# Back @ it again…

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#### The Zoomification of debate has only accelerated this logic, and desire for “normal”.

Moten, Harney, and Shukaitis 21 – Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. Interviewed by Stevphen Shukaitis. ("Refusing Completion: A Conversation," March 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/>)

SS: That reminds me of the discussion in the beginning of the book about property and dispossession. There you flip the usual narrative to say that **rather than talking about how to make things common, it’s more the case that** that’s their default state, **that sharing is the default**. Rather it’s the default sharing which needs to be broken down and individuated. To me that changes a few things in that **it gestures less towards needing to find ways to collaborate and more towards the necessity** of blocking and **stopping the processes which have stopped us from collaborating and sharing.** SH: Yes. You know it’s a Mario Tronti formulation, “the workers first, then capital.” Sharing first, then individuation, locates the energy source correctly. Collective resistance, even when practiced in singular acts, is the engine. But this is also a George Jackson and a Gilles Deleuze formulation. That is to say it is an ontological formulation even when it is not necessarily a temporal formulation. The riot precedes the police. Love precedes its regulation into “love” and hate. Cedric Robinson calls this the preservation of the ontological totality, the proliferation of life before, after, and in-excess-of its historically brutal regulation and/as individuation. And it is because life (and nonlife) proliferate even as death. That repeating flash in/out of time, the flash of sharing, of love, of riot, and then the coming into being of an already latent regulation is everything. Because that’s where the nonlocal is, that’s black quantum life, that’s the fugitive wormhole, the whole physical sociality that Denise teaches us. That’s where the order of one and the other, resistance and regulation, gets disordered, continually, where symmetry slips, and in a flash there’s a party going on. We work under the assumption that we are shared even if it only comes to us in the flash of a match, of a smile, or a touch. We work under the assumption that we have what we need though it is constantly stolen from us because we must give it away, as Fumi Okiji reminds us. We have what we need and, now, what we need to do is to want what we have. We work under the assumption that we are constantly being driven apart but that this is always ultimately unsuccessful at every level because we’re not apart. Not only do we fail, even the most exalted of us, at individuation, but also this attempt to destroy our sharing destroys the earth. We work under the assumption that the making of the world—which is none other than the grandest and most grotesque project of separating us—is genocidal and geocidal. And we work under the assumption that in the face of all this carnage, if we will have black study it has us. FM: Maybe what we always also want to be doing is operating under the assumption that when it comes to thought, rigor and generosity are not separate from one another. That “intra-action,” to use Karen Barad’s term, is intra-active with another: that of black study and black studies. That’s where it’s at, as the Godfather would say. That’s what we’re interested in. And that’s also where we’re at in our lives, in our intellectual life together, and in our social life together as friends. It’s just that the syntax and the semantics that we have been given in order to try to understand that double intra-action is inadequate for the most part. We ask ourselves, how do we understand the relation between black study and black studies, and then we have to take two months to try to overcome the fact that “relation” ain’t the right word. In other words, the intra-action of black study and black studies requires something like what Barad calls “experimental metaphysics.” Or, maybe another way to put it is that what’s required are some experiments in anti-metaphysics. Maybe black study is just this continual experiment in anti-metaphysics. SH: All Incomplete is also about the next town, about what we heard about the next town, about the next experiment already going on, continually as Fred says. And so, for instance, I’m very grateful to the current generation of Guyanese feminist, activist scholars such as Kamala Kempadoo and Alissa Trotz who have made more available the work of the great Guyanese feminist activist intellectual Andaiye. We’ve been studying and teaching with Andaiye’s The Point Is to Change the World, and also with Lessons from the Damned by the Damned, the latter a collectively written book about a freedom school set up by black women in the late 1960s and early ’70s in Newark. Now, Andaiye talks about the research she did as part of Red Thread, an independent cross-racial organization of women in Guyana. She talks about how the poor and working-class women who are keeping diaries on their social reproductive labor were doing research that she, Andaiye, could never do as well as them. Then, from the Damned, we hear the story of a key turning point in the freedom school. The women running the school have met some middle-class, teacher-qualified black women at a Vietnam protest and invited them back to the school. Much is gained by the encounter, but after a few weeks the women who run the school say something to the effect of, we loved them, but we had to send them away because they could not believe that we—in our position as black working-class women—were better placed to theorize this world. If we take these lessons from Andaiye and the Damned seriously, maybe we can get out of some of the metaphysical assumptions of our positions and roles. What Andaiye and the Damned are saying is that poor people, poor black and Indian and indigenous women, in these most vital instances were better researchers and better theorists than those of us who are traditionally and institutionally trained as such and rise through the “meritocracy.” So, **we have to find some other reason for doing what we are doing—cause it is not because we are the best at it—**and so we have to find some other way, beyond this metaphysics of meritocracy we inhabit. And from there **it becomes clear that we are not the ones to sit in judgment, and this means we can practice nothing but open admissions and open promotion in the places where we teach**, whether elementary schools, universities, or art academies. And what we would do is support the primary theorists and researchers as they come through, should they wish to come through, and should they wish to stay. And isn’t this serving the people? After all, serving the people never meant serving them breakfast. It meant being at the service of the people, because the people held what we all need, precariously, with only partial access sometimes themselves to this wealth, knowledge, and practice of how to learn about society and how to analyze it because it needs to be changed. That is why it was called a party of self-defense: to defend all this, not to imagine that the party was going to generate the wealth itself. **Service becomes the answer to all the anxieties about allyship and class. And service is debt, partiality, incompleteness in action.**

