherwise problematic structures, and instead advocates treating intersectionality’s juridical project as the very heart of its radical political agenda. It is intersectionality’s capacity to index vulnerability and witnessing, to imagine legal doctrine as centering those ethics (even as law might refuse those efforts), that makes intersectionality a space that resonates deeply with black feminism’s ongoing efforts to construct a political agenda rooted in love.

#### Even if true, we should imagine possibilities of a world beyond ontology---key to imagining law as a space for Black women’s survival, demanding juridical changes, and empowering radical Black feminist politics

Nash 19, Professor of Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at Duke University. (Jennifer, “love in the time of death,” Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality, Chapter 4, 124-126, Duke University Press. 2019.)

Risk and Promise

What if we refused the lure of negative affects, the tendency to grieve and mourn black feminism and its analytics? What if we rejected both the notion that blackness is synonymous with death and the idea that black feminism is dead or dying? My call for this rejection is not meant as a wholesale rejection of afropessimism, and its attendant affects of grief, loss, mourning, and despair. Nor is my plea here rooted in a sense that negative affects are per se problematic; indeed, the work of a host of scholars including Ann Cvetkovich, Heather Love, and Sianne Ngai has been to reclaim negative affects and to mine these feelings for their productive, world-making potential. Instead, my call is for us to consider why the position of death has become so alluring in this moment, particularly for black feminists who have made a practice of lamenting the slow and steady demise of our tradition. This chapter, then, aspires to perform letting go by suggesting another way to feel black feminism, one rooted in love rather than territoriality and defensiveness. Indeed, I argue that remembering intersectionality’s juridical orientations, and recovering them rather than eschewing them (even in a moment where law is treated as the paradigmatic site of antiblack violence), might allow black feminists to encounter the broad sweep of our transformative call for love-politics. In so doing, I emphasize that law might be a space of black women’s survival rather than simply the site of black women’s wounding. Moreover, I underscore that a space that black women did not author, and that was created largely with the interest in enshrining black women as property rather than as subjects, might become a site that allows us to imagine other ways of being and feeling black feminist. As I argue, black feminism’s long-standing commitment to lovepolitics, to ethics of mutual vulnerability and witnessing, is echoed by critical race feminist legal practices, including Williams’s expansive investment in rights and Crenshaw’s engagement with intersectionality as a critique of inclusionary politics. What both share are demands that law imagine itself otherwise, that it unfold and move in ways that might seem contrary to its fundamental project. These are demands that law acknowledge the failures and short-sightedness of inclusion and redress projects, and that law instead imagine its radical work to be an embrace of ideas of intimacy, proximity, vulnerability, and mutual regard. Reanimating black feminist engagement with law is particularly important because it upends the long-standing tenet that black women’s freedom comes exclusively through spaces that we self-authored, and, correlatively, that sites historically constructed to secure our status as property can never become locations where we stage our liberation. My inquiry shows otherwise and argues that freedom and radical black feminist politics can be rooted in myriad sites, including spaces that have been rife with our own subordination. Indeed, my engagement with law seeks to rescue law’s status of death in black studies, tracing how it can be a location of radical freedom-dreaming and visionary world-making rather than simply a death-world and the paradigmatic site of antiblackness.

### Turn---1NC

#### Focus on whiteness reifies racist domination

Andersen 3, Margaret L. Andersen, Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Delaware, 2003, “Whitewashing Race: A Critical Perspective on Whiteness,” in White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism, ed Doane & Bonilla-Silva, p. 28]

Conceptually, one of the major problems in the whiteness literature is the reification of whiteness as a concept, as an experience, and as an identity. This practice not only leads to conceptual obfuscation but also impedes the possibility for empirical analysis. In this literature, "whiteness" comes to mean just about everything associated with racial domination. As such, whiteness becomes a slippery and elusive concept. Whiteness is presented as any or all of the following: identity, self-understanding, social practices, group beliefs, ideology, and a system of domination. As one critic writes, "If historical actors are said to have behaved the way they did mainly because they were white, then there's little room left for more nuanced analysis of their motives and meanings" (Stowe 1996:77). And Alastair Bonnett points out that whiteness "emerges from this critique as an **omnipresent and all-powerful historical force**. Whiteness is seen to be responsible for the failure of socialism to develop in America, for racism, **for the impoverishment of humanity**. With the 'blame' comes a new kind of centering: Whiteness, and White people, are turned into the key agents of historical change, the shapers of contemporary America" (1996b:153). Despite noting that there is differentiation among whites and warning against using whiteness as a monolithic category, most of the literature still proceeds to do so, revealing a reductionist tendency. Even claiming to show its multiple forms, most writers essentialize and reify whiteness as something that directs most of Western history (Gallagher 2000). Hence while trying to "deconstruct” whiteness and see the ubiquitousness of whiteness, the literature at the same time reasserts and reinstates it (Stowe 1996:77). For example, Michael Eric Dyson suggests that whiteness is identity, ideology, and institution (Dyson, quoted in Chennault 1998:300). But if it is all these things, it becomes an analytically useless concept. Christine Clark and James O'Donnell write: "to reference it reifies it, to refrain from referencing it obscures the persistent, pervasive, and seemingly permanent reality of racism" (1999:2). Empirical investigation requires being able to identify and measure a concept— or at the very least to have a clear definition—but since whiteness has come to mean just about everything, it ends up meaning hardly anything.

#### The 1ac mythologizes whiteness, boiling it down to an absolutely empty signifier that locks in passivity

Mbembe 15 (Achille, 9/9/15, “Achille Mbembe on The State of South African Political Life”, Africa is a country, <https://africasacountry.com/2015/09/achille-mbembe-on-the-state-of-south-african-politics/>, accessed 11/27) JA

What we are hearing is that there have not been enough meaningful, decisive, radical change, not only in terms of the life chances of the black poor, but – and this is the novelty – in terms of the future prospects of the black middle class. What is being said is that twenty years after freedom, we have not disrupted enough the structures that maintain and reproduce “white power and supremacy”; that this is the reason why too many amongst us are trapped in a “bad life” that keeps wearing them out and down; that this wearing out and down of black life has been going on for too long and must now be brought to an end by all means necessary (the right to violence?). We are being told that we have not radically overturned the particular sets of interests that are produced and reproduced through white privilege in institutions of public and private life – in law firms, in financial institutions such as banking and insurance, in advertising and industry, in terms of land redistribution, in media, universities, languages and culture in general. “Whiteness”, “white power”, “white supremacy”, “white monopoly capital” is firmly back on the political and cultural agenda and to be white in South Africa now is to face a new-old kind of trial although with new judges – the so-called “born-free”. Politics of impatience But behind whites trial looms a broader indictment of South African social and political order. South Africa is fast approaching its Fanonian moment. A mass of structurally disenfranchised people have the feeling of being treated as “foreigners” on their own land. Convinced that the doors of opportunity are closing, they are asking for firmer demarcations between “citizens” (those who belong) and “foreigners” (those who must be excluded). They are convinced that as the doors of opportunity keep closing, those who won’t be able to “get in” right now might be left out for generations to come – thus the social stampede, the rush to “get in” before it gets too late, the willingness to risk a fight because waiting is no longer a viable option. The old politics of waiting is therefore gradually replaced by a new politics of impatience and, if necessary, of disruption. Brashness, disruption and a new anti-decorum ethos are meant to bring down the pretence of normality and the logics of normalization in this most “abnormal” society. Steve Biko, Frantz Fanon and a plethora of black feminist, queer, postcolonial, decolonial and critical race theorists are being reloaded in the service of a new form of militancy less accommodationist and more trenchant both in form and content. The age of impatience is an age when a lot is said – all sorts of things we had hardly heard about during the last twenty years; some ugly, outrageous, toxic things, including calls for murder, atrocious things that speak to everything except to the project of freedom, in this age of fantasy and hysteria, when the gap between psychic realities and actual material realities has never been so wide, and the digital world only serves as an amplifier of every single moment, event and accident. The age of urgency is also an age when new wounded bodies erupt and undertake to actually occupy spaces they used to simply haunt. They are now piling up, swearing and cursing, speaking with excrements, asking to be heard. They speak in allegories and analogies – the “colony”, the “plantation”, the “house Negro”, the “field Negro”, blurring all boundaries, embracing confusion, mixing times and spaces, at the risk of anachronism. They are claiming all kinds of rights – the right to violence; the right to disrupt and jam that which is parading as normal; the right to insult, intimidate and bully those who do not agree with them; the right to be angry, enraged; the right to go to war in the hope of recovering what was lost through conquest; the right to hate, to wreak vengeance, to smash something, it doesn’t matter what, as long as it looks “white”. All these new “rights” are supposed to achieve one thing we are told the 1994 “peaceful settlement” did not achieve – decolonization and retributive justice, the only way to restore a modicum of dignity to victims of the injuries of yesterday and today. Demythologizing whiteness And yet, some hard questions must be asked. Why are we invested in turning whiteness, pain and suffering into such erotogenic objects? Could it be that the concentration of our libido on whiteness, pain and suffering is after all typical of the narcissistic investments so privileged by this neoliberal age? To frame the issues in these terms does not mean embracing a position of moral relativism. How could it be? After all, in relation to our history, too many lives were destroyed in the name of whiteness. Furthermore, the structural repetition of past sufferings in the present is beyond any reasonable doubt. Whiteness as a necrophiliac power structure and a primary shaper of a global system of unequal redistribution of life chances will not die a natural death. But to properly engineer its death – and thus the end of the nightmare it has been for a large portion of the humanity – we urgently need to demythologize it. If we fail to properly demythologize whiteness, whiteness – as the machine in which a huge portion of the humanity has become entangled in spite of itself – will end up claiming us. As a result of whiteness having claimed us; as a result of having let ourselves be possessed by it in the manner of an evil spirit, we will inflict upon ourselves injuries of which whiteness, at its most ferocious, would scarcely have been capable. Indeed for whiteness to properly operate as the destructive force it is in the material sphere, it needs to capture its victim’s imagination and turn it into a poison well of hatred. For victims of white racism to hold on to the things that truly matter, they must incessantly fight against the kind of hatred which never fails to destroy, in the first instance, the person ~~man or woman~~ who hates while leaving the structure of whiteness itself intact. As a poisonous fiction that passes for a fact, whiteness seeks to institutionalize itself as an event by any means necessary. This it does by colonizing the entire realms of desire and of the imagination. To demythologize whiteness, it will not be enough to force “bad whites” into silence or into confessing guilt and/or complicity. This is too cheap. To puncture and deflate the fictions of whiteness will require an entirely different regime of desire, new approaches in the constitution of material, aesthetic and symbolic capital, another discourse on value, on what matters and why. The demythologization of whiteness also requires that we develop a more complex understanding of South African versions of whiteness here and now. This is the only country on Earth in which a revolution took place which resulted in not one single former oppressor losing anything. In order to keep its privileges intact in the post-1994 era, South African whiteness has sought to intensify its capacity to invest in what we should call the resources of the offshore. It has attempted to fence itself off, to re-maximize its privileges through self-enclaving and the logics of privatization. These logics of offshoring and self-enclaving are typical of this neoliberal age.

### Method---1NC

#### Do the solvency and method debate here:

#### 1---presumption. Challenging capital at the “level of subjectivity” is not resistance.

Reed 16, PhD, Professor of Political Science @ Penn (Adolph, “Splendors and Miseries of the Antiracist “Left”,” <http://nonsite.org/editorial/splendors-and-miseries-of-the-antiracist-left-2>)