#### Speech after speech, they’re all the same poetic in their continuation but never done, never new.

Moten, Harney, and Shukaitis 21 – Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. Interviewed by Stevphen Shukaitis. ("Refusing Completion: A Conversation," March 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/>)

SS: To me it seems rather than sitting down and planning out a book, it’s almost like **things happen with you just having ongoing conversations and spending time together, and then every so often there’s a congealment of what already happened**. So **rather than** things **being planned, they just emerge**. Maybe it’s like the Brötzmann Tentet where they started with planned and written compositions before tearing them up and letting all the voices gathered find their own form. SH: Well, this book, All Incomplete, is necessarily different. We had so many opportunities—as a direct result of The Undercommons—to travel, to turn up, and just to be with people who shared our passions and our commitments, and we found out that we shared and were shared with all these people because of The Undercommons, because of its being free and available and produced by this autonomous, militant press. In other words, because of you, Stevphen. And as a result of this rich experience coming out of The Undercommons, we knew we were going to put together another book of writing because **we wanted to stay afloat and adrift in this common wind.** So, this book, All Incomplete, is a peripatetic book of influences and circumstances, and sharedness. Also, with this book we’ve moved on to what we often call the General Baker stance in our talks. General Baker and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers—and again this is an inspiration not a comparison—did not worry about whether the Ford plant was a good or bad institution or about their complicity with the Ford Motor Company. And **we don’t worry about the university anymore**. For the League, the Ford plant or the Dodge plant was a job that sustained them as they attempted to abolish Ford or Dodge or take them over in such a way that it amounted to their abolition. Of course, this is a contradiction, to draw a check from the place you want to destroy, for us as it was for the League. But as Cedric Robinson was fond of saying, **the** **task then is to heighten the contradiction**. And that is what we have to tried to do, **rather than worry about governance or the sharpness of our critique of the university or our complicity with it.** The university has to go, and until the day it goes I want some money out of it, and I say that as someone who has been out of a wage from the university for two years now. Okay, so under the guidance of General Baker’s stance, **we could stop all the critique and we could start to write about what we loved, the ongoing red and black abolition, and this could take the form of criticism instead of critique, criticism like what collectives do because they want more collectivity.** In other words, **this kind of love I am talking about is not liberal**, individuated love. **It’s the love made up of joy and pain. All incomplete. And you can’t love something or someone by yourself.** To do that is really to abandon that someone or something to the subject/object relation, to purity, to separation. **We have to love commonly, collectively, entangled** in what we are doing. That’s why **this book has all these voices:** Denise [da Silva], Zun [Lee], me and Fred, and all those who made us possible, too. Beyond that this book is a book by the band, assembled with Le Mardi Gras Listening Collective, with the Center for Convivial Research and Autonomy, with the Institute for Physical Sociology to name a few. I heard Marquis Bey talk about how useful he found the prefix “non-” and I am going to borrow it from him. These collectives strive not to be collections of the interpersonal. What we are trying to make is a nonpersonal band, nonpersonal families.

#### The Role of the Ballot is to promote the intimacies of entangled relationality through the promotion of the polyrhythm – The AFF’s clears space for black people to tap into the frequency and recognizes the value in the then, now, and yet to come. It’s an affirmation of the work that “got done” before we ever entered this room and creates the potential for energy and communities of care.

Moten, Harney, and Shukaitis 21 – Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. Interviewed by Stevphen Shukaitis. ("Refusing Completion: A Conversation," March 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/>)

Stefano Harney: When I start off talking at our talks, going first, so to speak, **I’m really just continuing.** I’m **picking up where we never left off.** The talks are an important moment in our ongoing rehearsal. So, in that sense you are right. I’m just picking up the beat. And Fred just comes in on top of that, and I remember Fred’s great phrase, “improvisation is **making nothing out of something**.” We have to do it this way—improvisationally—because we never left practice. Because practice is where you can be with everyone, where you can be with your friends. And **the other thing is everybody already knows this beat, and the hook.** We don’t travel and talk to bring something new. Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich called themselves “pilgrims of the obvious.” And that’s what we are bringing with our itinerant ways—the good news people already have, the obvious. Now, we aren’t comparing ourselves to them, except insofar as like them we want to retain the emphasis on the obvious, and to avoid being confused with the message. **It’s not about us. We accept** going down the road, **travelling on**, as a breath of **the common wind**, as Julius Scott would teach us. We’re happy if our rehearsal, **our rhythm** as you call it, the strangeness of our dub, as Eddie George would say, **comes through to people as a kind of insurgent information about the obvious, a cadence in that common wind**. FM: There’s two things. There’s a poetics to the writing. Our acquaintance began as a function of a shared interest in poetry. That shared interest is old and sort of ancestral, so to speak, because we get it from our parents. But also, we got to know each other in terms of a certain kind of engagement with a tradition of experimental poetry in North America. Those poets remain really important and crucial for us—as poets but also as thinkers. Our friendship grew under the protection of our friend and mentor Bill Corbett, a poet who further immersed us in that tradition but who also lived that tradition. There is a poetics embedded in the criticism of poets who are in and extend that tradition—H.D., Zukofsky, Olson, Duncan, Mackey, Howe, Baraka. We grew up under the influence of their criticism, rather than under the influence of what people nowadays call critique. We were interested in the criticism that was being offered by poets more than in the various forms of literary or even theoretical critique. And to the extent that we were interested in theory or philosophy, we were always interested in folks who revel in their poetic sensibilities, whether that was James or Derrida or Glissant or Wynter or Spillers. And we gravitated towards the poetic or the literary sensibility that animates Marx’s work. **We were looking for poetry, or for the poetic, in everything we read**, and the criticism that got us started helped us in that. Marx, like Zukofsky, is a deep and playful reader of Shakespeare. There’s a trace of Shakespeare in how he develops this interplay of critique and criticism in his work, and that was always something in which we were trying to be involved. And that goes back to something that was there for Stefano in his relation to his dad, and for me in my relation to my mom**. It meant also being interested in the poetics of everyday speech, and the common tongues of the people that we grew up around. We’re just fascinated by the rhythm and the music of their speech.** You can talk about this as a kind of vernacular poetics, particularly with regard to the black tradition, but you could broaden that vernacular notion out in the ways that William Carlos Williams does as he tries to imagine a new American speech. When Baraka, say, takes up that charge he’s trying to make it ante-American and, at the end of the day, anti-American, too. So, **there are** some traditions **that we’re in**. The best way to put it is the way Baraka put it—you have to sound like something. You know, there’s writing that doesn’t sound like anything. It’s drone-ish. Rightly, Derrida teaches us not to think of writing as epiphenomenal to speech or parasitical on speech, and yet there is the kind of writing that appears to have no relation to speech whatsoever and to the way that speech is always irreducible to a single voice. We want to make sure **our writing sounds like something where sounding like something is sounding like something broken or cracked or dubbed or overdubbed. And because we’re overdubbed**—because, as Stefano says, **we’re visitors, who are always visiting, and who are always being visited**—we are always speaking names, always being spoken by them, always working in this unnaming and renaming, maybe both in but also against the grain of how poetry bears naming as a kind of power. **Maybe there was no way for us not to sound like something, given the various places where we’re coming from**. **Maybe we can also tap into some kinda poetic force** that sound bears against poetry’s nominating power. Maybe we can just hang with how folks hold something back of what they hold out to the poet’s lovingly extractive ear. We don’t know. Anyway, there’s that sense of a poetics in the writing that’s also a phonics of the writing. But **then there’s this other question of rhythm that has to do with the fact that our writing is a form of correspondence**. We like to think we’re involved in a kind of musical correspondence, like we’re trading fours. You know, Stefano takes four bars and I take four bars; or, probably it’s more like he takes four bars and I take forty-four. But also, there’s the problem that **the normal rhythm** of taking fours **is predicated on proximate presence, on being there with the person** with whom you’re trading. And **most of the time we’re not there together in the same place and we’re not playing at the same time. There’s all these** time lags and rhythmic **irregularities** that come into play—a sort of involuntary sync of patience. And for a while being in different places has meant being in different seasons. **We’ve been learning how to negotiate that—not overcome it but actually ride it. We use the gaps and the pauses as ways to think more clearly and more effectively with one another** and by way of one another and past the separation of one and another. **There’s a rhythm. Definitely. But it’s an irregular rhythm. And not only irregular compared to some metronomic norm but irregular in being overpopulated. The beautiful thing about the polyrhythm is that even though it’s just the two of us,** as Bill Withers and Grover Washington Jr. would say, **it’s way more than that.** Not only **our parents, our families, our partners, and the various children in our lives, but also all these other people that we’re always working with and talking with and thinking with and reading with. There’s always a lot of sound in our head,** and in our hands, too.

#### Debate’s refusal to acknowledge indebtedness is an active choice that tacitly endorses completeness. Being complete sounds cool and all on face, but actually fuck completeness because it is the grounds for racialized and gendered terms of order.