More than a decade and a half ago I criticized similar formulations of a notion of “infrapolitics,” understood as the domain of pre-political acts of everyday “resistance” undertaken by subordinated populations, which was then all the rage in cultural studies programs. Proponents of the political importance of this domain insisted that, because insurgent movements emerge within such cultures of quotidian resistance, a) examining them could help in understanding the processes through which insurgencies develop and/or b) they therefore ought to be considered as expressions of an insurgent politics themselves. Several factors accounted for the popularity of that version of the argument, which mainly had to do to with the political economy of academic life, including the self-propulsion of academic trendiness and the atrophy of the left outside the academy, which encouraged flights into fantasy for the sake of optimism. The infrapolitics idea also resonated with the substantive but generally unadmitted group essentialism underlying claims that esoteric, insider knowledge is necessary to decipher the “hidden transcripts” of the subordinate populations; put more bluntly, elevating infrapolitics to the domain on which the oppressed express their politics most authentically increased its interpreters’ academic capital.8 I discussed those factors in my critique. However, the point in that argument most pertinent for evaluating Birch and Heideman’s confidence that the contradictions they acknowledge in BLM should be seen only as growing pains of a “new movement” is the following: At best, those who romanticize “everyday resistance” or “cultural politics” read the evolution of political movements teleologically; they presume that those conditions necessarily, or even typically, lead to political action. They don’t. Not any more than the presence of carbon and water necessarily leads to the evolution of Homo sapiens. Think about it: infrapolitics is ubiquitous, developed political movements are rare.9 I assume that Trotskyists of their stripe still call themselves Marxists; if so, theirs is a Marxism that has more in common with geometry texts and the Baltimore Catechism than with open-ended historical materialist analysis. Indeed, the catechistic disposition is the spirit animating their snarky observation that it is “telling” – though they never indicate what it would tell if the charge were correct — that I supposedly “never engage” with any of the “massive” evidence that racial discrimination persists against black Americans. I have never denied the persistence of racial discrimination and therefore have no idea what they mean by “engage with.” I assume that what they want is for me to recite a litany of abuses or violations, doing the Confiteor at the same time, whether or not doing so would contribute to understanding or rectifying anything. I don’t have to testify to my knowledge of the existence of racial discrimination. I’ve dealt with being on the receiving end of it all my life.10 Moreover, racial discrimination and racial disparity are not the same thing. The latter does not automatically result from the former. And discrimination is often not necessary for, or even implicated in, reproduction of disparities. This is a key argument that Merlin Chowkanyun and I develop in our critique of the discourse of racial disparity.11 We do not deny the existence of racial disparities. We do argue that “racism,” accompanied by whatever adjectives – institutional, structural, postracial, etc.12 — is often not helpful for understanding the genesis of those disparities, how they are reproduced, or how to address them in policy interventions. Instead of engaging with that argument Birch and Heideman resort to baseless observations such as their claim that I have “always prided [myself] on being ahead of the curve.” This personal characterization is a bizarre alternative to critical argument about what I actually contend. And, of course, this is yet another area in which Birch and Heideman have no idea what they’re talking about. They don’t know me or for that matter anything about me that’s not a matter of public record, in what I’ve written for public consumption. Like much in their essay, this is an instance of uninformed proclamation of what they would like to be true to fit the a priori commitments of their dogma, which, by the way, is rather surprisingly like liberal individualism in the extent to which it hinges on speculation regarding individuals’ motives rather than examination of patterned social relations and processes. Haste to proclaim the magical ship’s pending arrival on the coastline is more an effusion of True Belief – and that’s the generous characterization — than sober analysis. And the magical predictions don’t require evidence of oppositional agency of any sort. Many in the Jacobin audience may be too young to recall how ventriloquy of the kind that Birch and Heideman and others now project onto BLM demonstrations supported proclamations of grand, transformative potential that some ersatz leftists assigned to the 1995 Million Man March and then to the 1999 Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations. More, however, should be able to remember the tsunami of almost clinically naïve pronouncements in 2008 and 2009 that the financial crash had either put neoliberalism on its deathbed or perhaps already killed it. For those who don’t recall that moment, Merlin Chowkwanyun’s fine critical assessment should be a bracing corrective.13 The authors also construct straw men and blatantly misrepresent arguments to provide themselves with easy targets. They adduce the fact that BLM has generated a program as a counter to my contention that that fact is not especially meaningful. They do so, of course, without fully addressing my actual argument: Some, perhaps many, of the items propounded in the initial 10 Point Plan are fine as a statement of reforms that could make things better in the area of criminal justice policy and practice. Many, if not most, of those assembled under the rubric ‘Vision for Black Lives’ are empty sloganeering and politically wrongheaded and/or unattainable and counterproductive. However, the problem is not a shortage of potentially effective reforms that could be implemented. The problem is much more a political and strategic one. And the focus on racial disparity both obscures the nature and extent of the strategic challenges we face and…undercuts our ability to mount a potentially effective challenge (italics added).14 I noted as well that, reminiscent of the trajectory of Black Power, a similar moment of affectively evocative political expression, the programs articulated in the name of BLM came primarily as responses to criticisms that it lacked a program. Their relation to the actual political practice of those who purport to represent the brand – and how else are we to understand the reality beneath the fatuous justifications offered by Garza and others as to why it’s important to honor the hashtag and its originators? — is not at all clear. The notion that having a program is eo ipso an indication of being “part of a broader radicalization around issue [sic] of class and inequality” is reasonable only within the sectarian universe of resolutionary socialists15 who measure one another’s significance by whether or not they publish newspapers or have good websites. Birch and Heideman and I apparently talk past each other regarding whether BLM should be seen as a serious political movement. Where one comes down on that question depends on how one understands what counts as a movement. I have no idea what their criteria are; I do know that, as public relations engineering has become increasingly prominent as an alternative to slow, careful organizing and constituency building, the label has been thrown around ever more promiscuously. When I refer to a political movement, as I’ve stressed for many years,16 I mean a relatively durable social and political force with a demonstrated capacity to mobilize resources and clearly defined constituencies – including actual people who have names and addresses – to advance programs and agendas with the goal of altering public policy and/or power relations. I don’t see how BLM qualifies by that standard. Activism undertaken under that name has contributed significantly to focusing public attention on patterns of police abuse and broader miscarriages of justice in the criminal justice system. However, from the perspective I indicate, extrapolations from that fact to broader claims that BLM is a substantial political movement are hyperbolic or aspirational. Birch and Heideman may operate with a different understanding of what constitutes a political movement. I assume they do because of their insistence that BLM is one, but they don’t address that question. They seem to accept proclamation by the self-appointed spokespersons – including those who claim not to be spokespersons while obviously adopting that role – press releases, demonstrations and other staged events in the mass-mediated (including social media) pageantry of protest as adequate evidence. In any event, I thought I had also made clear that the principal reason I, in their view, “refuse to engage even with the aspects” of the BLM current that the authors presume to be “in sync with” my politics and am not interested in helping to “advance a class perspective within the movement” is that my judgment is that what passes under the rubric BLM is primarily a mélange of episodic actions and performances and is not a coherent political movement. I know the response to that skepticism is assertion of BLM’s inner potentiality, which supporters contend is visible through a combination of esoteric interpretation and Faith and which skeptics are too jaundiced or biased to see – i.e., the cargo-cult pathology. Birch and Heideman say as much themselves: It is of course true that “Black Lives Matter” is shorthand for a variety of organizing efforts, whose goals can sometimes be opaque. The protests of the past two years are hardly the first to focus on questions of police violence or racism. And like many movements today, Black Lives Matter suffers from chronic volatility and organizational weakness.17 Thus even they acknowledge that, as Cedric Johnson indicates in a forthcoming article, who and what BLM is are in no way clear. The contemporary “movement for black lives” is a diverse phenomenon – horizontal, decentralized, and driven by organizations like #BlackLivesMatter, the Dream Defenders, the Black Youth Project 100, Assata’s Daughters, Freedom, Inc., Southerners on New Ground, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, as well as dozens of other youth groups, black student unions and community-based organizations. Contemporary protests have found broad support among liberals, black nationalists, socialists, clergy, politicians, civil liberties advocates, and urbanites…Of course, there are different ideological tendencies operating within the movement for black lives. Broad acceptance of black ethnic politics, however, facilitates the very brokerage politics that many activists dislike about older black civil rights organizations. The spats between black lives matter’s founders and those who sought to use the hashtag without their permission reflected a proprietary sensibility, more suited to product branding and entrepreneurship than popular social struggle. Despite the various allusions to class and insistence by some supporters that there is a class-politics at the heart of black lives matter activism, the rapture of “unapologetic blackness” and the ethnic politics that expression implies will continue to lead away from the kind of political work that is needed to end the policing crisis.18 Comparing BLM’s commitment to the romantic racialism of the National Black Convention movement and following its trajectory through the 1972 Gary Convention, which rested on a similar commitment to a romantic racialism, Johnson contends: If the Gary Convention is the model here, then what we might expect is the fracturing of the movement into different brokerage camps, each claiming to represent the “black community” more effectively than the other, and more capable of amassing the necessary counterpower that might be politically impactful. One signpost of this possible outcome is the growing fissure among activists over school privatization and futile attempts to reconcile those differences with romantic calls to black unity…Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrice Cullors gives a sense of this problem, when she says that she will continue to work with black neoliberals because of their common bond as blacks. “That I don’t agree with neoliberalism doesn’t encourage me to launch an online assault against those who do. We can, in fact, agree to disagree. We can have healthy debate. We can show up for one another as Black folks inside of this movement in ways that don’t isolate, terrorize, and shame people – something I’ve experienced first hand.” She mistakes the core basis of political life, however. Sustained political work is held together by shared historical interests, especially those that connect to our daily lives and felt needs, not sentimental “ties of blood.”19 To what, then, are Birch and Heideman referring when they declare BLM’s potential? Which strains are the real or even the really real expressions of the tendency’s radical anti-capitalist telos? The answer, steeped in circular reasoning, is the ones that Birch and Heideman want to believe are consistent with their transhistorical, preformationist notions of how movements grow. This is not simply a matter of stipulating different criteria for assigning the label “political movement.” BLM’s amorphousness reflects and enables another tiresome political pathology that has become increasingly common in an era when an actually insurgent left is so remote from living memory and cargo-cult politics is so prominent. Activists, typically without visible institutional connections, stage more or less flamboyant events that often evoke nostalgic associations with earlier insurgencies – civil rights/Black Power demonstrations, sit-ins, militant “street action,” even purely rhetorical appropriation of the phrase “general strike” as a reference that sounds appealingly militant, totally disconnected from any concrete practice. Prior to BLM, Occupy and, more cynically, the Tea Party were the most highly publicized illustrations of this phenomenon, which is similar to an ad agency approach to movement-building. The point of these performances is to project simulacra of popular insurgency, which then become justification for issuing press statements and manifestos and, depending on the mood of the moment and skills of the operators, being recognized as spokespersons for the fictive movement. In the public interest world such groups are described as “astro-turf,” as contrasted to grassroots. Proliferation of this Kabuki theater politics among leftists stems in part from the dialectic of desperation and wishful thinking that underlies the cargo-cult tendency; it is commonly driven by an understandable sense of urgency that the dangers facing us are so grave as to require some immediate action in response. That dialectic encourages immediatist fantasies as well as tendencies to define the direct goal of political action as exposing, or bearing witness against, injustice. Occupy, for instance, proceeded from premises at least overlapping a tendency I have described as the Myth of the Spark,20 the notion that single events or dramatic acts can in themselves galvanize mass mobilization. That was also the dream that too many enthusiasts crafted for themselves about the Sanders campaign. Fetishization of the power of social media feeds the fantasy that movement-building can be automatic and instantaneous. That disposition is exacerbated in a context in which organizing as a project of deepening and broadening an actual base through building solidaristic relationships around shared interests is not part of an activistist culture in which radicalism is more posture and performance than strategic pursuit of a program.21 The strains of Trotskyism and anarchism popular in some activist quarters are drawn to spontaneist and voluntarist approaches to politics, which fit comfortably as well with the logic of insta-celebrity generated through Potemkin internet and social media campaigns. From that perspective, one of the most revealing and chilling features of the BLM phenomenon has been the unself-conscious clarity with which Alicia Garza and other of its prominent personalities represent, and no doubt genuinely understand, crafting and projecting their individual personae as identical with advancing political objectives.22 The potential for opportunism is great because the inertial material imperatives impel in that direction and unrestrained because the “movement” has no concrete constituency to which its spokespeople are accountable. What we get instead are shopworn calls to distinguish the really authentic BLM voices – i.e., what DeRay McKesson was until he wasn’t – from the fakers and hustlers and those who are genuinely grassroots from those who aren’t. So Birch and Heideman finger McKesson as epitomizing a “black professional class selling a desiccated form of opposition to racism as radical politics.” What distinguishes this “desiccated form of opposition to racism” from the good, radical anti-racism they insist is out there? The only clue we have is that McKesson embodies the former. Yet a year ago he embodied the latter! This kind of political differentiation grounded on claims to racial authenticity rehearses the product cycle in the hip-hop industry in the 1990s, in which an act started out packaged as authentic or hardcore, attained success and became crossover and thence became a target against which those that follow proclaim their own real authenticity. This sort of politics is also, as we’ve seen at least since Black Power, a hustler’s paradise. And all the millennial versions of New Age-y bullshit about leaderlessness and structurelessness obscure the fact that absence of organizational mechanisms of accountability enable anyone to say anything, or deny anything said, in the name of the “movement.” Overestimation of the political significance of protest and a related, all too familiar problem of confusing militancy and radicalism contribute to exaggerating the significance of eruptions like those associated with BLM. Militancy is a posture; radicalism is linked to program for social transformation, and protests do not necessarily challenge power relations at all. In some ways, as political scientists have pointed out for generations, they can validate existing power relations insofar as they appeal to established authority to accommodate their demands and pursue more effective incorporation into extant governing coalitions.23 Although they are so commonplace now that most people no doubt rehearse them unreflectively, presumptions that protest actions and militant postures are intrinsically radical or follow a natural trajectory leading them toward radicalism depend on the nostalgic wishful thinking and forms of fallacious reasoning I’ve already discussed.

#### 2---double-bind. Either:

#### a---the aff functionally fiats a nationwide revolution against debt---the former is a voting issue because it enables them to weigh hundreds of millions of individuals changing their minds; the latter is insolvent because single people can’t effectively refuse debt.

#### b---it advocates individual debt refusal that doesn’t need to be accompanied by broader change---that fails because individuals can’t effectively refuse debt

#### 3---refusing debt leads to elite backlash and repression.

Wright 17, \*Erik Olin Wright, Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA. Director of A. E. Havens Center for Social Justice, University of Wisconsin-Madison, (2017, “How to be an Anti-capitalist for the 21st Century”, https://www.redalyc.org/journal/124/12452111002/html/)

Smashing

This is the classic strategic logic of revolutionaries. The rationale goes something like this:

The system is rotten. All efforts to make life tolerable within capitalism will eventually fail. From time to time small reforms that improve the lives of people may be possible when popular forces are strong, but such improvements will always be fragile, vulnerable to attack and reversible. Ultimately it is an illusion that capitalism can be rendered a benign social order in which ordinary people can live flourishing, meaningful lives. At its core, capitalism is unreformable. The only hope is to destroy it, sweep away the rubble and then build an alternative. As the closing words of the early twentieth century song Solidarity Forever proclaim, “We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.” The full realization of the emancipatory alternative may be gradual, but the necessary condition for such a gradual transition is a ruptural break in the existing system of power.

But how to do this? How is it possible for anti-capitalist forces to amass sufficient power to destroy capitalism and replace it with a better alternative? This is indeed a daunting task, for the power of dominant classes that makes reform an illusion also blocks the revolutionary goal of a rupture in the system. Anti-capitalist revolutionary theory, informed by the writings of Marx and extended by Lenin, Gramsci and others, offered an attractive argument about how this could take place:

While it is true that much of the time capitalism seems unassailable, it is also a deeply contradictory system, prone to disruptions and crises. Sometimes those crises reach an intensity which makes the system as a whole fragile, vulnerable to challenge. In the strongest versions of the theory, there are even underlying tendencies in the “laws of motion” of capitalism for the intensity of such system-weakening crises to increase over time, so that in the long-term capitalism becomes unsustainable; it destroys its own conditions of existence. But even if there is no systematic tendency for crises to become ever-worse, what can be predicted is that periodically there will be intense capitalist economic crises in which the system becomes vulnerable and ruptures become possible. The problem for a revolutionary party, therefore, is to be in a position to take advantage of the opportunity created by such system-level crises to lead a mass mobilization to seize state power, either through elections or through an insurrectionary overthrow of the existing regime. Once in control of the state, the first task is to rapidly refashion the state itself to make it a suitable weapon of ruptural transformation, and then use that power to repress the opposition of the dominant classes and their allies, dismantle the pivotal power structures of capitalism, and build the necessary institutions for the long-term development of an alternative economic system.

In the 20th century, various versions of this general line of reasoning animated the imagination of revolutionaries around the world. Revolutionary Marxism infused struggles with hope and optimism, for it not only provided a potent indictment of the world as it existed, but also provided a plausible scenario for how an emancipatory alternative could be realized. This gave people courage, sustaining the belief that they were on the side of history and that the enormous commitment and sacrifices they were called on to make in their struggles against capitalism had real prospects of eventually succeeding. And sometimes, if rarely, such struggles did culminate in the revolutionary seizure of state power.

The results of such revolutionary seizures of power, however, were never the creation of a democratic, egalitarian, emancipatory alternative to capitalism. While revolutions in the name of socialism and communism did demonstrate that it was possible “to build a new world from the ashes of the old,” and in certain specific ways they may have improved the material conditions of life of most people for a period of time, the evidence of the heroic attempts at rupture in the 20th century is that they do not produce the kind of new world envisioned in revolutionary ideology. It is one thing to burn down old institutions and social structures; it is quite another to build emancipatory new institutions from the ashes.

Why the revolutions of the 20th century never resulted in robust, sustainable human emancipation is, of course, a hotly debated matter. Some people argue that this was just because of the historically specific, unfavorable circumstances of the attempts at system-wide ruptures. Revolutions occurred in economically backward societies, surrounded by powerful enemies. Some argue it was because of strategic errors of the leadership of those revolutions. Others indict the motives of leadership: the leaders that triumphed in the course of these revolutions were motivated by desires for status and power rather than the empowerment and wellbeing of the masses. And still others argue that failure is intrinsic to any attempt at radical rupture in a social system. There are too many moving parts, too much complexity and too many unintended consequences. As a result, attempts at system-rupture will inevitably tend to unravel into such chaos that revolutionary elites, regardless of their motives, will be compelled to resort to pervasive violence and repression to sustain social order. Such violence, in turn, destroys the possibility for a genuinely democratic, participatory process of building a new society.