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SS: Your use of **incompleteness reminds me in certain ways of how before you talked about debt not as this crushing condition but as something that, in being unpayable,** is **the** very **principle of sociality.** So debt not as IMF-backed austerity measures, but debt as **all those things we owe to each other.** The way you talk about **incompleteness strikes me as similar in that it’s not incompleteness as a problem—like there’s something lacking in myself which is fulfilled through another person—but rather as a permanent state which is more of a blessing, or something to be preserved.** It’s not something that needs to be dealt with as a problem. Is that a fair reading? SH: Yes, I think that’s right. FM: Have you ever seen the film Jerry Maguire? The title character is this brutal drone of individuation whose whole life ends up depending upon his exploitation of a black football player, which he accomplishes with the help of a female assistant whom he later marries. The movie begins with Jerry Maguire being a successfully individuated man who’s complete, or thinks he is, until he gets stripped of all that. In order to find himself he’s got to attach himself in a more or less straight Hegelian mode to one who’s not quite really one, this player who shows out on and off the playing field while also modeling an authentic and loving family life, all of which reveals him never to have been the kind of free subject Jerry used to be. They call this a romantic comedy. It’s the story of the man who at the end of his personal (re)development—after having the biggest night of his life because the black football player literally endangers his own health in order to make a catch that will make him a superstar so that Jerry MaFuckingGuire can exploit him and attract other superstars who he can also exploit—finds that he can’t enjoy it without the woman who has made it all possible but whom he has exploited and demeaned and overlooked. That’s when this motherfucker breaks into a feminist consciousness-raising group in order to reclaim his wife. How does he get her back? Just by saying, “Hello,” according to her, but he gets to finish his speech by saying to her, “You complete me.” Like, he was at 87 percent and she was the final 13 percent. Now, he’s fucking complete when he gets her back. Well, **fuck completeness. Not only that, fuck completeness as a way of understanding anything about what love actually is.** What they call romantic comedy is really anti-romantic tragedy. It’s amazing that something like Jerry Maguire is offered as a representation of what it’s like to fall in love. If you’ve ever fallen you know that the other person or persons don’t complete you. They incomplete you. They fuck you the fuck up. **It doesn’t leave you intact.** It plays you, undermines you. **It disturbs and disrupts your individuation. It obliterates not only the possibility of but the desire for individuation.** If you think about it in those terms, incompleteness is a consummation devoutly to be wished. The entire genre of the romantic comedy is usually some white dude who’s being dragged against his will into the condition of incompleteness. When, finally, he submits to it, you know that the sequel of that movie will be all about the breakup, which follow’s the idea of individuation having had a chance to rally, which the regular miseries of monogamous heterosexuality—which Samuel R. Delany teaches us is the deepest perversion—are happy to provide. **The idea of completeness is ridiculous** and genocidal. **There’s** just **no end to the ways it continually seeks to destroy our shared capacity to breathe** and ground. It predicates and requires the constantly asserted revision of what Robinson calls “the terms of order.” **It** predicates and **necessitates the constant brutalization of all the people in the world who resist** those terms of order and **who practice modalities of social existence that are not predicated on those terms of order**, as Robinson shows in his beautifully radical use of ethnographic and anthropological work in The Terms of Order. **We advocate for incompleteness.** We think such advocacy is part of what it is “to preserve,” as he says, “the ontological totality.” **To preserve the totality is to refuse its completion. That’s our** ongoing ante- and anti-metaphysical **experiment.** SS: To stay with the absurd then, that reminds me of when I was on my honeymoon in India and I ended up randomly watching this interview with Jeff Bridges where they’re asking him about how he’s ended up married so long and how that’s very unusual for a lot of successful Hollywood actors … that kind of crap. And his response to that is excellent. He says that he loves being married not because when things go bad his wife can magically fix things. **There’s no expectation of completeness**. Rather he says that **when things go bad** for either of them **the other will be able to feel and understand that pain deeper and more fully than anyone else could.** It’s not that the other is the solution to a problem but rather that **the relationship makes it possible to feel in ways that would not be possible by oneself.** You could make the same points about other emotions as well. He talks about how that develops through spending and sharing years together with someone. That really struck me as a better, non-idealized version of a relationship. **It’s not that anything gets fixed, it’s that the everything is felt more deeply** … like when Spinoza talks about affect **both in terms of developing greater capacities to affect and be affected by the world.** SH: When my partner Tonika and I found each other in Singapore, the first gift she ever gave me was a book called The Dude and the Zen Master. I read this book from cover to cover. In the book, Jeff Bridges has a series of conversations with a Zen master. They’re trying to lose themselves together. Getting lost together where the loss of self does not lead to selflessness alone but to a new state of being lost together, a shared state of (non)self. So, when I say Tonika and I found each other I also mean this: that we got lost together not in each other, but instead of each other. SS: That book is great. I’m quite fond it myself. I really like how Bernie Glassman, who’s the Zen master and a long-time friend of Jeff Bridges, talks about that for him dharma practice is a way that undercuts or escapes from the subject-object relationship. In some ways the way that book comes together through a long-standing friendship and series of ongoing conversations is similar to the dynamic between you two. And since Stefano is the Dude, Fred, that makes you the Zen master … Another thing that comes up in their conversation is the idea that The Big Lebowski is formed around a series of Zen koans. Maybe I’m stretching the comparison too far, but I might even suggest that The Undercommons is likewise formed around a series of paradoxical observations, like the university being the place you cannot study. It’s those things that are strange ideas when you first hear them, and their value is as much in what it produces as you engage with it, preferably with other people, even more so than the value of the literal statement itself. It’s something you need to sit with. FM: It makes you want to think about what the relationship is between the dialectic, the antinomy, and the koan. We want—and then imagine that as we get older and have a chance to read more books that we will receive—other terms in other languages from other places that also correspond to this. Let’s stay with the work of paradox and the way paradox constitutes a motive force or an engine for thinking. Stefano, you’re saying that you get lost with others. Generally, our experience of being lost is not described like that. Man, one of my earliest memories is of being lost in a grocery store in Las Vegas called Vegas Village. I remember going to Vegas Village, when I was maybe three or four years old, and getting separated from my mom. At a certain moment, you’re wandering, looking at toys, and all of a sudden, where’s mama? And I got all upset and I was crying, and it wasn’t my mother who found me. It was some other person who found me and helped me then to reunite with my mom. But I remember that very vividly now because I was found by someone else. It’s as if being found is that moment when, having realized one is alone, one finds that one is not alone. It was as if I had been found by a principle; that principle, Stefano, of being lost with others. There are these famous lines from The Faerie Queene: “What though the sea with waves continuall / Doe eate the earth, it is no more at all; / Ne is the earth the lesse, or loseth ought: / For whatsoever from one place doth fall / Is with the tyde unto another brought: / For there is nothing lost, that may be found if sought.” Edmund Spenser is ruminating on this intra-action of the lost and found. He elaborates this relation between loss and finding and seeking that ends up being something like an early version of Newton’s law of conservation of matter and energy. There’s a physics, or an anti-metaphysics, to this shit, and a question concerning the no-thing, the non-singularity of the lost and found and sought. My relation, to the extent that I have one, to Zen was initiated through a book by Gary Zukav called The Dancing Wu Li Masters. It was an extension of the interesting work in physics that this group in the Bay Area, the Fundamental Fysiks Group, was doing again in the mid-seventies. They were really interested in the philosophical foundations and implications of quantum mechanics and in what they saw as these absolute affinities between quantum mechanics and Zen Buddhism. Our old friend, Alan Jackson, is the one who gave me this book. I’ve been trying to read this book for thirty years now and not quite getting there. **Let’s use the word “sharing”** to describe what Jeff Bridges is talking about with his partner even though maybe the obvious word that would come to mind is “empathy.” Let’s use the word “sharing” **in order to take into account the righteous and legitimate critique of a certain kind of racialized and highly gendered and brutal empathy that Saidiya Hartman gives us** in Scenes of Subjection. Or, if we move by way of a certain radical recovery of empathy that Hortense Spillers gives us in Arthur Jafa’s Dreams Are Colder than Death, then we can move from that recovery of empathy towards something like sharing. But if we try to understand this notion of sharing, which we’ve tried to talk about under the rubric of debt, this implies that we’re not trying to establish or to justify the metaphysical foundations of politics, which are predicated on brutalities including those that Hartman delineates. Rather, **what we’re interested in is a social physics of sharing that is intra-active and which is predicated on this interplay of losing and finding and seeking** that Stefano is talking about under the general rubric of subtle selflessness. **This is something to which we can’t simply declare our allegiance; we have to practice it. That practice bears a revolutionary imperative.** It’s fucking communism.