#### 4---Refusal of debt is a failed strategy – incremental challenges are key

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While the refusal of the other is locked into liberal/neoliberal history, I believe that this vision of asociality is entirely unsustainable and that the phobic reaction to and rejection of the basic sociological truth that we find in the work of, for example, Gilbert Simondon, who wrote about trans-individualism, is what produces the procession of spectres that haunt contemporary capitalism with their complaints about injustice, misery, and injury (Combes, 2012). From the neoliberal perspective, there is no social relation, but only economic exchange that limits responsibility to contractual obligation, but the sociological truth the spectres reveal is that the human condition is to be responsible because the individual is founded on otherness in the present, born in the world made by the others of the past, and can only make a future on the basis of cooperation with other people who share the same vision of how the world might change. In this way, debt is irreducible, and this is essentially what Derrida (1994) explains in his Spectres of Marx—the spectre demands responsibility, and a recognition of indebtedness, that is horrific from the point of view of the neoliberal subject who learns that debt is somehow evil, but is in truth representative of the possibility of a space of freedom beyond the capitalist injunction to live out a lonely life in suffocating proximity to others who are similarly phobic about interdependence. Against Nietzsche’s theory of debt, which he sets out in his On the Genealogy of Morals (2008), explaining that essential indebtedness is the philosophy of the weak, the sociological vision of debt that the spectre communicates carries a message concerned with the necessity of humility born in the very real limitation of the self-identical individual in those others who sustain its existence. It is, of course, precisely this humility which is lost in contemporary global capitalism that individualises everybody, with the effect that it is possible to fortify Europe in the face of migrants on the run from destroyed lands and defend the necessity of severe austerity in the context of an economic system that supports exorbitant luxury. When neoliberal ideology rejects the connection, or responsibility, between self and other, the spectre returns in order to insist upon the irreducibility of the social relation. This is why the spectre is perhaps the key figure of early 21st-century sociology. In the wake of the end of history, and the globalisation of capitalism, the other is nowhere. In this situation there is no hope for self or other because there is no social situation open to change. As Adorno and Horkheimer (1997) note in their theory of ghosts, it is in these hopeless times when ghosts appear. In their view the spectre represents destroyed hope and in this respect keeps possibility alive post-mortem. According to Freud (2003c), the fear of ghosts, the fear of the dead who have not been able to pass over but remain in our world, is symbolic of the inability to internalise trauma. He thought that ghosts will continue to haunt the living until psychoanalysis works through the hard core of trauma which would allow the spectre to pass over to the other side. While we can read this therapeutic vision conservatively, so that spectres pass over and very little changes, it is also possible to take a more radical interpretation of what Laurence Rickels (2011) calls unmourning, or the inability to enable the ghost to leave the world of the living, and suggest that the spectral symbol of the need to address injustice, misery, and despair will only leave the scene when its conditions have been met. From this point of view, the spectre becomes a figure of utopian possibility and potential transformation, which is exactly what the sociologist of haunting Avery Gordon (2008) explains in her Ghostly Matters. For Gordon the spectre represents the possibility of enchantment, the possibility of hope, in a godless, disenchanted world where hopelessness has become the norm. In his Specters of Marx (1994), Derrida argues that the spectre represents a new atheological theology and that spiritless capitalism is fated to produce ghosts by virtue of the phantom objectivity of the commodity that fascinates the consumer. In this way Derrida shows how the pinnacle of late capitalist estrangement is characterised by the reflexive production of spectres. Against this neo-Gothic thesis one might claim that the hyper-visibility of our mediated world screens out the possibility of haunting, but what the works of Jeffrey Sconce (2000), Laurence Rickels (2011), and Stefan Andriopoulos (2013) show is that media is, and has always been, the space of modern and postmodern haunting. While there is a sense in which the postmodern theory of the ghostly concerns the production of a phantasmatic world where reality itself breaks down before universal simulation where ethics no longer make sense, my view is that the spectre of sociology has a very clear ethical, political function concerned with giving voice to the other who came before, must live in misery today, survive the catastrophe of the cancelled future, and centrally demand that the neoliberal individual recognises his claims on the basis of a social relation which is absolutely irreducible. In this respect it may be possible to supplement Derrida’s (1994) reference to Hamlet’s spectre with the case of Dickens’ (2003) Jacob Marley and the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future, who show the story’s famous capitalist miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, the horror of the destroyed lives of Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim and force him to face up to his responsibility for their situation. While Scrooge rejects Christmas in the name of the love of money, Marley’s ghost confronts him with his own traumatic past and shows him his own miserable end in order to show him that the social relation is irreducible and that generosity and indebtedness are essential human attributes necessary for survival. Thus Marley shows Scrooge what happens when we lose these human qualities and abandon each other for money—we live and die in misery. In much the same way that Dickens wrote about the failure of the spirit of generosity in his A Christmas Carol in 1843, which was coincidentally the same decade in which Marx and Engels published The Communist Manifesto, Derrida’s student and collaborator, Bernard Stiegler (2011, 2012, 2014) explores the failure of belief and spirit in contemporary capitalism and suggests that the postmodern, neoliberal, global economy has similarly transformed into a kind of hopeless, nihilistic machine for the production of profit. That is to say that while Dickens’ ghost emerges to critique Scrooge’s cruel and desperate vision of Victorian capitalism, Stiegler suggests that a similar spectralisation is necessary today in order to save postmodern society from economic destruction. Against Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2007), who suggested that the 1960s led to the emergence of a new individualistic spirit of capitalism which could provide people with hope in personal freedom and self-realisation, Stiegler suggests that this turn to what we might call hyper-individualism has led to the creation of the kind of miserable society Dickens imagines and Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim endure—the individual is everything and there is no room for generosity or a recognition of the sociality that makes people human. Indeed, there is no social space beyond the space of the miserable economic transaction. As a result, compassion is impossible, which Scrooge explains in his famous refusal of sympathy—‘Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?’—and the other is simply left to perish. This is the misery of capitalism, which Dickens painted in the 1840s, Marx and Engels imagined in the same period, and Bernard Stiegler explains in his works on contemporary disbelief and discredit. After the period of Keynesian state management between the horrors of Victorian laissez-faire and its rebirth in the form of neoliberal economic governmentality, Stiegler (2012) shows how the horror remains the same and that we must return to the question of fundamental human value once more. In this respect the message of the spectre of sociology, which reminds the individual of his irreducible responsibility for the other who must live and die in misery, is very similar to the message Marley’s ghost brought to Scrooge, who was confronted with destroyed lives and compelled to change his ways in order to produce a better world where responsibility, compassion, and sympathy form the basis of a sociological ethic of care. As a result it is possible to see that the utopianism of the spectre of sociology revolves around a rejection of the restricted economics of neoliberal individualism in the name of a vision of social relations where human value trumps the right to private property. Given this vision, the future the spectre conjures contains the possibility of a form of globalisation for itself, rather than in itself, where an integrated, sociological world organised around human value, rationality, and a recognition of a communistic ethic where I am necessarily bound to the other supersedes the systemic stupidity of the godless theodicy of neoliberal capitalism. However, the life of the red-green utopian fantasy of the spectre, where there is a recognition of the irreducible interdependence of self, other, world, and earth, is absolutely reliant on sociology and its idea of the social relation that remains beyond the pale in neoliberal society where the individual is the primary unit and his interactions with others are reducible to base, instrumental, economic transactions. Thus the radical nature of sociology resides in its necessary resistance to this weak vision of the social, and its critical, utopian potential is founded upon its core claim that ensures its marginality in the neoliberal universe that cannot recognise social interaction beyond economics. As a result sociology becomes a spectral form of knowledge concerned with the spectre of the social relation screened out by the hyper-rationality of neoliberal capitalism, where the individual is everything. While neoliberal ideology must oppose sociological truth because the ideas of irreducible relationality, trans-individualism, and absolute responsibility for others destroy the fantasy of the self-reliant, rugged individual and conjure the horror story of totalitarianism in its opposition to the unplanned society, from the sociological point of view, the militarised individualism of late capitalism suggests dystopia and catastrophe because there is no human future under conditions of systemic stupidity. These are the coordinates of the political struggle of the spectre of sociology, and the dystopian fantasy of the catastrophic future should not be dismissed in the name of realism, because the assumption of the worst opens up a space of utopian possibility simply because it becomes necessary to imagine change (Dupuy, 2014). Of course, neoliberal capitalism is complicit in the production of the vision of the late capitalist dystopia and the spectres that speak about the need for some other way, because its rejection of social responsibility condemns ever more people to live in poverty, misery, and despair.

#### 5---The 1AC is merely intellectual radicalism that fails to create revolution

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Misuse of ‘revolution’ Radical dreams of freedom are uncompromising, totalising and demand the complete transformation of the social, political and economic order. For radicals the only solution is revolution, in order to ‘overturn’ and ‘destroy’ the existing system.21 But Malcolm warned that ‘many of our people are using this word “revolution” loosely’,22 lightly embracing radical rhetoric without truly taking on board revolutionary practice. This critique definitely applies to Black politics and theory, where to be radical or revolutionary appears to mean adopting a position that differs somewhat from the norm. Part of the misuse of the term revolution is closely tied to the idea that change must come from within before it can lead to social transformation. For cultural nationalists that is the spiritual and cultural transformation; in academia we focus on the ideas, the knowledge to produce change. While acknowledging that Cesaire’s negritude movement was ‘never intended to be a road map or a blueprint for revolution’, Kelley contends that his classic work Discourse on Colonialism was ‘poetry and therefore revolt’. He goes further to argue that the book was an ‘act of insurrection … a hand grenade thrown with deadly accuracy, clearing the field so that we might write a new history with what’s left standing’.23 Cesaire is the perfect figure to explain the limits of intellectual radicalism. As we explored in Chapter 3, his work was hugely influential, with Fanon crediting him for transforming how Black subjects of colonialism saw themselves. But we also discussed how Cesaire was a French republican to the core, who did not see liberation from France as being desirable. Negritude was about claiming Black personhood in order to integrate more equally into the Western ideal. There is nothing radical or revolutionary about the project. Just because it went against the prevailing ideas of the time (that Black people were inferior) that does not make it radical. To judge the radical nature of an argument we have to engage in the ‘new history’ that it writes, not just its condemnation of the old one. To be revolutionary also means going beyond deconstructing the present and offering abstract visions of a different future. This clearly applies to a range of post-structural theoretical reminiscences on society that even if they were written intelligibly would make little sense. In terms of Black radicalism the more common misuse of revolutionary relates to giving too much power to music and popular culture. Moten argues that ‘Black radicalism is (like) music. The broken circle demands a new analytic (way of listening to the music)’.24 He spends a lot of time making the argument that Black music with its different arrangements, soulful cries and boundary-breaking forms of expression represent the ‘aesthetics’ of Black radicalism. Kelley speaks of the ‘revolutionary nature of the blues’,25 and the power of the surreal in transforming our vision for reality. A lot of emphasis is placed on this work in the idea of desire, fantasy and soul being alternative concepts to build our understanding on rather than European ideas of rationality. To be a blues people is to embody a different form of being, and can perhaps lead to a revolutionary transformation of society based on ‘love and creativity’.26 There’s certainly something romantic about the idea of the artists, writers, poets and musicians being the revolutionary vanguard, painting a new vision for the future and calling us to its tune. However, in reality this is just an intellectual version of cultural nationalism. We know society is corrupt but instead of trying to overthrow it we seek solace in the beauty that has been created in the hideous. We can affirm ourselves by getting lost in the sorrow songs, fiction and poetry or watching the achingly beautiful choreography of the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre. But none of this culture, no matter how beautiful or genre defying, is revolutionary. It does not pave the way for revolution, or even in itself open up possibilities. Culture is always a product of the political moment. Slavery and marronage make the blues; the New Negro movement shapes the Harlem Renaissance; Pan-Africanism calls into existence Afro-beat; Rastafari and Garveyism produce Reggae; and Black Power creates the Black Arts movement. Even the lack of cohesive Black political movements can be traced to the commercialisation and gangstaisation of Hip Hop. In a memorable quote from the James Baldwin documentary I am Not Your Negro, he explains that he was a ‘witness’ to the political events that shaped his work. The film is based on a book he was writing about Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers. Unlike those three he was not a leader in any organisation, and he did not pay with his life for his commitment. Baldwin was on the side-lines, linked in but not fully part of the movements. This is not to belittle or downplay Baldwin’s role, but to recognise it. Artists document the political moment, they do not create it. It is a vital role, but not a revolutionary one.

#### 6---They draw the wrong inference from the flux of blackness---it can change, which proves that it is a racial formation that movements and state engagement can overcome; Moten agrees

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Simone Browne points out that we have to grapple with the ontological conditions of blackness in order to develop a theory of racializing surveillance. 76 I align myself with Browne and further suggest that the same holds true regarding any resistance to racializing surveillance (e.g. copwatching). It is not enough, however, to situate blackness in relation to ontology. The Western conceptualization of being falls short when it comes to blackness – and thus we need new philosophical idioms and categories which are not contingent on racist assumptions (in a “decolonialization of the epistemic”).77 On the following pages I argue for a paraontological framing of black resistance/being in the vein of Black Optimism. It is mainly an abstract discussion serving to lay a theoretical foundation for the subsequent chapters. An important first distinction to make is that between blackness and the lived experience of being (considered) black. It has been suggested by Frantz Fanon, through Sylvia Wynter, that blackness can be seen as an objective fact – that is, a separate entity from any multitude of black subjectivities.78 We can think about it the way any culture tend to be framed through a post-modern lens; as something constantly in flux but nevertheless real.79 For Rinaldo Walcott blackness can be seen as a sign “that carries with it particular histories of resistance and domination” – “never closed and always under contestation.”80 From such an outset you can infer the general postulate that not all persons who are deemed black by society are necessarily part of (the culture of) blackness. Blackness is something you take active part in (shaping), but the lines between signifier and signified are blurred, since blackness is both “identity and culture, history and present […].”81 The lived experience of blackness actualizes the imposition of race onto black bodies and lives.82 “[O]ne’s being is experienced through others,” as Browne describes it.83 This is echoed in Sara Ahmed, who claims that “racism ensures that the black gaze returns to the black body, which is not a loving return but rather follows the line of the white hostile gaze.”84 The phenomenon Ahmed describes is arguably the same phenomenon which led Fanon to famously say that his black body was reduced to “an object among other object.”85 At this juncture, the ontology of blackness intersects the constitutive forces which racializes the black body, as Ahmed shows: The alignment of race and space are crucial to how they materialize as givens, as if each “extends” the other. In other words, while “the other side of the world” is associated with “racial otherness,” racial others become associated with “the other side of the world.” They come to embody distance. The embodiment of distance is what makes whiteness “proximate,” as the “starting point” for orientation.86 Consequently, blackness is not only constructed as the negation of ontology through a hierarchical episteme – but its ontological status is also reified and veiled as something natural by the “alignment of race and space.”87 Thus, although separate, blackness and black bodies are intimately related to each other. By extension, I assert that the black person should have an ethical interpretative prerogative with regards to the lived experience and phenomenological aspects of blackness – a reason why I so frequently quote participants in the field study. However, the statements of participants must be read critically against each other, and in relation to scholars such as Ahmed. One participant alone cannot represent the overarching complexity of blackness. Nor should they be forced to do so, or construed as doing so.88 I thus align myself with Harney and Moten, who states that blackness “must be understood in its ontological difference from black people who are, nevertheless, (under)privileged insofar as they are given (to) an understanding of it.”89

3.1. Ontology as Resistance

The paraontological hinges on the notion that blackness comes prior to governance.90 In other words, that blackness is not a response to regulative power, but rather the other way around: “Power is a response to the uncontainable priority of blackness.”91 To be clear, we can think of the slave trader as imposing a regulatory violence seeking to “ensnare” an already prior freedom.92 To Harney and Moten, this prior freedom is integral to blackness, as an “anoriginary drive” – which translates to something like an immanent force of resistance or insubordination, in my reading.93 The important point at this stage is that blackness is constitutive; “neither an aberration nor an effect of power.”94 What emerges from this line of thinking is [not only that] blackness is ontologically prior to the logistic and regulative power that is supposed to have brought it into existence but that blackness is prior to ontology; or, in a slight variation of what [Nahum Dimitri] Chandler would say, blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology, that it is ontology’s anti- and antefoundation, ontology’s underground, the irreparable disturbance of ontology’s time and space.95 In other words, the paraontological entails not only that blackness is anterior to ontology, but also that this anteriority (“anti- and ante-foundation” in Moten) displaces ontology and inhabits an “underground” position – or the “undercommons” – from which resistance can take shape.96 According to Moten, the “undercommons” must withdraw from the framework posed by ontology and “refuse subjection to ontology’s sanction against the very idea of black subjectivity.”97 By extension, frami ng the distinction between blackness and black people through a paraontological lens lets us separate blackness from the question of (Western ontological) being altogether.98 Drawing from Moten, this leads David Kline to claim that “[b]lackness is a counter-force to ontology itself [italicized in original].” 99

3.2. Anteriority and Activism

This subchapter is an extension of the discussion above, but it is also an attempt to specifically highlight aspects of paraontology which can be productive for a discussion in relation to the field study. An important first step is to delineate the paraontological as separate from the politico-ontological, in order to avoid a misreading. In contrast to the politico-ontological, the paraontological namely designates a mode of being which is “always [by definition] already resisting the imposing logic of (political) ontology.”100 In other words, by being prior to ontology it conjoins with utopian visions to establish a political position outside of ontology altogether.101 In the vein of Black Optimism, Moten sees blackness as “not reducible to its social costs; [but] also manifest in a set of benefits and responsibilities.” 102 There is always a surplus to the suppression of blackness; or, “lines of flight” to speak with Deleuze.103 There is an anoriginary drive whose fateful internal difference (as opposed to fatal flaw) is that it brings regulation into existence, into a history irregularly punctuated by transformations that drive imposes upon regulation. Those transformative impositions show up for us now as compensation and surplus: as the payment of a massive and incalculable debt by the ones who not only never promised it […].104 To be clear, the “transformative impositions” Moten refers to could be read as, for instance, impositions on lawmaking brought about by the civil rights movement – which today creates a “surplus” and spaces for resistance. However, such “transformative impositions” do not necessarily have to occur in a formal way, changing dominant structures of society (e.g. laws); these impositions are the effect of the “anoriginary drive” and could take place on a micropolitical scale or outside the sovereign state itself (e.g. black nationalism).105 The ontological foundation in and of “Man” circumscribes blackness into negation. In Moten’s words, “[t]he givenness and substantiveness of transcendental subjectivity is assured by a relative nothingness.”106 Moten’s use of “nothingness” corresponds to a famous passage in Frantz Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks: I feel my soul as vast as the world, truly a soul as deep as the deepest of rivers; my chest has the power to expand to infinity. I was made to give and they prescribe for me the humility of the cripple. When I opened my eyes yesterday I saw the sky in total revulsion. I tried to get up but eviscerated silence surged toward me with paralyzed wings. Not responsible for my acts, at the crossroads between Nothingness and Infinity, I began to weep.107 We could read Fanon’s first sentence as something closely related to Moten’s anorginary drive; a freedom which is then “crippled” by external forces. This is also in line with Nana Adusei-Poku, who further suggests that the lived experience of blackness can recode this nothingness into a “foundational ground, or as anti-/ante-ground, as a void that sustains.”108 Thus, although Fanon was trapped in this nothingness, the same “black abyss” can serve as a space to draw creative power from – which reconnects back to Moten and the intellectual project of Black Optimism.109 In short, the discussed “nothingness is not absence but foundation.”110 So how does this foundation translate into concrete political activism and something relevant to the present thesis’ field study? First, the fact that paraontology lets us see blackness as a separate entity makes it possible for activists (e.g. copwatchers) to align themselves with blackness regardless of their own status of being racialized.111 This could be seen throughout the study, in slightly different iterations.112 Further, to take a position outside of ontology can be achieved by a reconstruction of aesthetics in line with the main argument of Moten’s In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition. For instance, Moten discuss how the photograph of Emmett Till – the black fourteen-year old boy murdered in 1955 – could possibly challenge ontological questioning.113 He asks “what the hegemony of the visual” have to do with the death – and connects a critical aesthetic reading to the necessary re-construction of ontology.114 In relation to the moving image specifically, the “ante-ground” of blackness can perhaps offer a new type of aesthetics, outside of ontology.115 Following Judith Butler’s line of thought, there needs to be such an aesthetics, since “[t]he visual field is not neutral to the question of race; it is itself a racial formation, an episteme, hegemonic and forceful.116 The fact that blackness is prior to regulatory violence could make possible a certain kind of resistance and political subjectivity. This was a working hypothesis I came up with through abductive reasoning while in the field. Moten suggests that “one wants to assert the presence of something between the subjectivity that is refused [“Man”] and which one refuses and nothing, whatever that is.”117 I argue that copwatching and other acts of “looking back” have the potential to inhabit that interstitial space. This is, of course, a main topic of the thesis and is further explored in the subsequent chapters.

#### 7---Their call for the ballot fails to create social change, but prevents political compromise — default to debate-specific evidence

— formatting: footnotes omitted

— we don’t endorse potentially problematic language in this evidence

Ritter 13 — Michael J. Ritter (J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law), September 2013, “OVERCOMING THE FICTION OF “SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH DEBATE”:,” National Journal of Speech and Debate, Volume 2, Issue 1

WHAT’S TO LEARN FROM 2PAC’S CHANGES

In his immortal Changes, the supposedly late Tupac (2PAC) Shakur lamented, “I see no changes.” 16 2PAC expresses in Changes both his frustration with social racism and his hope for change.17 Acknowledging that race-based social inequalities would likely never completely disappear, he provocatively presented a model for improved communication and understanding to minimize racial inequalities.18 In 1999, Changes was released, topped international charts, and for many years thereafter, impressed a global audience (including The Vatican).19 Many students who participate in competitive interscholastic debate in high school and college20 frequently argue during debates that their speech acts, performances, or presentations criticizing a particular concept in a debate round could, just like 2PAC’s Changes, actually affect social inequities or issues inside and outside of the debate community. To preserve the activity, coaches and judges should discourage debaters from attempting to use—or deceiving others that they are using—competitive interscholastic debate to create social change. Those in the debate community who believe (or argue) that competitive interscholastic debate21 can reach an audience beyond the debate room, and their opponents, coaches, and judges, should consider this question: “What can I learn from 2PAC’s success in communicating his message in Changes?” Those who have wed themselves to the fiction that in-round speech acts in a competitive interscholastic debate setting can and does create actual social change (due to either some strategic reasoning or simple denial) will have a difficult time reaching the honest answer to that question: “I am wrong.” The structure of competitive interscholastic debate renders any message communicated in a debate round virtually incapable of creating any social change, either in the debate community or in general society. And to the extent that the fiction of social change through debate can be proven or disproven through empirical studies or surveys, academics instead have analyzed debate with nonapplicable rhetorical theory that fails to account for the unique aspects of competitive interscholastic debate. Rather, the current debate relating to activism and competitive interscholastic debate concerns the following: “What is the best model to promote social change?” But a more fundamental question that must be addressed first is: “Can debate cause social change?” Despite over two decades of opportunity to conduct and publish empirical studies or surveys, academic proponents of the fiction that debate can create social change have chosen not to prove this fundamental assumption, which—as this article argues—is merely a fiction that is harmful in most, if not all, respects. The position that competitive interscholastic debate can create social change is more properly characterized as a fiction than an argument. A fiction is an invented or fabricated idea purporting to be factual but is not provable by any human senses or reasoning or is an assumption otherwise unproven by valid statistical studies. An argument, most basically, consists of a claim and some support for why the claim is true. If the support for the claim is false or its relation to the claim is illogical, then we can deduce that the particular argument does not help in ascertaining whether the claim is true. Interscholastic competitive debate is premised upon the assumption that debate is argumentation. Because fictions are necessarily not true or cannot be proven true by any means of argumentation, the competitive interscholastic debate community should be incredibly critical of those fictions and adopt them only if they promote the activity and its purposes.

Competitive Interscholastic Debate: The Break Down

Competitive interscholastic debate is uniquely different from other types of persuasive activities. Each individual component of the term “competitive interscholastic debate” describes the essential structures of the activity from which very important precepts can be discerned. These precepts are fundamental to any application of any rhetorical theory regarding speech acts within a debate round because the precepts necessarily affect the scope of two crucial aspects of all communication: audience and purpose. The debate community’s members, many of whom are shorthand enthusiasts, simply refer to the activity as “debate.” But what that simple term omits, and what many frequently forget when uncritically accepting the “social change through debate” fiction, is any reference to the essential structures from which the community spawned: a competition of argumentation during which students from one school compete against students from other schools for the votes of judges. Therefore, before any plausible argument can be made concerning the purposes or benefits of debate, the assumptions upon which those arguments are based must be identified and explained. The following discussion (perhaps painstakingly) analyzes the essential components of competitive interscholastic debate to identify the essential precepts that debunk the assumptions relied upon by those endorsing the fiction that competitive interscholastic debate can create social change.

“Debate”

“Debate,” in its simplest and most basic form, is the presentation of seemingly inconsistent positions to convince an audience. A position could be a factual or empirical position that describes current or historical fact (e.g. A = B). The presentation of a seemingly inconsistent position to convince an audience (e.g. A ≠ B) would constitute an empirical debate about what facts are (or were) true or false (or neither). A position could also be a normative position (i.e. a position about how the way things should have been or should be (e.g. “A should not have been or should be A). The presentation of inconsistent normative positions to convince an audience (e.g. A should not or should be A) constitutes a normative debate. The intent-to-convince element is an indispensible part of any debate. Presenting apparently conflicting positions with the intent to convince requires an audience of some sort, as an audience is necessary for someone to be convinced. For instance, if a person writes an article on the propriety of the verdict in the Trayvon Martin trial to convince others that the verdict was wrong, but then no one reads it, there is no consideration of the position by the intended audience because no one (other than the author himself) could be persuaded. An audience can be as simple as a single person (e.g. having an internal debate with oneself to consider the validity of two seemingly inconsistent positions). An audience could constitute only one person when someone presents two seemingly inconsistent positions for that one-person audience to consider (e.g. an attorney advising his22 client that he has two options and presents the pros and cons of both for his client to make a decision). Two people could comprise an audience. For example, a debate could involve two people who present apparently inconsistent positions to try to convince each other of the rightness of their respective positions. A seeming or apparent inconsistency between positions is also a necessary component of a debate. If two positions are clearly consistent, then there is no debate. Conversely, an actual inconsistency is not necessary for a debate. The following hypothetical demonstrates why: Two debaters who go on a date appear to disagree over which movie, Django Unchained or Kill Bill, to see at Quinton Tarantino’s privately owned theater on Friday night at 10 p.m. This appears to be a conflict because the two cannot watch both in different theaters together at the same time. Both of them want to see the most violent Tarantino movie with a revenge theme at that time. During the exchange their arguments for why Django Unchained or Kill Bill is more violent, one debater mentions Inglorious Bastards and both agree that Inglorious Bastards is the most violent Tarantino movie with a revenge theme. Fortunately, Inglorious Bastards is also playing at the theater at the same time. Just because the two debaters did not decide between Kill Bill and Django Unchained does not mean that they did not have a debate. During their debate, they realized that their apparently conflicting positions were not actually conflicting; they had the same position—wanting to see the most violent Tarantino revenge movie. And in this example, neither audience member was convinced of either initial position. Therefore, in any “debate” there will be some audience that must resolve an apparent conflict of positions. In all communications, there is some audience. Sometimes the audience has a specific goal, such as being entertained, informed, or persuaded. The discussion about what debate “is” demonstrates that identifying the audience is essential to understanding how the context of a speech act can advance or hinder the speaker’s goals.

A Competitive Activity

A second component of competitive interscholastic debate is that it necessarily involves a competition. Not all debates must occur within the context of a competition, as the Tarantino hypothetical above suggests. But most—if not all— debates in the debate community occur either to win a debate round at a debate tournament or in preparation for winning a debate round at a debate tournament. The tournament structure is a sin qua non (a fundamental component) of the debate community. And in the very rare case that debaters host a public debate (and in the very fortunate case that an audience attends and does not leave during the first speech), the purpose is ordinarily not to convince the audience of a particular side, but to demonstrate what the school’s debate team does. At a typical tournament, there are a pre-determined number of preliminary rounds in which all entered schools’ debaters compete against debaters from other schools that have entered the tournament. The tournament usually determines beforehand the number of debaters that will advance to elimination rounds, and that number usually equals four to thirty-two teams divided into brackets (semifinals to double octafinals). If a team loses an elimination round, as the term suggests, then they are eliminated from the tournament. The prevailing team advances further into the tournament until the “winner” is left with no competitor. A hypothetically neutral critic will be assigned as a “judge.” The judge, or a panel of an odd number of judges, will vote for the debaters who they believe won the debate by doing “the better debating.” Many judges have written paradigms; and the vast majority of written paradigms express a preference for how the debate should occur, but express little or no concern about what (in terms of content) is argued. In almost all debate rounds, the judge will make his decision based on how the debate occurs, not based on what persuaded the judge. A primary (and probably the best) example of this point is a “dropped” argument. Many debate rounds are won, not on the basis of the persuasiveness of an argument, but because the opponents failed to directly respond to the argument. Judges will ordinarily permit the opponent to then “blow up the impact” of this drop in the following speech. Thus, the competitive nature of debate causes, to a great degree, the how to precede the what (unless the point is immaterial or nonessential). As a result, many judges divorce their human experiences and logical reasoning skills of objectively evaluating the persuasiveness of an argument from the decision of which team to vote for. And even when there is a “point-for-point and warrant-for-warrant” debate, many judges will vote based on who does the better job (technically speaking) extending and explaining the argument (even if the argument is atrociously absurd). The target audience is solely the judge, and the sole issue the judge must decide is which side “did the better debating.” Mandatory switch-side debating confirms that the debaters themselves are not the audience for persuasion. And because fair opportunity is valued when there are winners and losers in competitions, most judges approach their paradigms with an attempt to be objective. Tournaments hire judges to objectively evaluate debates based on direct language from the ballot, the ballot the judge must sign his or her name to: who did the “better debating” or who “won the round” (which is a rephrasing of who did the better debating). Competitive debate is a very narrow slice of “debate.” One could persuasively argue that competitive debate barely qualifies as “debate” because the target audience (the judge) is persuaded not by the truth of an argument, but who “does the better debating.” Hence, the only point on which the judge of a competitive debate is seeking to be persuaded of is who to vote for. This conclusion narrows the previous section’s conclusions regarding “debate” (generally) because the “competition” element narrows the audience in the debate to the judge, not the competitors. The debaters are not competing to be persuaded. They are competing to persuade. And the only issue on which the audience—the judge—is asked to resolve is which competitors did the better debating. The judges are not present to objectively evaluate the content of messages and arguments for their persuasive value outside of the narrow issue of who did the better debating.

An Interscholastic Activity

The final essential component of competitive interscholastic debate is that students from different schools compete against each other at debate tournaments. Many academics who have spent decades competing in and coaching debate have probably never encountered an intrascholastic debate competition, at least not in any of the formats in the debate community. The interscholastic element further narrows “competitive debate” to a student activity that faces resource constraint (e.g. time, budget, rooms available, etc.). Perhaps, noting that the competitive debates are interscholastic highlights the more important point about what competitive student debate is not: “academic debate” or “public debate.” The interscholastic element determines how the competitive debates take place. Generally, several factors constrain interest in and participation on a school’s debate team. First, a school likely could not afford to send every enrolled student to travel to and register in debate tournaments. Even if some schools could afford this, not all could. But even the possibility of all schools’ students would be problematic in terms of one school making up more than half of the field. And even if all schools could afford to send all students to a debate competition, debate tournaments likely could not occur (perhaps, only during the summer) because debate tournaments would last several weeks. The tournament structure means that only a select few will be included in the first place to compete, and as tournaments progress, more and more debaters are excluded. Because only a limited number of teams can be sent to tournaments, coaches must decide who “makes the team” and which teams go to what tournaments. But these decisions (while they could be made for a good reason, bad reason, or no reason at all) will likely be influenced by a student’s natural ability or potential to become skilled at how to do our community’s particular formats of competitive debate. And because teams generally can and do not compete against other teams from their schools, a competitive interscholastic debate will result in one school advancing over the other whose chances of advancing then diminish if not disappear altogether. Finally, the interscholastic nature of competitive interscholastic debate is a point of differentiation from other types of competitive debates: the debaters are all students from different schools. They are either in college or high school. This distinguishes competitive interscholastic debate from other types of debate— particularly academic debate. High schoolers are generally still developing physically and mentally, as well as start developing intellectually. Most college students continue their intellectual development as they obtain their associate’s or bachelor’s degrees. It is not until students begin studying for a master’s, law, or doctoral degree that they must study a particular field in depth, reading publications from academics in their respective fields. Many former competitive interscholastic debaters must, for the first time, become familiar with the academics in the particular field for the sole purpose of learning, not “cutting cards” for debate. It is at the end of a master’s studies or PhD program that students finally must contribute something novel within their particular field of study that contributes something to that field of study. This is the point at which students have made an academic contribution (assuming that what is written is selected for publication). Thus, competitive interscholastic debate is radically different from every other kind of debate. It is not “academic debate,” and it is not “public debate.”23 Because schools’ resources limit debate participation, it is necessarily an exclusive activity to which no students have the right to participate in. And without accounting for how the structures unique to competitive interscholastic debate—exclusion, competition, a limited audience, very narrow audience purpose, etc.—affect the application of a general communications or rhetorical theory in this specific context, the application should be reconsidered or viewed highly skeptically if not outright rejected.

Let’s Talk 2PAC

To illustrate many of the reasons why “social change through debate” is a fiction, consider the question posed in the introduction: “How did 2PAC’s Changes reach a substantial and diverse cross-section of a global audience?” Any reader who picked up on the humor of the “supposedly-late” descriptor above would immediately know that it is a trick question: 2PAC didn’t make any impression by releasing Changes in 1999; 2PAC died in 1996. 2PAC’s estate contracted with players in the music industry to produce Changes by splicing together several of 2PAC’s pre-death recordings, and released Changes in 1999. The song was advertised and played on the radio and CD players internationally. The similarities and differences between 2PAC when recording Changes and a student arguing that competitive interscholastic debate can create social change are informative. Although 2PAC wrote and recorded parts of Changes, several other individuals in a very complex series of transactions and communications were responsible for the song’s global successes. When 2PAC recorded the various parts of Changes, he merely spoke and sang words into a microphone in a recording studio where the audience was solely concerned with operating equipment for quality assurance purposes. Similarly, a debater who is asserting that debate can cause social change, like 2PAC in a recording studio, is speaking to an audience who typically cares little (if at all) about the debater’s intended message and cares about recording it “on the flow.” But unlike 2PAC’s audience (that likely had solely a financial interest in re-communicating 2PAC’s message), the judge generally does not re-communicate the debater’s message for any persuasive purpose, and the judge usually has little or no interest or incentive to do so.24 Changes’s commercial context is part of what allowed the song to spread worldwide. Those initially re-communicating 2PAC’s message did so for financial reasons; the fact that 2PAC’s message was concerned with minimizing racial inequalities likely contributed only a limited extent to the song’s success. Pys’s Gangnam Style had similar success at reaching a global audience, and it made fun of Korean culture. What Changes, Gangnam Style (both messages disseminated in a commercial context), and debate (a competitive activity and, yet ironically, one increasingly marked by anti-capitalist sentiments) have in common is that form is so much more important than substance. But the difference between the form of international hit songs and debate is that the form of musical productions—with a catchy tune, visually stimulating music video, and sometimes a valuable message—makes the message appealing to a general audience. The form of modern competitive interscholastic debate—with, at its worse, rapid fire spreading of dense philosophical verbiage or personal attacks tangentially related (at best) to the topic—is simply unappealing to a general audience. If anything, the form in which messages are communicated in competitive interscholastic debate repels audiences outside of the community. To the extent that Changes was made more popular by its message, the crucial difference between the message of Changes and messages communicated in a debate round is that the in original production of Changes, and the recommunication of that original message, the message has never changed (save some remixes) or contradicted itself. The original version of Changes was the same as it was when it was released until (and after) the time that it made the Pope’s playlist. Conversely, debaters who communicate messages in a debate round will, almost always, contradict their argument (again for persuasive reasons, not because they were convinced that they were wrong initially) in another round, read a different part of the card they were reading previously, reading different phrasings of the same argument by a different author, etc. Therefore, the message-repetition element is missing from competitive interscholastic debate. The multiple points of distinction between 2PAC’s Changes and messages made in debate rounds demonstrate why the dissemination of messages outside of a debate round for persuasive purposes is highly unlikely.