#### Polyrhythmic praxis embodies a radical alternative to normativity that throws dominant narratives of spacetime into crisis.

Crawley 20, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and African American Studies at the University of Virginia. (Ashon T., Of Forgiveness, February 25, 2020, By Ashon T. Crawley, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/of-forgiveness/>)

It’s in the constant struggle that freedom is found, Angela Davis informs us. We share in air. Here. In this place. We flesh. Even those that have renounced relation to flesh, which is their relation to the earth, to the social, to the sensual sound, to blackness. And it is urgent to think about how we can live together, to breathe with one another — to, as Gwendolyn Brooks says, live in the along. This, in the language of Katherine McKittrick, livingness of blackness is a syncopated, arrhythmic, polyrhythmic thing. Found in the sound, in the music. Not about or for or in the direction of linear progression of spacetime but is a thing that happens in some otherwise relation to normative time and space. It also doesn’t long to return to normative function and form; it is instead about an otherwise form of music and an otherwise praxis that would produce a radical alternative to and against the normative in our current moment. A different temporality.

#### Attuning to irregular rhythms as a site of black refusal enacts revolutionary politics through temporal subversion.

Ramsey 21, Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Divinity @ Harvard Divinity School. (James Stevenson, “Black Relativity: On Law, Music, and Spirit in (Anti-)Black Time”, pg. 32-35, Accessible at: https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37368077)

Of course, time is not reducible to rhythm, nor rhythm to time. Time might be thought of as fodder for rhythm, or the dark matter between the elements of whatever is deemed to be (ir)rhythmic—notes, speech, embodied movement, or something else. Or, rhythm, the (ir)regular pattern or passage of events, might be understood as that which makes time comprehensible; we measure our days, for example, by a certain repetition of moments, whether what we call “seconds” or the sun’s rising and falling. But, in the relationship and/or conceptual space, whatever it is, between rhythm and time, we can discern certain Black, revolutionary politics in and against given or imposed temporality. Smallwood notes that ‘Sibell’s storytelling, for instance, contravenes conventional, Western formats, incongruent with the “trajector[ies]” and “tropes of early modern travel literature.”85 ‘Sibell was, in other words, not beholden to the rhythms of narrative expression that ruled the day. She moves variously between past, present, and future throughout her story, even denying her listeners closure; as recorded by her transcriber, “here she burst into tears and could say no more.” ‘Sibell’s piecemeal, irregular storytelling, its blending of different points in time, and its sudden conclusion reflect the fracturing, disorienting traumas of the hold. Indeed, her account of endurance is perforated and shaped by the violences of betrayal, erasure, and the subjection of her body and soul to the whims of the master class, which reach backward and forward in (‘Sibell’s) story/time. However, the peculiar rhythmic patterns of her life and story are not only inflicted on ‘Sibell; here, they are expressed by ‘Sibell herself, products of her choices. She, for example, laments her separation from her homeland and her people, but, in order to mourn them, she must recall them, inscribing them into the archive even as the archive and its masters seek to extinguish and/or corrupt their memory. From this perspective, the story she tells might be understood as simultaneously a testament to the anti-Blackness she experienced and a challenging of it and its norms, toward a different way of being. Along these lines, we might reread the conclusion of her story’s transcription; what if, instead of her (white) transcriber’s assumption that “she could say no more,” we read “she would say no more,” a refusal?