The Kicker

As the question, “How did 2PAC reach a substantial and diverse cross-section of that global audience?” was trick question, so (to some extent) was this article’s initial question: “What can I learn from 2PAC’s success in communicating his message in Changes?” While one lesson we can learn from the success 2PAC’s changes concerns the factors that make messages more likely to be disseminated worldwide, there is pretty much nothing else to learn in terms of persuasion in the context of competitive interscholastic debate. Up to this point, this article has shown how each of the essential components of “competitive interscholastic debate” makes it very different from any other kind of debate. But one thing that is persuasive in any kind of debate is some sort of properly conducted study (or even a mere survey) that provides empirical proof or even substantial anecdotal support. To date, none of the many academics who coach or participate in the debate community have published a study or survey to support the social change fiction. (Perhaps they have tried, and discovered they were just wrong.) But until such an empirical study of competitive interscholastic debate is conducted, students, judges, and coaches should not take it for granted. Similarly, no one has studied whether 2PAC’s Changes had any effect on people’s attitudes toward racial equality. (Thus, it would be equally supported to say that 2PAC’s Changes increased racial violence.) No survey or statistical studies have been conducted, constrained by academic standards, and then published, that suggest that 2PAC’s Changes had any real effect on anyone (other than the objectively measurable effect that purchasing the song had on the buyer’s wallet). Similarly, no one has studied whether any individual debate round, a team’s year-long “project,” or a debate team’s seemingly perpetual social campaign has created any social change regarding the position they support. While it is theoretically possible that someone has listened to 2PAC and thought to himself, “Hmm , perhaps I should not be so racist,” it is as equally possible that, according to the arguments of Judith Butler or Jacques Derrida (or insert any other philosophy academic or rhetorical theorist—from Aristotle to Slavoj Žižek—here), debate has created some sort of social change. The problem is that nothing supports that debate rounds can create social change other than the adage, “Anything is possible.” The reasoning that debate can create social change is circular at its best. The absurdity is that judges prefer specific, predictive, and empirical evidence over general theoretical possibilities in almost every single context except when it comes to attempts to use debate to create social change. Bald theoretical assertions with flowery language from philosophers are accepted over uncarded but logical analytical arguments. Any explanation for why coaches and students (at least pretend to) believe that debate can create social change would require an unacceptable degree of speculation. The bottom line is that the proposition that competitive interscholastic debate will (or more accurately, can) result in social change is merely speculation without any logical or empirical support.

Overcoming the Fiction

Merely identifying a proposition as a fiction is insufficient to merit its abandonment. This article uses the term “fiction” because the idea that debate rounds could likely create any social change is, in all meanings of the term, a fiction. A fiction is a conclusion that is feigned, invented, or imagined. It is an imaginary thing or event, postulated for the purposes of argument or explanation. One can distinguish a fiction from a statement of fact (which can be determined true or false) or a scientific hypothesis (a falsifiable theory answering a posed question). A fiction, on the other hand, is something that is either false or has not been attempted to be proven true. A fiction is neither inherently good nor inherently bad. Rather, it is a tool to achieve some other purpose. Fictional stories frequently convey a moral to be extracted or lesson to be learned.25 In law, a legal fiction is a legal rule that is known to be factually false (such as the legal fiction that all people are presumed to know the law) that is endorsed for some greater public policy purpose (such as to avoid ignorance and discourage intentionally avoiding knowledge of the law). After identifying whether a proposition is a fiction (or a truth or hypothesis), determining whether the fiction is worthwhile requires weighing the pros and cons of the fiction against the purposes of the context in which it is used.

The Fiction

The idea or proposition that competitive interscholastic debate can result in social change is properly characterized as a fiction because it is false and has not been proven true. The proposition that debate rounds can create social change is a fiction because it is false on a theoretical level. Those who attempt to apply theories about academic debate (i.e. arguments published in books and journals by PhDs who argue about concepts within their respective fields of study), social movements, rhetorical acts, and performances are not discussing competitive interscholastic debate. Philosophers and rhetorical theorists have never written an article or book using competitive interscholastic debate as an example of the effectiveness of a communication strategy (at least not successes outside of a debate round). Their theories draw upon historical (i.e. anecdotal) examples to demonstrate their theories. None of them have ever cited a debate round or “debate movement” as an example of their theories.26 Those who attempt to apply academic theories to competitive interscholastic debate (primarily communications academics, who also frequently happen to be participants in the debate community), decontextualize the broader theories to apply them to competitive interscholastic debate without adequately accounting for the competitive and interscholastic structures of competitive interscholastic debate. 27 Although some “competition” is part of any debate, this part is more accurately described as the presence of seemingly conflicting positions, which is discussed above and exemplified by the Tarantino hypothetical. In social movements or public debate, there are two (or more) apparently conflicting positions. Competitive interscholastic debate is uniquely different because there is not a possibility for compromise on the ultimate question of who did the better debating; most tournaments prohibit double wins, and no debaters would agree to a double loss. The competition is absolute; one side must win and one side must lose. This is radically different from the ability of individuals to be persuaded by the other side of a social movement. The switching of sides outside of the debate context comes from a person’s willingness to be persuaded by a particular position; it is not forced by tournament rules. Thus, the competitive structures of competitive interscholastic debate render the applicability of philosophical or rhetorical theory inapplicable to the extent that it does not account for particular competitive interscholastic debate context. The unique structures of debate rounds rob all arguments or positions therein (or in a series of rounds) of any persuasive value beyond the very narrow issue of “which side did the better debating.” The competitive element and tournament structure of competitive interscholastic debate taint all positions proffered in a debate round to create social change with a stench of “I am actually lying about my goals; I am clearly just using this argument to win the ballot.” Even debates about how debates should proceed (i.e. theory arguments or arguments about the practices in debate, or “meta-debate” (debates about debate)) are not proffered for the truth of the proposition, but to win the debate. The audience—only the judge—is solely concerned with the ultimate question: “Which side did the better debating?” Competitive interscholastic debate is certainly a venue in which students can become aware of societal issues and topics of concern. But the persuasive value of arguments presented in a debate round to convince debaters of the truth of either side on a topic is virtually nil.28 Students will generally form opinions about issues they learn about in a debate round outside of their debate rounds. The issues debaters become aware of include issues external to debate (e.g. affirmative action, foreign policy) and issues internal to debate (e.g. theory, community issues). When debaters choose to bring those issues into a debate round, they necessarily use those issues as a competitive means to the ultimate end of convincing the judge that they did the better debating. This requires the opposing team to adopt a competitive counterstrategy to that position; it forecloses the option of the opposing team being fully persuaded by the other team’s position. Even an attempt to “compromise” via a permutation (as a competitive strategy rather than a persuasive position) will meet vigorous, usually pre-scripted opposition. As a result, any in-round action (whether a speech act or the judge voting for one team or the other) will have no out-of-round effect consistent with or contemplated by any cited authors or postulated by the high school or college student making the assertion. Even arguments about competitive interscholastic debate—primarily theory and issues about inequalities in the debate community—will necessarily lose all persuasive value about those particular issues when they are raised in a debate round. Although more specific to competitive interscholastic debate and not general theories about academic debate, meta-debate loses its power to convince anyone in the round because the audience—only the judge—is solely concerned with the question of “which team did the better debating.” Theory and arguments about “social issues in debate” made in a debate inherently reek of disingenuousness. Most debaters and judges do not even consider adopting a position on the meta-debate until after the round in reflective discussion and thought about the issue, thought that never incorporates the truthfulness of an argument because “it was dropped” in a debate round. In the particular debate, the result is always based on who, in the judge’s opinion, did the better debating. It is not based on who convinced the judge of some proposition irrelevant to deciding which team did the better debating. The preceding discussion demonstrates why arguments about social change— even social change within the debate community—have persuasive value only outside of a debate round. The debate community has developed multiple forums in which members of the community engage in noncompetitive and, sometimes, academic debate on issues within the debate community. These include discussions before and after rounds with judges, teammates, and competitors; on forums or online message boards; or in academic publications. For the social issues external to the debate community, there are almost an unlimited number of ways that students form opinions. And, after students form their opinions and join causes and organizations, there are about an equal number of non-competitive ways that students can use techniques and modes of persuasion discussed by academics and rhetorical theories. Debate rounds, at the very most, operate as venue solely for raising awareness about social issues and debate practices. It would be illogical to conclude that, because issues were debated in a particular debate and out-of-round discussion about that practice followed, the in-round debate created a social change. Because coaches and students strategically consider their arguments and practices prior to a debate round, the social issues or the “concern” about a debate tactic initially spawns outside of debate rounds, not from within a singular debate round. And just because one event occurred before another does not make the former the cause of the latter. To the extent that the in-round practice causes a subsequent out-of-round discussion, debate is admittedly a form for raising awareness about practices and social issues for students. But the arguments presented in the debate round will lack persuasive value in the round insofar as convincing the judge or other audience members of anything beyond the ultimate question of who did the better debating. But even if this article’s arguments up to this point have no validity, and creating social change through debate rounds is more likely than just theoretically possible, this is insufficient to adopt the proposition that competitive interscholastic debate creates social change. It remains a fiction because no academics—not even those who have remained in the debate community for decades—have attempted to prove its validity with any form of study or survey. No studies or surveys have been conducted on any particular application of philosophical or rhetorical theory to the practices within competitive interscholastic debate. Thus, competitive interscholastic debates and meta-debates therein claiming to create some sort of change either within the community or outside the community have no empirical support. They simply present the possibility, but fail to show any probability of success. Because any critically thinking person (in or out of the debate community) should be hesitant to presume probability based on mere possibility, the probability of the general theory being applicable in the competitive interscholastic debate context should be presumed to be zero, as no probability has been proven. Although practices have certainly evolved, no empirical study has causally linked this evolution to in-round arguments to the exclusion of out-of-round, non-competitive discussions.

Why We Should Get Over This Fiction

Fictions are neither inherently good nor inherently bad. Fictions must be judged based on whether they serve some relevant purpose to the context in which the fiction is adopted. The legal fiction that all people are presumed to know the law is one such fiction. If no one follows laws, then passing laws is pointless. Therefore, compliance with the law is fundamental. The fiction that people are presumed to know the law encourages individuals to know the law and increases compliance. If individuals can shield themselves from the ramifications of violating the law by not knowing the law, people would be encouraged to avoid learning about the law to excuse or justify non-compliance. A sound methodology for determining whether a fiction is good or bad must include: (1) an identification of whether the proposition is a fiction; (2) what the purposes of the context, field, or activity that is considering adoption of the fiction; and (3) whether the fiction advances or hinders those purposes. Up until this point, this article has argued why it is a fiction to believe that debate rounds cause social change. And, as was discussed at length in Nix the Nixonism: Identifying the Purposes of Debate by Understanding Constituency, Transparency & Accountability, the primary purposes of debate are self-preservation and “o promote skills including public speaking, researching, and critical thinking as judged by the larger academic community and the general public.29 Thus, deciding whether to dispense with the fiction of “social change through debate” is a worthwhile endeavor will require determining whether this fiction promotes or hinders the self-preservation of the community and promotes skills including public speaking, research, and critical thinking. Although either maintaining or dispensing with the fiction would likely be neutral with respect to promoting public speaking, researching, and critical thinking skills, the fiction continues to deal damaging blows to the debate community. These damaging effects can be shown anecdotally. The fiction has damaged the legitimacy of the debate community by encouraging a race to the bottom in terms of debaters—in a competitive flurry—trying to outdo each other and themselves. The best examples of this are in college policy debate, which has existed for much longer than any other interscholastic debate format in the U.S. The development of the “kritik” opened possibilities for deployment of a new body of literature in rounds. The race to the bottom has caused the debate community’s acceptance of the following in-round tactics: stripping nude to de-mystify the female body; dance-offs; defecating into a bag to face our waste; simulating an abortion; actual in round violence between debate partners to illustrate and dramatize domestic violence; voting down white debaters because they were white in order to promote minority participation in competitive interscholastic debate; and debating with the lights off, performatively conserving energy. Those outside of the debate community in academic and professional circles have noticed this downward trend in competitive interscholastic debate. As a result of this trend, debate is currently viewed as having diminished pedagogical value in terms of public speaking, research, and critical thinking. This presents a very real threat to the existence of schools’ debate programs.30 A possible advantage of adopting the fiction is that if students believe in the persuasive power of their positions, then they would be more likely to recommunicate the message in non-competitive formats outside of the competitive interscholastic debate community. Not only has this argument been empirically disproven, the opposite has proven to be true. Most debaters are involved in few, if any, other extra-curricular activities. Sometimes debate programs discourage participation in other activities to hone skills unique to competitive interscholastic debate (e.g. spreading). Furthermore, to the extent that debaters are convinced of their own argument that debate can create social change, the fiction discourages participation in more effective methods of persuasion that do not require the participants to contradict themselves. Students are led to believe that they have accomplished something when, in fact, they have contributed nothing (except to the decline of the community). Additionally, arguing that debate can create social change by the judge voting for the argument is also unethical. The fiction of social change through debate is powerful because it abuses debate’s structures designed to ensure fairness and minimize arbitrariness in judges’ decision-making. One primary structure is the contractual requirement that when the judges sign their ballots, they are voting for the team that does the better debating, as they have contracted with the tournament to do so. When the judge agrees with the host school to judge, he has promised to vote for the debaters who do the better debating. An argument that voting for one team over the other solely because of some out-of-round benefit compromises the judge’s objectivity of evaluating who did the better debating through the arguments made in the particular debate round. In essence, it is a promise for a benefit outside of the debate round in exchange for the ballot that would outweigh the judge’s sense of duty to remain objective and decide the round on who did the better debating. In this sense, endorsing the fiction of social change through debate is, by definition, is endorsing bribery. The only way this ethical dilemma would not exist would be for debaters relying on the fiction to admit that there really is no out-of-round benefit, which is this article’s ultimate point. Not only does the fiction unfairly place the judge in an ethical dilemma, it is also unfair by asking the judge to consider and accept out-of-round benefits of voting for a particular team but ignore all of the judge’s and other debaters’ personal outof-round experiences. In debate rounds, judges attempt to adopt neutral, objective paradigms by not disregarding an argument simply because they personally disagree or do not like it. The general motivation for this is to be fair to the students and allow them an opportunity to succeed despite the judge’s idiosyncratic preferences, the full disclosure of which would take too long to explain prior to a debate or write in a paradigm (although some judges definitely try). The fiction of social change through debate invites the judge to insert his or her subjective preferences only to the extent the judge personally agrees. If the judge personally disagrees with the team’s particular social goals, the judge will be shunned by rejecting the team’s argument absent some argument that the opposing team wins “on the flow.” But if the judge personally agrees with the team’s particular social goals (or at least what the debaters purport their social goals to be), then the debaters relying on the fiction of social change through debate invites and attempts to justify judges’ intervention only to the extent it benefits them even if the argument is not won “on the flow.” This is true because arguments about what the ballot can would, if the argument is true (or dropped), outweigh a technically bad performance by the debaters relying on those arguments. By placing the judge in an ethical dilemma, bribing the judge, and inviting and justifying one-sided intervention, the fiction of social change through debate encourages debaters to commit the ultimate in-round abuse. Arguments and strategies are not, by themselves, properly considered unfair or abusive to another debater. There are always counter-arguments and counter-strategies. Tactics—or the in-round conduct of debaters—can be unfair and abusive. For example, card clipping (purporting to read the entirety of a card but only reading part of it), hiding the other team’s evidence, name-calling, promising the judge money or job in exchange for voting for a particular team, blanket refusal to answer questions in cross-examination, and other rule violations (meaning the actual rules of the debate tournament or the organization under which the tournament is conducted) are all examples of tactics that are unfair and abusive. These tactics and the fiction of social change through debate place the judge in an ethical dilemma, bribe the judge with out-of-round compensation to vote for a team who does not do the better debating, and invite and justify one-sided intervention. They compromise the integrity of the activity and are thus the ultimate unfair tactics and the worst forms of in round abuse. The fiction of social change through debate abuses the win–loss structure of debate and permits debaters to otherize, demonize, dehumanize, and exclude opponents. The win–loss structure of debate rounds requires a judge to vote for one side or the other, as judges generally cannot give a double win. This precludes the possibility of compromise on any major position in the debate when the resolution of the position would determine the ultimate issue of “which team did the better debating.” Thus, the fiction of social change through debate encourages debaters to construct narratives of good versus evil in which the other team is representative of some evil that threatens to bring about our destruction if it is endorsed (e.g. capitalism). The team relying on the fiction of social change through debate then paints themselves as agents of the good, and gives the judge a George W. Bush-like “option”: “You’re either with us or you’re against us.” The fiction of social change through debate—like Bush’s rhetorical fear tactics and creation of a false, polarizing, and exclusionary dichotomy to justify all parts of the War on Terror—enables the otherization, demonization, dehumanization, and exclusion of the opposing team. When the unfairness of this tactic is brought to light—particularly in egregious situations when a team is arguing that the other team should lose because of their skin color—all can see that the debate centers on personal attacks against opposing debaters. This causes tensions between debaters that frequently result in debaters losing interest or quitting. By alienating and excluding members of the competitive interscholastic debate community for the purpose of winning a debate, it also makes the reaching of any compromise outside of the debate—the only place where compromise is possible—much less likely. By bringing the social issue into a debate round, debaters impede out-of-round progress on the resolution of social issues within and outside the debate community by prompting backlash. Finally, the fiction of social change through debate teaches debaters to engage in unethical tactics that justify—and, if those students then become government leaders or corporate executives, could result in—the tactics used by oppressive governments and corrupt corporations to maintain their positions of power. One such unethical tactic is requiring a person to make a decision in a limited amount of time based solely on a limited amount of biased or false information. North Korea, for example, campaigns for support with propaganda and lies, and then forcefully limits its people’s access to other sources of information. Nazi Germany also used comparable propaganda tactics to convince people of the superiority of an Aryan race. Corrupt corporations similarly scam consumers by presenting misleading and biased information and falsely promising great benefits after the consumer hands over his monetary endorsement. The fiction of social change through debate encourages these same tactics in a debate round and teaches students that these tactics are effective and rewarding. It places the judge in the position of supporting or rejecting a particular cause based on very limited information presented in a single debate round. It frequently requires the judge to act based solely on the particular, biased information presented by the debaters. The possibility of the other side presenting counterarguments is inadequate because debate teams purposefully research arguments to run that other debate teams likely do not have specific responsive evidence to. Furthermore, by requiring the judge to decide in the debate round whether to support or reject a cause, debaters seek to limit the judge’s access to other sources of information that would enable the judge to come to an informed decision. Thus, arguments made in a debate round are not the driving force convincing students of those arguments. It is the competitive tactics and strategies that students that are positively reinforced with the ballot that the debate community should be concerned about.