Whether a matter of refusal or capacity, this abrupt ending is a cut, a sharp break, a breaking in and of a story, its internal rhythms, and the rhythms an audience might expect from it, which is to say their (rhythmic) worlds. This break and the unconventional forms of ‘Sibell’s story more generally demonstrate a mode of, in Sharpe’s words, “inhabiting and rupturing this episteme,” and they constitute an alternative imagination by which ‘Sibell attempts to “think and imagine laterally, across a series of relations in the hold, in multiple Black everydays of the wake”: “Me no know nobody in de [slave] House, but ven me go in de Ship me find my Country woman Mimbo, my Country man Dublin…, My Country woman Sally, and some more, but dey sell dem all about and me no savvy where now.—here she burst into tears and could [read: would] say no more.”86 This concluding sentence’s insistence on relation despite separation; its collapse of past, present, and future; and its hard stop instantiate what Moten might refer to as the “radical temporal politics of the broken groove,”87 an orientation in and toward the hold (along with its contrived coherence, its time, and its temporal violences) that can foster Black life. This is an orientation that feels and reflects the violent time(s) inflicted upon the Black while also making space for Black response to and reconfiguration of these times.

Thinking in terms of time, rhythm, groove, and their breaking, we might turn to music, then, as a site of Black refusal of, in, and through time. Ashon Crawley refers to the sounds of Black music (for him, Blackpentecostal noise and performance in particular) “as dissent, … a critique of the very conditions under which work-time as enslavement emerges.”88 That music serves as a “choreosonic” force which is itself a critique of anti-Black impositions of time—of which slavery’s work-time is an example, with a long wake—exemplifies what Crawley refers to as “the inexhaustible resource of resistance found in black performance.”89 In this way, in its capacity to demonstrate and enact alternative temporalities and, per Crawley, (a)theologies,90 musical performance serves as a form of wake work, which is to say as a resource by which Black folk might sustain themselves and the relations among them, lay claim to the twisted forms of time levied against them, and resist and disrupt the very conditions that make such temporal violences possible, toward the subversion of the regime itself along with its law. To demonstrate this, I now turn to two musical compositions and their performances: “Come Sunday” and “Ostinato (Suite for Angela).”

#### Surrender to Blackness: You should prioritize the impacts that are the least familiar to you because of the ways in which your cognition will always have a desire to prioritize literally anything else.

Brady and Murillo 14[Nicholas and John, “Black Imperative: A Forum on Solidarity in the Age of Coalition,” January 26, 2014, <http://outofnowhereblog.wordpress.com/2014/01/26/black-imperative-a-forum-on-solidarity-in-the-age-of-coalition/>, John Murillo III is a PhD student in the English department at Brown University, and a graduate of the University of California, Irvine, with bachelor’s degrees in Cognitive Science and English. His research interests are broad, and include extensive engagements with and within: Black Studies–particularly Afro-Pessimism–Narrative Theory; Theoretical Physics; Astrophysics; Cosmology; and Neuroscience. [Nicholas Brady](http://uci.academia.edu/nicholasbrady) is an activist-scholar from Baltimore, Maryland. He was also a recent graduate of Johns Hopkins with a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and currently a doctoral student at the University of California-Irvine Culture and Theory program. ]