Conclusion

The idea that speech acts in a debate round can create social change is a fiction. The successes of 2PAC’s Changes demonstrate that communication and persuasive attempts in competitive interscholastic debate is entirely different from all other forms of persuasive communication that have been successful at reaching a broad audience. The fiction of social change through debate undermines the fundamental purposes of the competitive interscholastic debate activity— primarily self-preservation and the development of skills. It encourages tactics that undermine the prevalent values endorsed in the community (fairness, education, objectivity, ethics, morality, etc.) and tactics that mirror the most commonly criticized notions (unjust governments, corporate abuse, capitalism etc.). It is long past time for academics in our community who endorse the fiction of social change through debate to prove it by publishing some sort of valid academic study or survey. Despite the past decades of in-round argumentation that debate can create social change, one must lament, “I see no changes,” at least none for the better.

# 2NC

#### The TVA is the best way to create “black radicalism”

Moten 13, (Fred Moten, October 2013, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” The South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. 112, Issue 4, pp. 777-779, DOI:10.1215/00382876-2345261)

We should be no less forthright in recognizing that such positionality is the desire that Fanon admits, if only, perhaps, to disavow, when he conducts his philosophical investigations of the lived experience of the black. Two questions arise: Does he disavow it? Or is it, in its necessity, the very essence of what Wilderson calls “our black capacity to desire”? Certain things about the first few paragraphs of Fanon’s phenomenological analysis seem clearer to me now than when I was composing “The Case of Blackness” (Moten 2008). The desire to attain transcendental subjectivity’s self-regard is emphatic even if it is there primarily to mark an interdiction, an antagonism, a declivity, a fall into the deadly experiment that will have been productive of “a genuine new departure” (Fanon 2008: xii), the end of the world and the start of the general dispossession that will have been understood as cost and benefit. But that desire returns, as something like the residual self-image of the phenomenologist that he wants to but cannot be, to enunciate the (political) ontology he says is outlawed, in what he would characterize as the neurotic language of the demand, called, as he is, to be a witness in a court in which he has no standing, thereby requiring us to reconsider, by way of and beyond a certain Boalian turn, what it is to be a specta(c)tor. Elsewhere, I misleadingly assert, Fanon is saying that there is no and can be no black social life. I now believe he says that is all there can be (Moten 2008: 177). The antephenomenology of spirit that constitutes Black Skin, White Masks prepares our approach to sociological or, more precisely, sociopoetic grounding, as Du Bois, say, or later Walter Rodney would have it, by way of the description of the impossibility of political life, which is, nevertheless, at this moment and for much of his career, Fanon’s chief concern. The social life of the black, or of the colonized, is, to be sure, given to us in or through Fanon, often in his case studies, sometimes in verse, or in his narrative of the career of the revolutionary cadre. It is as if Fanon is there to remind us that the lunatic, the (revolutionary) lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact. They occupy and are preoccupied with a zone of the alternative, the zone of nonbeing (antic disposition’s tendency to cut and displace organic position) that asks and requires us to consider whether it is possible to differentiate a place in the sun, a promised land, a home—or merely a place and time—in this world, from the position of the settler. Is it possible to desire the something other than transcendental subjectivity that is called nothing? What if blackness is the name that has been given to the social field and social life of an illicit alternative capacity to desire? Basically, that is precisely what I think blackness is. I want it to be my constant study. I listen for it everywhere. Or, at least, I try to. If I read Sexton correctly, after trying to get underneath the generous severity of his lesson, he objects, rightly and legitimately, to the fact that in the texts he cites I have not sufficiently looked for it in the Afro-pessimistic texts toward which I have sometimes gestured. In the gestures I have made here I hope I have shown what it is that I have been so happy to find, that projection or relay or amplification carried out by the paraontological imagination that animates and agitates Afro-pessimism’s antiregulatory force. Black optimism and Afro-pessimism are asymptotic. Which one is the curve and which one is the line? Which is the kernel and which is the shell? Which one is rational, which one is mystical? It doesn’t matter. Let’s just say that their nonmeeting is part of an ongoing ~~manic depressive~~ episode called black radicalism / black social life. Is it just a minor internal conflict, this intimate nonmeeting, this impossibility of touching in mutual radiation and permeation? Can pessimists and optimists be friends? I hope so. Maybe that’s what friendship is, this bipolarity, which is to say, more precisely, the commitment to it. To say that we are friends is to say that we want to be friends. I want to try to talk about the nature and importance of the friendship I want, that I would like us to have, that we are about to have, that in the deepest sense we already more than have, which is grounded in and enabled by that commitment even as it is continually rethought and replayed by way of our differences from one another, which is held within and holds together our commonness. The difference has to do with the proper calibration of this bipolarity. Sexton is right to suggest that the far too simple opposition between pessimism and optimism is off, and that I was off in forwarding it, or off in forwarding an imprecision that made it seem as if I were, having been seduced by a certain heuristic and its sound, thereby perhaps inadvertently seducing others into mistaking an alternating current for a direct one. The bipolarity in question is, at every instance, way too complicated for that, and I really want you to hear what we’ve been working on, this under-riff we’ve been trying to play, to study, to improvise, to compose in the hyperreal time of our thinking and that thinking’s desire. There is an ethics of the cut, of contestation, that I have tried to honor and illuminate because it instantiates and articulates another way of living in the world, a black way of living together in the other world we are constantly making in and out of this world, in the alternative planetarity that the intramural, internally differentiated presence—the (sur)real presence—of blackness serially brings online as persistent aeration, the incessant turning over of the ground beneath our feet that is the indispensable preparation for the radical overturning of the ground that we are under.

#### Rejection of political engagement is too pessimistic

Moten 13, (Fred Moten, October 2013, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” The South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. 112, Issue 4, pp. 737-740, DOI:10.1215/00382876-2345261)

Just Friends

In the past decade, the most exciting and generative advance in black critical theory, which is to say critical theory, is the announcement and enactment of Afro-pessimism in the work of Frank B. Wilderson III and Jared Sexton. Black study such as theirs refreshes lines of rigorously antidisciplinary in(ter)vention, effecting intellectual renewal against academic sterility. When wardens of established disciplines and advocates of interdisciplinary reform fight to secure depleted sovereignty in and over the same depleted real estate—whose value increases as its desertification progresses; whose value is set by the new masters of another form of what Thomas Jefferson called silent profit—and when note of this false alternative is taken by those who offer nothing but a critique of the very idea of a true one, Wilderson and Sexton keep on pushing over the edge of refusal, driven by a visionary impetus their work requires and allows us to try to see and hear and feel. This essay is dedicated to Sexton’s and Wilderson’s work, out of love for the common project, out of love for such rigorous devotion to the common project, out of love for black people, out of love for blackness. I have thought long and hard, in the wake of their work, in a kind of echo of Bob Marley’s question, about whether blackness could be loved; there seems to be a growing consensus that analytic precision does not allow for such a flight of fancy, such romance, but I remain under the impression, and devoted to the impression, that analytic precision is, in fact, a function of such fancy. And this, perhaps, is where the tension comes, where it is and will remain, not in spite of the love but in it, embedded in its difficulty and violence, not in the impossibility of its performance or declaration but out of the exhaustion that is their condition of possibility. More to the point, if Afro-pessimism is the study of this impossibility, the thinking that I have to offer (and I think I’m as reticent about the term black optimism as Wilderson and Sexton are about Afro-pessimism, in spite of the fact that we make recourse to them) moves not in that impossibility’s transcendence but rather in its exhaustion. Moreover, I want to consider exhaustion as a mode or form or way of life, which is to say sociality, thereby marking a relation whose implications constitute, in my view, a fundamental theoretical reason not to believe, as it were, in social death. Like Curtis Mayfield, however, I do plan to stay a believer. This is to say, again like Mayfield, that I plan to stay a black motherfucker. Over the course of this essay, we’ll have occasion to consider what that means, by way of a discussion of my preference for the terms life and optimism over death and pessimism and in the light of Wilderson’s and Sexton’s brilliant insistence not only upon the preferential option for blackness but also upon the requirement of the most painstaking and painful attention to our damnation, a term I prefer to wretchedness, after the example of Miguel Mellino, not simply because it is a more literal translation of Fanon (though often, with regard to Fanon, I prefer the particular kinds of precision that follow from what some might dismiss as mistranslation) but also because wretchedness emerges from a standpoint that is not only not ours, that is not only one we cannot have and ought not want, but that is, in general, held within the logic of im/possibility that delineates what subjects and citizens call the real world (Mellino 2013). But this is to say, from the outset, not that I will advocate the construction of a necessarily fictive standpoint of our own but that I will seek to begin to explore not just the absence but the refusal of standpoint, to actually explore and to inhabit and to think what Bryan Wagner (2009: 1) calls “existence without standing” from no standpoint because this is what it would truly mean to remain in the hold of the ship (when the hold is thought with properly critical, and improperly celebratory, clarity). What would it be, deeper still, what is it, to think from no standpoint; to think outside the desire for a standpoint? What emerges in the desire that constitutes a certain proximity to that thought is not (just) that blackness is ontologically prior to the logistic and regulative power that is supposed to have brought it into existence but that blackness is prior to ontology; or, in a slight variation of what Chandler would say, blackness is the anoriginal displacement of ontology, that it is ontology’s anti- and ante-foundation, ontology’s underground, the irreparable disturbance of ontology’s time and space. This is to say that what I do assert, not against, I think, but certainly in apposition to Afro-pessimism, as it is, at least at one point, distilled in Sexton’s work, is not what he calls one of that project’s most polemical dimensions, “namely, that black life is not social, or rather that black life is lived in social death” (Sexton 2011b: 28). What I assert is this: that black life—which is as surely to say life as black thought is to say thought—is irreducibly social; that, moreover, black life is lived in political death or that it is lived, if you will, in the burial ground of the subject by those who, insofar as they are not subjects, are also not, in the interminable (as opposed to the last) analysis, “death-bound,” as Abdul JanMohamed (2005) would say. In this, however, I also agree with Sexton insofar as I am inclined to call this burial ground “the world” and to conceive of it and the desire for it as pathogenic. At stake, now, will be what the difference is between the pathogenic and the pathological, a difference that will have been instantiated by what we might think of as the view, as well as the point of view, of the pathologist. I don’t think I ever claimed, or meant to claim, that Afro-pessimism sees blackness as a kind of pathogen. I think I probably do, or at least hope that it is, insofar as I bear the hope that blackness bears or is the potential to end the world. The question concerning the point of view, or standpoint, of the pathologist is crucial but so is the question of what it is that the pathologist examines. What, precisely, is the morbid body upon which Fanon, the pathologist, trains his eye? What is the object of his “complete lysis” (Fanon 2008: xiv)? And if it is more proper, because more literal, to speak of a lysis of universe, rather than body, how do we think the relation between transcendental frame and the body, or nobody, that occupies, or is banished from, its confines and powers of orientation? What I offer here as a clarification of Sexton’s understanding of my relation to Afro-pessimism emerges from my sense of a kind of terminological dehiscence in Orlando Patterson’s (1982) work that emerges in what I take to be his deep but unacknowledged affinity with and indebtedness to the work of Hannah Arendt, namely, with a distinction crucial to her work between the social and the political. The “secular excommunication” that describes slavery for Patterson (1982: 5) is more precisely understood as the radical exclusion from a political order, which is tantamount, in Arendt’s formulation, with something on the order of a radical relegation to the social. The problem with slavery, for Patterson, is that it is political death, not social death; the problem is that slavery confers the paradoxically stateless status of the merely, barely living; it delineates the inhuman as unaccommodated bios. At stake is the transvaluation or, better yet, the invaluation or antivaluation, the extraction from the sciences of value (and from the very possibility of that necessarily fictional, but materially brutal, standpoint that Wagner [2009: 1] calls “being a party to exchange”). Such extraction will, in turn, be the very mark and inscription (rather than absence or eradication) of the sociality of a life, given in common, instantiated in exchange. What I am trying to get to, by way of this terminological slide in Patterson, is the consideration of a radical disjunction between sociality and the state-sanctioned, state-sponsored terror of power-laden intersubjectivity, which is, or would be, the structural foundation of Patterson’s epiphenomenology of spirit. To have honor, which is, of necessity, to be a man of honor, for Patterson, is to become a combatant in transcendental subjectivity’s perpetual civil war. To refuse the induction that Patterson desires is to enact or perform the recognition of the constitution of civil society as enmity, hostility, and civil butchery. It is, moreover, to consider that the unspoken violence of political friendship constitutes a capacity for alignment and coalition that is enhanced by the unspeakable violence that is done to what and whom the political excludes. This is to say that, yes, I am in total agreement with the Afro-pessimistic understanding of blackness as exterior to civil society and, moreover, as unmappable within the cosmological grid of the transcendental subject. However, I understand civil society and the coordinates of the transcendental aesthetic—cognate as they are not with the failed but rather with the successful state and its abstract, equivalent citizens—to be the fundamentally and essentially antisocial nursery for a necessarily necropolitical imitation of life. So that if Afro-pessimists say that social life is not the condition of black life but is, rather, the political field that would surround it, then that’s a formulation with which I would agree. Social death is not imposed upon blackness by or from the standpoint or positionality of the political; rather, it is the field of the political, from which blackness is relegated to the supposedly undifferentiated mass or blob of the social, which is, in any case, where and what blackness chooses to stay.

### AT: Traber

#### The Black Panthers had reformists tendencies that their evidence ignores

Vernon 14, Associate Professor of Philosophy at York University (Jim Vernon, 2014, “‘I Am We’: The Dialectics of Political Will in Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party,” Theory & Event, Vol. 17, No. 4 14)

While I have endeavored above to draw a consistent argument from them, in a way, the Party’s split simply reflects the conflict that runs through Newton’s writings. Their inspirational power, for many, came from his full-throated embrace of the absolute principle of freedom and the revolutionary enthusiasm that flows from it. Their organizational clarity and political purchase, however, came from their insistence upon institutional development and tangible improvement in the lives of the oppressed as the litmus test for freedom’s actualization. Within months, one could find him quoted as saying “The only political power that I see that we can build would be potentially destructive. It is not our choice to be destructive: we would like some other avenue to work through, but the country has left us no choice”,61 but also “This is why the Peace Movement is so important. If the Peace Movement is successful, then the revolution will be successful […] Not only should we communicate with it, we should actually get out and support it fully in various ways including literature and demonstrations” (TDFP, 152). The BPP’s rupture, in essence, was “a reflection of the split in Huey’s own personality, two halves operating in completely separate spheres”, and ultimately of the split in the political will whose necessary, but fraught, unity Newton had implicitly theorized.62 The free will which grounds political action is a tense coalition of revolutionary and reformist tendencies—always haunted by arbitrariness—and each aspect no doubt manifests itself with a different degree of intensity at different times in the distinct individuals whose collective action is required for its actualization. There will thus always be those driven to strike back at the status quo in abstract revolt or empty revenge, or who long to withdraw from it in a separate society of like-minded souls, just as there will always be those who largely accept the current alignment, arbitrarily seek to modify it to suit their interests better, or seek larger change as a matter of principle or even whim. By both giving reformist direction to otherwise destructive revolutionaries, withdrawn separatists and arbitrary opportunists, as well as grounding pragmatic reforms in prescriptive, universal principle and militant commitment, the BPP managed to link seemingly piecemeal institutional changes into a broad program far more dangerous to the status quo than the independently operating would-be separatists, organized terrorists or spontaneous rioters of their day combined. While many “reduce the Party to its community service programs or to armed confrontation with the police” in order to impose a sense of unified consciousness and purpose upon it,63 the BPP itself must be grasped as a site of struggle and contest, rife with internal inconsistencies. It is as easy for a small band of underground revolutionaries—from the BLA to the various manifestations of the Black Bloc tactic—to find unified consciousness and purpose as it is for the reactionary State to isolate and neutralize them. It is the alienating and fruitless violence of such groups that has led, in recent years, groups like Occupy to seek common will through consensual dialogue. For all the inspiration such groups provide, however, their work continues to have little purchase on the situation, guided as it is by the very forms of democratic debate and finite opinion that stabilize the status quo, and infinitely deferred as it is in actually finding a generally acceptable program. What unites these two conceptions of social change is their non-dialectical conception of collective will, pushing towards or presuming from the outset an absolute or general collective consciousness. As the short history of the BPP shows, by forging a tense, imperfect unity between revolutionaries, progressives and even arbitrary actors, seemingly reformist actions can be linked through militant commitment and principle into a potent vehicle for fundamental and sweeping institutional change. Lacking either the universal or particular sides of the free will, political movements generally remain too situationally determined, or too emptily abstract to produce concrete emancipation. Newton’s BPP offers one, no doubt imperfect and unrepeatable, but nevertheless remarkably potent and instructive, example of a political program that allows revolutionaries to constrain their enthusiasm, without abandoning it, within bounds both acceptable and meaningful to those whose lives are a continual, but too particular and often arbitrary, struggle for institutional change. While there are no doubt many lessons to be learned from Newton and the BPP, it is this need for a dialectical, rather than unified, collective to actualize political will that seems both the most pressing, and the least heeded.64

#### They viewed themselves as actively political and made demands on the state, which operated within the legal system to justify self-defense ⁠— their own case study contradicts the claims of their alt.