**“Surrender to blackness.” A grammatical imperative. Grammatical because** syntactically **it marks a command to or demand** of a generalized addressee: **“(Everyone) surrender to blackness**.” Grammatical **because the black flesh scarred** and tattooed by these illegible hieroglyphics **enunciates at the level of symbolic and ontological world orders: “Surrender to blackness” is a command at the level of the foundations of thought and being themselves**; grammatical. **Imperative because if there is any hope for a revolutionary praxis along any lines—race, class, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability—it must centralize**, which is to say look in the face of, which is to say begin to the work of real love for, **the blackness** [preposition] **which “an authentic upheaval might be born**.” #BlackPowerYellowPeril failed to recognize this imperative as legible, let alone heed and meet its command/demand. Created by Suey Park (@suey\_park), the hashtag sought to draw from and build upon the accomplishments of Black womyn activists on twitter and tumblr who have long mobilized to generate productive and revolutionary interjections into the world’s violently antiblack discourses (see, for example, #solidarityisforwhitewomen, and #blackmaleprivilege) through extended, communal commentary, usually in direct opposition to the censoring strictures of any kind of respectability politics. Discussions about and within the hashtag can be found [here](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23blackpoweryellowperil&src=typd), [here](http://touchofpoetry.tumblr.com/post/71382994662/newblackschool-touchofpoetry), [here](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23AsianAmAntiblackness&src=typd), [here](http://criticalspontaneity.com/2014/01/17/997/)(though this is very hasty, a bit shortsighted, and still not doing much more than glancing at, as opposed to engaging blackness), and [here](http://newblackschool.tumblr.com/post/73489671137/three-notes-on-solidarity-writedarkmatter). But broadly, the intentions of the hashtag are founded upon a belief in the possibility of solidarity/coalition politics between Blacks and Asians, seeking to challenge persistent “tensions” between the communities for the sake of a common struggle against ‘white supremacy.’ **For** those **nonblack participants**, the drive toward **solidarity represents a purely innocent** and unquestioned, unquestionable, **desire**. **All critiques of Asian antiblackness are rendered as derailing** the move toward solidarity, **for** they are to bring up the obvious – clearly we are all human, we make mistakes, but **to continuously bring up the “mistakes” and never “move on” is to foreclose the possibility of solidarity**. And what a wonderful thing the blacks of the conversation were foreclosing – this solidarity thing. What a wonderful thing others were offering to us and we simply would not take. And **yet, the unthought question remains: have you truly earned the right to act in solidarity,** to form solidarity, to even believe in solidarity? And what is this solidarity thing we all hold near and dear to our hearts? Have we ever experienced it or do we simply have images we have transformed into memories of a solidarity that never existed? I know Black people and Asian people have worked together in the past, but have we ever formed a solid whole? And who is to blame for the fact that we have never had solidarity? The hashtag implies that both “sides” play an equal part in the failure to form solidarity. In the face of this, confessing our sins to each other forms the moment where we can form emotional bonds: “see, you were as racist as I, and how unfortunate it is that we let old whitey come between us. Never again will whitey make us part.” **This is the logic behind much of the Asian confessing – white supremacy duped us into being antiblack racists – and also fed into the backlash aimed at blacks – “stop playing oppression olympics, that’s what whitey wants.”** **It must be foregrounded** here that **antiblackness** cannot be simplified as “anti-black racism” and it **is a singularity with no equivalent force – “anti-Asian” racism is not the flipside of antiblackness nor is orientalism or islamophobia. Antiblackness predates white supremacy by at least 300** years (and much more than that depending on how we trace our history) **and we can understand antiblackness as the general tethering of the very concept of life to the ontological and unspeakable, unthinkable force of black death**. That statement is a place to begin to define antiblackness, it is not the end for this force weaves itself in infinite variety throughout all corners of the globe, forming globe into world. This is not simply about the little racist microaggressions that people listed in their tweets, this is about a global force that the world – not simply whites – bond over and form their lives inside of and through. What #BlackPowerYellowPeril revealed, however, is that **the underside of coalition politics remains a violent and virulent antiblackness**. **As blacks**— John Murillo III (@writedarkmatter), New Black School (@newblackschool), Nicholas Brady (@nubluez\_nick), and others—**raised** questions and comments in the spirit of **that singular imperative—“Surrender to blackness”—antiblackness emerged** in the violence of the response levied against it; one need only visit the hashtag to bear witness. **From outright refusals to engage the antiblackness central to the histories and politics of nonblack communities of color, to denials of the foundational, global, and singular nature of antiblackness**, and to the repeated calls to police and remove this disruptive blackness and its imperative from the conversation, **antiblackness exploded onto the scene. All of this in the name of “coalition.”** This is because **“coalition” politics** and possibilities **are fetishized**, not loved. **The fetish denies the necessary recognition of antiblackness at coalition’s heart**, and that antiblackness left unattended renders the imperative illegible. It is a fetishization, then, of antiblackness. **The fetish** object at the heart of the coalition **has always been black flesh** – a fetishization **where pleasure and terror meet to create the bonds of solidarity** people so desire. Here, **we open a forum on** how the hashtag embodies this fetish, **the distinction between fetish** and love that must be made in excess of the hashtag and ones like it, **and the absolute imperativeness of the imperative. Instead of fetishizing the object, you must surrender to blackness**.

# 2AC

## 1 – Framework

### AT: Antitrust Good

#### Antitrust law was founded on a racialized economism that entrenched antiblack racism

Platt 16 Daniel Platt earned his PhD in American Studies at Brown University in 2018 and was a postdoctoral fellow in interdisciplinary legal studies at The Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy at the University at Buffalo School of Law, Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era, by Thomas C. Leonard, lliberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics, and American Economics in the Progressive Era, by Thomas C. Leonard, Journal of Cultural Economy, 10:2, 225-229, DOI: 10.1080/17530350.2016.1258587