Newton 73, cofounder (with Bobby Seale) of the Black Panther Party (Huey P. Newton, 1973, “Revolutionary suicide,” (1st ed.]. ed.). New York: Harcourt)

It was the spring of 1966. Still without a definite program, we were at the stage of testing ideas that would capture the imagination of the community. We began, as always, by checking around with the street brothers. We asked them if they would be interested in forming the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, which would be based upon defending the community against the aggression of the power structure, including the military and the armed might of the police. We informed the brothers of their right to possess weapons; most of them were interested. Then we talked about how the people are constantly intimidated by arrogant, belligerent police officers and exactly what we could do about it. We went to pool halls and bars, all the places where brothers congregate and talk. I was prepared to give them legal advice. From my law courses at Oakland City College and San Francisco law school I was familiar with the California Penal Code and well-versed in the laws relating to weapons. I also had something very important at my disposal-the law library of the North Oakland Service Center, a community center poverty program where Bobby was working. The Center gave legal advice, and there were many logbooks on the shelf. Unfortunately, most of them dealt with civil law, since the anti-poverty program was not supposed to advise poor people about criminal law. However, I made good use of the books they had to run down the full legal situation two brothers on the street. We were doing what the poverty program claimed to be doing but never had-giving help and counsel to poor people about the things that critically affected their lives. All that summer we circulated in the black communities of Richmond, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco. Wherever brothers gathered, we talked with them about their right to arm. In general, they were interested but skeptical about the weapons idea. They could not see anyone walking around with a gun in full view. To recruit any sizable number of street brothers, we would obviously have to do more than talk. We needed to give practical applications of our theory, show them that we were not afraid of weapons and not afraid of death. The way we finally won the brothers over was by patrolling the police with arms. Before we began the patrols, however, Bobby and I set down in writing a practical course of action. We could go no further without a program, and we resolved to drop everything else, even though it might take a wild to come up with something viable. One day, we went to the North Oakland Service Center to work it out. The Center was an ideal place because of the books and the fact that we could work undisturbed. First, we pull together all the books we had been reading and dozens we had only heard about. We discussed Mao’s program, Cuba’s program, and all the others, but concluded that we could not follow any of them. Our unique situation required a unique program. Although the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is universal, forms of oppression vary. The ideas that mobilized the people of Cuba and China Spring from their own history and political structures. The practical parts of those programs could be carried out only under a certain time of oppression. Our program had to deal with America. I started rapping off the essential points for the survival of Black and oppressed people in the United States. Bobby wrote them down, and then we separated those ideas into two sections, “What We Want” and “What We Believe.” We split them up because the ideas fell naturally into two distinct categories. It was necessary to explain why we wanted certain things. At the same time, our goals were based on beliefs, and we set those out, to. In the section on believes, we made it clear that all the objective conditions necessary for attaining our goals were already in existence, but that a number of societal factors stood in our way. This was to help the people understand what was working against them. All in all, our 10-point program took about 20 minutes to write. Thinking it would take days, we were prepared for a long session, but we never got to the small mountain of books piled up around us. We had come to an important realization: books could only point in a general direction; the rest was up to us. This was the program we wrote down: OCTOBER 1966 BLACK PANTHER PARTY PLATFORM AND PROGRAM WHAT WE WANT WHAT WE BELIEVE 1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community. We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny. 2. We want full employment for our people. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessman will not get full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessman and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize an employee all of its people and give a high standard of living. 3. we want an end to the robbery by the capitalist of our Black community. We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of 40 acres and two mules . 40 acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment and currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered 6 million Jews. The American racist has taken park in the slaughter of over 50 million Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make. 4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings. We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should b made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people. 5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society. We believe that in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else. 6. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service. We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will no fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary. 7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people. We believe we can end police brutality in our Black communities by organizing Black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our Black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all Black people should arm themselves for self-defense. 8. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails. We believe that all Black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial 9. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a juries of their peer group or people from their Black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. We believe that the courts should follow the United States Constitution so that Black people will receive a fair trial. The Fourteenth Amendment of the U. S. Constitution gives a man a right to be tried by his peer group. A peer is a person from a similar economic, social, religious, geographical, environmental, historical, and racial background. To do this the court will be forced to select a jury from the Black community from which the Black defendant came. We have been and are being tried by all-white juries that have no understanding of the “average reasoning man” of the Black community. 10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. And as our major political objective, a United-Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black colony in which only Black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people as to their national identity. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature‘s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such a form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute nepotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. With the program on paper, we set up the structure of our organization. Babby became Chairman, and I chose the position of Minister of Defense. I was very happy with this arrangement; I do not like to lead formally, and the Chairman has to conduct meetings and be involved in administration. We also discussed having an advisory cabinet as an information arm of the Party. We wanted this cabinet to do research on each of the ten points and their relation to the community and to advise the people on how to implement them. It seemed best to weight the political wing of the Party with street brothers and the advisory cabinet with middle-class Blacks who had the necessary knowledge and skills. We were also seeking a functional unity between middle-class Blacks and the street brothers. I asked my brother Melvin to approach a few friends about serving on the advisory cabinet, but when our plan became clear, they all refused, and the cabinet was deferred. The first member of the Black Panther Party, after Bobby and myself, was Little Bobby Hutton. Little Bobby had met Bobby Seale at the North Oakland Service Center, where both were working, and he immediately became enthusiastic about the nascent organization. Even though he was only about fifteen years old then, he was a responsible and mature person, determined to help the cause of Black people. He became the Party’s first treasurer. Little Bobby was the youngest of seven children; his family had come to Oakland from Arkansas when he was three years old. His parents were good, hard-working people, but Bobby had endured the same hardships and humiliations to which so many young Blacks in poor communities are subjected. Like many of the brothers, he had been kicked out of school. Then he had gotten a part-time job at the Shrive Center. After work he used to come around to Bobby Seale’s house to talk and learn to read. At the time of his murder, he was reading Black Reconstruction in America, by W.E.B. DuBois. Bobby was a serious revolutionary, but there was nothing grim about him. He had an infectious smile and a disarming quality that made people love him. He died courageously, the first Black Panther to make the supreme sacrifice for the people. We all attempt to carry on the work he began. We started now to implement our ten-point program. Interested primarily in educating and revolutionizing the community, we needed to get their attention and give them something to identify with. This is why the seventh point-police action- was the first program we emphasized. Point 7 stated “We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people.” This is a major issue in every Black community. The military arm of our oppressors and continually brutalize us. Many communities have tried and failed to get civilian review boards to supervise the behavior of the police. In some places, organized citizen patrols have followed the police and observed them in their community dealings. They take pictures and make tape recordings of the encounters and report misbehavior to the authorities. However, the authorities responsible for overseeing the police are policemen themselves and usually side against the citizens. We recognize that it was ridiculous to report the police to the police, but we hoped that by raising encounters to a higher level, by patrolling the police with arms, we would see a change in their behavior. Further, the community would notice this and become interested in the Party. Thus our armed patrols were also a means of recruiting. At first, the patrols were a total success. Frightened and confused, the police did not know how to respond, because they had never encountered patrols like this before. They were familiar with the community-alert patrols in other cities, but never before had guns been an integral part of any patrol program. With weapons in our hands, we were no longer their subjects but their equals. Out on patrol, we stopped whenever we saw the police questioning a brother or a sister. We would walk over with our weapons and observe them from a “safe” distance so that the police could not say we were interfering with the performance of their duty. We would ask the community members if they were being abused. Most of the time, when a policeman saw us coming, he slipped his book back into his pocket, got into his car, and left in a hurry. The citizens who had been stopped were as amazed as the police at our sudden appearance. I always carried law books in my car. Sometimes, when a policeman was harassing a citizen, I would stand off a little and read the relevant portions of the penal code in a loud voice to all within hearing distance. In doing this, we were helping to educate those who gathered to observe these incidents. If the policeman arrested the citizen and took him to the station, we would follow and immediately post bail. Many community people could not believe at first that we had only their interests at heart. Nobody had ever given them any support or assistance when the police harassed them, but here we were, proud Black men, armed with guns and a knowledge of the law. Many citizens came right out of jail and into the Party, and the statistics of murder and brutality by policemen in our communities fell sharply. Each day we went out on our watch. Sometimes, we got on a policeman’s tail and followed him with our weapons in full view. If he darted around the block or made a U-turn trying to follow us, we let him do it until he got tied fo that. Then, we would follow him again. Either way, we too up a good bit of police time that otherwise would have been spent in harassment. As our forces built up, we doubled the patrols, then tippled them; we began to patrol everywhere- Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, and San Fransisco. Most patrols were a part of our normal movement around the community. We kept them random, however, so that the police could not set a network to anticipate us. They never knew when or where we were going to show up. It might be late at night or early in the morning; some brothers would go on patrol the same time every day, but never in a specific pattern or in the same geographical area. The chief purpose of the patrols was to teach the community security against the police, and we did not need a regular schedule for that. We knew that no particular area could be totally defended; only the community could effectively defend and eventually liberate itself. Our aim was simply to teach them how to go about it. We passed out our literature and ten-point program to the citizens who gathered, discussed community defense, and educated them about their rights concerning weapons. All along, the number of members grew. The Black Panthers were and always required to keep their activities within legal bounds. This was emphasized repeatedly in our political education classes and also when we taught weapons care. If we overstepped legal bounds, the police would easily gain the upper hand and be able to continue their intimidation. We also knew the community was somewhat fearful of the gun and of the policeman who had it. So, we studied the law about weapons and kept within our rights. To be arrested for having weapons would have been a setback to our program of teaching the people their constitutional right to bear arms. As long as we kept everything legal, the police could do nothing, and the people would see that armed defense was a legitimate, constitutional right. In this way, they would lose their doubts and fears and be able to move against the oppressor.

#### The Black Panther Party actively sought alliances with “whiteness” via the Rainbow Coalition

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In the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump won the white vote across all demographics except for college-educated white women. He did especially well among working class white voters: 67 percent of whites without a college degree voted for him. Some post-election analysis marveled at how the white working class could vote against its own interests by supporting a billionaire businessman who is likely to support policies that cut taxes for the rich and weaken the country’s social safety net. Since the New Deal, the Democratic Party has been seen as the party of working people, while Republicans were considered the party of the elites. Donald Trump was able to flip this narrative to his advantage. Election 2016 balkanized issues and made it seem impossible to work on racism, sexism, poverty and economic issues all at once. A core question moving forward for social justice advocates and the Democratic Party is how they can move beyond identity politics and attract working-class voters of all races, building stronger coalitions among disparate groups. One place to look for inspiration and instruction might be 1960s social movements that understood the power of alliances across identities and issues. During this period, a radical coalition formed that might seem impossible today: A group of migrant southerners and working-class white activists called the Young Patriots joined forces with the Black Panthers in Chicago to fight systemic class oppression. So how did this alliance form? And how can its lessons be applied to today’s political moment? An unlikely alliance In the post-civil rights era, a militant Black Power movement emerged, with the Black Panther Party for Self Defense forming in 1966. Inspired by Malcolm X and other international black thought leaders, the group embraced armed struggle as a potential tool against organized racial oppression – a radical break from the philosophy of nonviolent protest. A large faction of the group developed in Chicago, where one of the party leaders was a young man named Fred Hampton. Chicago in the 1960s was a brutal place for poor people. Black, brown and white people all dealt with poverty, unemployment, police violence, substandard housing, inadequate schools and a lack of social services. Ethnic and racial groups each created their own social service and activist networks to combat every kind of oppression. One was the Young Patriot Organization (YPO), which was based in Hillbilly Harlem, an uptown neighborhood of Chicago populated by displaced white southerners. Many YPO members were racist, and they flaunted controversial symbols associated with southern pride, such as the Confederate flag. But like blacks and Latinos, the white Young Patriots and their families experienced discrimination in Chicago. In their case, it was because they were poor and from the South. In his short time as a Black Panther leader, Fred Hampton wanted to advance the group’s goals by forming a “Rainbow Coalition” of working class and poor people of all races. Former members of the Chicago Panthers and YPO tell different versions of the same story of how the groups connected: Each attended the other’s organizing meetings and decided to work together on their common issues. Over time, the Black Panthers learned to tolerate Confederate flags as intransigent signs for rebellion. Their only stipulation was that the white Young Patriots denounce racism. Eventually, Young Patriots rejected their deeply embedded ideas of white supremacy – and even the Confederate flag – as they realized how much they had in common with the Black Panthers and Latino Young Lords. Despite many differences, the two groups united under the umbrella of economic justice. Redneck Revolt Assumed to be natural enemies, these groups united in their calls for economic justice. In the Aug. 9, 1969 issue of The Black Panther newspaper, the party’s chief of staff, David Hilliard, admiringly called the Young Patriots “the only revolutionaries we respect that ever came out of the mother country.” Recalling his work with the YPO, former Black Panther Bobby Lee explained that “The Rainbow Coalition was just a code word for class struggle.” In the end, the Illinois Panthers brought together various elements of the black community, Confederate flag-waving southern white migrants (Young Patriots), Puerto Ricans (Young Lords), poor white ethnic groups (Rising Up Angry, JOIN Community Union, and the Intercommunal Survival Committee), students and the women’s movement. The disparate groups under the coalition’s umbrella pooled resources and shared strategies for providing community services and aid that the government and private sector would not. Initiatives included health clinics, feeding homeless and hungry people, and legal advice for those dealing with unethical landlords and police brutality. In 2016, a stark racial divide is exposed Almost 50 years after the original Rainbow Coalition, the U.S. electorate remains divided along racial lines. Even though Donald Trump asked black Americans, “What do you have to lose?” by voting for him and abandoning the Democratic Party, it didn’t work: Only 8 percent of black voters (and 28 percent of Latino and 27 percent of Asian voters) cast ballots for Trump. Blacks and Latinos are well-represented in the working class, and people of color will become the majority in the working class in 2032. A button depicts the partnership between the Young Patriots and the Black Panthers. Much 2016 post-election attention has focused on working-class white voters, who have been characterized as “forgotten” and “angry” for being left out of the economic recovery. Yet African-Americans have been far worse off; since the 2007 recession, the unemployment rate of African-Americans is nearly double that of Hispanics and more than twice that of whites. Hillary Clinton was the candidate who collected the most diverse voter base – the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia looked like the Rainbow Coalition redux – and she was expected to win the election. However, that visual hid racism’s residual and deeply entrenched place in U.S. society. One of the lessons of the 2016 election is that the country is not as advanced in its work on ending racism and discrimination as most would like to believe. Donald Trump did not have to do much to capitalize on this. The Rainbow Coalition members in 1960s Chicago understood how difficult it is to build coalitions across identities. Former Black Panther Bobby Lee recalled working with the Young Patriots: “It wasn’t easy to build an alliance. I advised them on how to set up ‘serve the people’ programs – free breakfasts, people’s health clinics, all that. I had to run with those cats, break bread with them, hang out at the pool hall. I had to lay down on their couch, in their neighborhood. Then I had to invite them into mine. That was how the Rainbow Coalition was built, real slow.” The coalition, bringing together seemingly polar opposite Black Panthers and Young Patriots, showed that real interactions allow people to understand that their struggles are not essentially different. Donald Trump probably was sincere when he invited African-Americans to join his movement. He simply didn’t realize that a glib invitation would not produce the same results as real coalition-building over a period of time. The lesson to learn from studying 1960s social movements is that lasting change toward economic and racial justice will probably be built brick by brick, person to person and “real slow.”

# 1NR

## Case

### Institution Key---1NR

#### I’m doing the ontology debate here because that is where the 2AC did it, they gave examples like hospitals and police violence, but those can be resolved via institutions via prosecution, putting bad cops in jail and using antitrust to lower healthcare costs.

Kritter 21, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, (Dani, March 2021, “Antitrust as Antiracist”, <https://www.californialawreview.org/antitrust-as-antiracist/>)

The [federal antitrust laws](https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/competition-guidance/guide-antitrust-laws/antitrust-laws)—three statutes enacted over a century ago—are in the spotlight. The year 2020 brought a [new reckoning with corporate power](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/dec/18/google-facebook-antitrust-lawsuits-big-tech) and a [resurgent interest in using antitrust law](https://newrepublic.com/article/160646/biden-antitrust-blueprint-monopoly-busting) as a force for populist change. The “hipster antitrust” movement argues that the focus of antitrust policy should not be limited to market power and consumer welfare. Rather, antitrust can and should be a remedy for a suite of societal ills, from workers’ rights to campaign finance and income inequality. The year 2020 also marked an awakening to [racial injustice](https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/09/22/racial-justice-in-america-a-deeper-look/) in America. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery sparked nationwide outrage and demands to reform institutions built on systemic racism. Yet the recent plans for [antitrust reform](https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/117th-congress-takes-early-steps-6904745/)—which primarily focus on monopolies in tech—ignore the fact that the antitrust status quo perpetuates [racial injustice](https://theappeal.org/how-antitrust-perpetuates-structural-racism/). But it doesn’t have to be this way. This blog identifies consolidation in healthcare and vertical restraints in franchising as two examples of how lax antitrust enforcement has disproportionately harmed people of color. It also argues that by dusting off existing antitrust tools, antitrust enforcement can be [antiracist](https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist). Background: The Antitrust Toolbox Congress enacted the federal antitrust laws to check the power of massive corporations run amuck. These laws—the Sherman Act, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Act, and the Clayton Act—were originally designed to control corporate power, protect individual economic freedom, and ensure a fair and equal society. But beginning in the 1970s when Robert Bork published the still-influential “[Antitrust Paradox](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2012/12/20/antitrust-was-defined-by-robert-bork-i-cannot-overstate-his-influence/),” courts slowly narrowed the focus of antitrust law to protecting consumer welfare. Today, antitrust enforcement prioritizes preventing the anticompetitive acquisition, exercise, or maintenance of market power that threatens consumer welfare and competition—a much narrower goal than its populist origins. Dusting Off the Tools Recent years have seen [bipartisan](https://www.axios.com/exclusive-poll-shows-bipartisan-support-for-tech-antitrust-action-c3794ff5-120d-44d8-bac1-58b033efbd8a.html) interest in reining in powerful corporations with more aggressive antitrust enforcement. One of the few agency voices calling for an antiracist approach to antitrust is Rebecca Slaughter, the acting chair of the FTC. Slaughter [has recently spoken out](https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/public_statements/1583714/slaughter_remarks_at_gcr_interactive_women_in_antitrust.pdf) about using antitrust enforcement to “right the wrongs of systemic racism.” She challenges what she views to be a faulty premise of antitrust law: “that antitrust can and should be value-neutral, and therefore social justice problems like racism do not have a role in antitrust enforcement.” Slaughter argues that antitrust has never been and never will be value-neutral. Antitrust addresses market structures, and racism is entrenched in the historic and current market structures in the United States. When agencies make decisions about how to deploy antitrust tools, they can choose whether to reinforce these structural inequities or to dismantle them. Healthcare and franchising are two examples of how a shift in antitrust enforcement from “value-neutral” to antiracist can break down market structures that perpetuate racial injustice. Honing in on Healthcare Monopolies Consolidation in the healthcare industry is a driving force behind the sky-high cost of medical care and pharmaceutical drugs. Due to a wave of healthcare mergers, most hospital markets in the United States are dominated by a single corporate entity. The lack of competition means the dominant hospital is free to exercise market power by raising prices and restricting output. [Recent studies](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/18/health/covid-hospitals-medicare-rates.html) of prices for hospital and outpatient treatment report that healthcare mergers have resulted in large networks charging private insurers 2.5 to 3 times more than Medicare rates for the same patient care. These rising costs lead to higher insurance premiums paid by employers and individuals. Artificially inflated healthcare costs disproportionately burden people of color and create a barrier to accessing quality care. Black families spend a greater share of their household income on health care premiums and out-of-pocket costs than the average American family. And of the thirty million [uninsured](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/usc-brookings-schaeffer-on-health-policy/2020/02/19/there-are-clear-race-based-inequalities-in-health-insurance-and-health-outcomes/) individuals in the United States, half are people of color. The [COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/index.html) has put this health inequity in sharp focus: racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to contract the virus, get severely ill, and die from coronavirus infections. What can antitrust do? First, antitrust merger review can be antiracist. Mergers between competitors are scrutinized under Section 7 of the Clayton Act, which prohibits mergers that may substantially lessen competition or create a monopoly. When determining whether a merger lessens competition, the FTC, Department of Justice (DOJ), and courts consider the likelihood of anticompetitive effects. An antiracist application of the Clayton Act would consider racially disparate outcomes like health care costs, insurance premiums, and the quality of care provided as anticompetitive effects. Business practices that perpetuate systemic racism are anticompetitive because they exclude people of color from full participation in the market. And this exclusion is expensive: a study by Citigroup estimates that discrimination cost the U.S. economy [$16 trillion](https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/09/23/916022472/cost-of-racism-u-s-economy-lost-16-trillion-because-of-discrimination-bank-says) since 2000. Moreover, there is precedent for applying a broad conception of anticompetitive effects in merger review. In [Brown Shoe Co. Inc. v. United States](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/20/technology/tech-giants-antitrust-law.html), the Supreme Court held that a meager 7.2 percent combined market share of two merging shoe manufacturers was unhealthy market concentration under the Clayton Act. Chief Justice Earl Warren acknowledged that concentration in the shoe industry might offer some efficiencies and lower prices for consumers, but “the protection of viable, small, locally owned businesses” was a priority. Therefore, agencies can and should argue that mergers that reinforce racial inequity substantially lessen competition. Second, antitrust enforcement actions can hone in on industries like healthcare where the anticompetitive effects are acutely felt by people of color. As California attorney general from 2011 to 2017, [Vice President Kamala Harris](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/06/health/kamala-harris-health-care.html) prioritized taking on healthcare prices through antitrust. Her investigation laid the groundwork for California’s suit against [Sutter Health](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/03/health/sutter-hospitals-medical-bills.html) for using its market power to raise prices and extort better deals from insurers, which resulted in a $575 million settlement. The DOJ and FTC should follow in California and Vice President Harris’s footsteps and crack down on healthcare, utilizing an antiracist approach.

### Debt Turn---1NR

#### The contempt loophole has fueled debt criminalization at the federal level and throughout the country

Pallardy 18 Carrie Pallardy journalist reporting for Saving for College, December 31, 2018 Can You Be Arrested for Not Repaying Your Student Loans? https://www.savingforcollege.com/article/can-you-be-arrested-for-not-repaying-your-student-loans

The potential consequences of unpaid student loans can be serious, ranging from damaged credit and lawsuits to even arrest. Even though the United States no longer has debtors’ prisons, it is still possible today to be arrested for unpaid debt, including unpaid student loan debt, if you fail to appear in court. A brief history of debtors’ prisons The term “debtors’ prisons” refers to a jail or prison specifically operated to hold people who are arrested for failing to pay back debts. The term “peonage” refers to compelling a borrower to work off a debt. Debtors’ prisons became illegal in the United States in 1833 and peonage was abolished by the Peonage Abolition Act of 1867. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Bearden v. Georgia in 1983 that jailing people who cannot repay their debts is unconstitutional, according to The Marshall Project. Why do arrests for unpaid debt still happen? If debtors’ prisons are illegal, how can people still be arrested for not repaying debts like student loans? These types of arrests occur because of more than just unpaid debt. When someone defaults on their student loan, the lender will often turn to debt collectors. Filing a lawsuit against the borrower is one tactic collection agencies use to recoup the debt, according to an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) report on the criminalization of private debt. Both private student loan lenders and the federal government can sue for failure to pay student loan debt. If the borrower is sued and fails to appear in court, the debt collection agency can ask the judge to issue an arrest warrant. The ACLU notes a number of reasons borrowers do not make their court appearances, including lack of notification and health issues. In some cases, notice was served at an incorrect or old address. Arrests made for unpaid student loan debt A total of 44 states allow the arrest of debtors for contempt of court, according to the ACLU report. Failing to appear in court after a court summons can result in a warrant and arrest. The warrant and arrest are for a failure to appear in court, not for a failure to repay student loan debt.

#### The federal govt is arresting people for student loan debts

Luperon 16 ALBERTO LUPERON is a reporter for Law & Crime , US Marshals Are Rounding Up People With Late Student Loan Debt Feb 16th, 2016, https://lawandcrime.com/crazy/us-marshals-are-rounding-up-people-with-late-student-loan-debt/

Are you behind on your student loans? Do you live in Houston, Texas? Then hold my hand because I have bad news. U.S. Marshals there are arresting people who are late on their federal college debt. Fox 26 reported an anonymous U.S. Marshal source who said they’re going to serve 1200 to 1500 warrants to people who are behind their federal student loans.

#### The best form of their argument is mutual aid, but that is bad, it lets the state off the hook. It endgenders a charity economy that autonomizes political activity and allows hierarchies to re-assert themselves.

Dawson 20, author, activist and professor of English at the CUNY Graduate Center, and at the College of Staten Island, City University of New York. Dawson specializes in postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and environmental humanities (Ashley, “Interview: Ashley Dawson, Extreme Cities,” https://www.stirtoaction.com/blog-posts/interview-ashley-dawson-extreme-cities)

Later in the book you explore ‘disaster communism’, described as ‘the communal solidarities forged in the teeth of calamity.’ Could you explain this approach? In addition to what I was finding on the ground with Occupy Sandy activists, one of the main inspirations was Rebecca Solnit’s Paradise Built in Hell. The book is a good set of theoretical arguments, as well as a series of case studies of the moments when disasters, such as the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, lead to a breakdown of established social hierarchies and the state ceases to function. During these moments, people re-engage in mutual aid and you find a lot more social solidarity. Such moments of disaster can have a levelling effect, and to use the terms we’ve been criticising, they can produce quite a lot of resilience. Another way we could think about this is by drawing on Autonomy theory, which came out of Italy in the 1970s with an emphasis on working-class agency. It’s about how people can function outside of established institutions, whether it’s the state or trade unions - and how they can rely on self-help. So disaster communism can be seen as an example of applied Autonomy. In my book I explore how disaster communism can be really powerful in both the initial stages and the aftermath of a disaster, as people turn to one another in the absence of established authority. But as communities move on from bare survival to reconstruction efforts, the established hierarchies tend to reassert themselves unless there are very strong organisational forms, either born out of the disaster or reanimated, to challenge those with more resources as well as the forms of state power that entrench such inequalities. This reassertion of authority is what happened in Red Hook, Brooklyn, after Hurricane Sandy. Occupy Sandy’s efforts to work with people living in Red Hook social housing – the largest residential development in the borough – really got stymied by the local Democratic Party machine. Their representatives swooped in and worked with real estate developers and affluent people. Their rhetoric about Occupy Sandy activists as anarchists and hooligans scared people into not working anymore with activists. I think this example shows that mutual aid is not enough, that there has to be a reckoning with and democratisation of the State – in both its local form or at a more abstract level. So we need a disaster communist theory about how an upsurge in mutual aid can be made more durable.

#### Genuine equality relies on the rich giving up their power. That makes mutual aid self-defeating and political challenges to corporate power preferable

Geng 21 (Lucia, “Mutual Aid Goes Mainstream,” Fall 2021, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/mutual-aid-goes-mainstream)

Last spring, within hours of the University of Chicago’s announcement that classes would be held online, students created a Facebook group to coordinate mutual aid efforts. Even with finals right around the corner, UChicago Mutual Aid came alive with activity. Students eagerly offered and accepted support in the form of advice, essential supplies like food and moving boxes, and spreadsheets listing leads on resources like housing. What I witnessed at my college was just one example of the many mutual aid networks, both college-based and non-college-based, that sprung up across the country in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mutual aid, a radical practice that has been undertaken by marginalized groups for decades, became a mainstream buzzword almost overnight. Mutual aid efforts often arise during moments of crisis when those in positions of authority fail to help people, and when the importance of grassroots efforts comes into full focus. When the immediate crisis passes, groups may either fizzle out or choose to adapt to a new context. Today, the UChicago group is still active and boasts a membership of nearly 6,000 on Facebook, but the pace of its posts has slowed down. Scrolling through the public group, you might see questions or requests for help receive just a few responses or none at all, especially if the poster is not a UChicago student. As the new school year begins, however, there’s still a need for mutual aid. The pandemic revealed inequalities between students on campus that have not gone away. COVID-19 continues to take a toll on many college students, both physically and psychologically. What’s more, temporary measures that were intended to relieve stress—such as colleges choosing to adopt a universal pass/fail grading system—have all but faded away. Though students may no longer be scrambling in the same way they were last spring, many are now struggling to meet a new series of challenges. To learn how mutual aid groups are approaching their activities as students return to campuses, I spoke to organizers at six different universities. I found that even as donations slow down, many groups are eager to experiment with their structure and broaden the scope of the work they do. Students have found that mutual aid provides a unique way to build solidarity with others both on and off campus. Carleton Mutual Aid was founded in May 2021 by student organizers with Sunrise Carleton, an environmental justice activist group. They were inspired by a supply drive set up by Carleton College students to help those protesting the police killing of Daunte Wright in a nearby Minneapolis suburb in April. After seeing how students collected funds, food items, medical supplies, and hygiene products for protesters, organizers decided to set up a fund to meet daily needs on their campus. The mutual aid fund is only open to Carleton students. Requests are filled in a first-come, first-served order. The group doesn’t prioritize based on the type of need, instead choosing to trust that people who make requests for funds would truly benefit from them. So far, the fund has fulfilled students’ requests for things like groceries, travel expenses to and from campus, hospital bills, and sneakers. The group’s organizers told me they want to challenge the scarcity mindset that pervades campus: the feeling that one will never have enough of something, especially money. They also want to strengthen ties between campus community members. “I feel like the money that goes towards mutual aid blesses someone else in a way,” said Hannah Ward, a Carleton Mutual Aid organizer and second-year student. “Say you get money for your sneakers, then somebody’s like, ‘Oh, I love those sneakers.’ . . . I feel like it enforces a feeling of community.” The group also wants to promote the importance of wealth redistribution. Mutual aid “means an end or at least a step toward the end of wealth hoarding,” said Ellie Zimmerman, a recent Carleton graduate and former organizer with Sunrise Carleton and Carleton Mutual Aid. “If you have excess, there’s a lot better places that that could be sitting than your trust fund.” Carleton’s mutual aid group is relatively new. At Georgetown Mutual Aid, which was founded by students Megan Huynh and Binqi Chen in August 2020, organizers have been working long enough to encounter donation fatigue. Most of the mutual aid organizers I spoke with mentioned a slowdown in donations as the pandemic has continued. In response, groups have tried out a variety of new tactics to solicit contributions, including posting on social media, setting up systems for recurring donations, and expanding their fundraising outreach beyond students to professors. As an elite private institution, Georgetown has more than its fair share of well-off students. You might expect that proximity to wealth to simplify fundraising efforts, but that isn’t the case, according to Huynh. “We go to school with international royalty’s children or ambassadors’, or TikTok influencers,” she said, “but it is kind of interesting to note who is donating to mutual aid and who isn’t.” Huynh and Chen have found that it’s poorer students—those most in need of assistance from mutual aid themselves—who are the most likely to donate their time and resources. That sentiment was echoed by other organizers. These conditions present another challenge. “A lot of the people who need aid don’t have the time or energy to organize something like this,” said Mallika Luthar, a University of California, Berkeley student and co-founder of Mutual Aid at Berkeley. As a result, the group contacts relevant student organizations, like environmental groups and low-income support groups, to ensure that students who most need aid are aware of Mutual Aid at Berkeley’s resources. The group is also trying to tap into networks of students involved with tech and business activities on campus, who have access to bigger pools of funding. Student mutual aid groups will need to carefully consider how much time and effort to spend wooing potential benefactors. A large donation can go a long way, but it’s important that organizers not forget whom mutual aid is truly for: those who are the most vulnerable during a crisis. Mutual aid as a means to redistribute wealth is a worthy goal, but the practice can only go so far when it relies on the voluntary giving of the rich.