In his 1897 essay ‘The Path of the Law’, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. drew a contrast between the narrow formalism of postbellum political thought and the dawning age of pragmatic policy-making. ‘The black-letter man may be the man of the present’, he declared, ‘but the man of the future is the man of statistics and the master of economics’. Holmes’s bold modernism foreshadowed the rise of the regulatory state, with its fine levers of power and its legions of educated experts, but it signaled subtler historical developments as well. It is difficult to read the jurist’s deference to the statistical sciences without anticipating his gradual turn toward hereditarianism, culminating in his defense of eugenic sterilization in Buck v. Bell (1927). It is also hard not to place his language of economic mastery in the longer history of the field’s staggering ascent in the political imagination over the course of the twentieth century, with all its unsettling consequences. That state-building, race-making, and economic knowledge should appear so entwined in Holmes’s mid-career thought ought not to surprise, for as Thomas C. Leonard demonstrates in Illiberal Reformers, a braided discourse of race, state, and market ran through many of the most pressing political conversations of the Progressive Era, particularly those propelled by the budding ranks of professional economists. Leonard, an economist who has published extensively on the history of the discipline, does not simply document the racism that pervaded the writings of those men who created the field and helped to craft administrative governance in the United States. Instead, he analyzes how notions of immutable racial difference performed important intellectual work within progressive economic thought and how the regulatory posture of economic progressivism likewise cultivated a eugenicist worldview. The result is a persuasive, if often familiar, portrait of the early twentieth century as an essentially illiberal epoch when the impulse to secure the good fortunes of the social whole underwrote dramatic interventions in both the market economy and reproductive life. While the book is divided into two sections, ‘The Progressive Ascendancy’ and ‘The Progressive Paradox’, Leonard’s narrative really unfolds in three movements. The first charts the emergence of a cohort of ‘economic progressives’ in the last decades of the nineteenth century who drew on different forms of professional authority in order to speak for the economic interests of society. Many of these men held doctorates in political economy, often from German universities, while others were trained in history, political science, or sociology. Uniting them in Leonard’s account were profound institutional, intellectual, and moral ligatures. The American Economics Association (est. 1885) and the American Association for Labor Legislation (est. 1905) loom especially large as organizational spaces where figures like Richard T. Ely, John R. Commons and William Willoughby forged public identities as disinterested experts. These institutions attracted men who shared not only a common educational pedigree but also a distinctive philosophical orientation, ordered around the supremacy of the common good and a disdain for ‘individual liberties as archaic impediments to needed social and economic reforms’ (p. 24). They also drew figures with thick roots in American Protestantism, who understood the struggle against laissez-faire in strikingly moral terms. Twenty-three of the American Economics Association’s 55 charter members were clergymen, and many of the remaining 32 considered the religious calling before deciding, as Henry Carter Adams did, that economics, while ‘of a lower order than dealing directly … with the souls of men’, was ‘work which a follower of Christ may do’ (p. 14). The moral outrage stirred by poverty, corruption, and labor strife, combined with a faith in the expert’s ability to transcend the myopia of self-interest, led the economic progressives to the local and federal state in the first two decades of the twentieth century. There, they worked to construct legal mechanisms that would allow them to supplant the market as managers of commercial life, from the anti-trust powers of the Federal Trade Commission to the supervisory tools of the Federal Reserve. The rise of modern regulation is a familiar story, but Leonard summarizes it well, noting that the growth of the administrative state provided additional anchors for the economists’ expanding dominion. The economics profession and liberal governance, he suggests, matured in tandem. Also nurtured in these formative years was a cast of mind that conflated the commercial market with human reproduction as two forces responsible for shaping the health of the nation and yet highly susceptible to irrational feedback and regressive tendencies. Just as business survival under the predatory conditions of laissez-faire was ‘likely to mean something else than fitness for good and efficient production’, as John Bates Clark asserted, so too was free procreation seen as ‘wasteful, slow, inhuman, and indifferent to progress’ (p. 103). The slippage of metaphors between the biological and the economic indicated more than rhetorical embellishment, in Leonard’s estimation. Eugenics and economic reform joined in the language and life pursuits of people like Irving Fisher, Edward Ross, and Sydney and Beatrice Webb, he argues, because they shared and reified an illiberal privileging of society over individual, science over sentiment, and man over nature. At times, conceptual affinities dissolved into outright crossover, as Leonard demonstrates in the narrative’s third and most compelling portion, on the eugenic origins of protective labor laws. Across several chapters, the text traces how the question of what labor was owed in the Industrial Age led progressive economists to the living-standard theory of wages, which held that workers deserved and would struggle until they received an income adequate to their needs and wants. Historians of consumer politics have long regarded this discourse as integral to the growth of the American welfare state, but Leonard adds that for many partisans it carried significant racial connotations as well. The standard of living, declared John Graham Brooks, first president of the National Consumers League, was always a ‘question of race’ (p. 134). Convinced that ‘the meat-eating Anglo-Saxon’ could not compete on the tolerance of indignities with those inferior peoples built for poverty, progressive economists refined an economic-eugenic argument for combating class conflict through immigration restriction, selective birth control, and minimum wage laws (p. 133). Such workplace regulations in particular would prevent the unfit from underbidding their biological betters, forcing short-sighted employers to hire more productive, if more expensive, workers and ultimately contributing to social peace and advances in the industrial arts. The exclusion of inferiors from both the gene pool and the labor pool thus not only traded in a similar illiberal logic but also were understood as conjoined solutions to the same social problems. Rather than treating economic anxiety as a cover for racial antipathy or racism as derivative of economic tension, Leonard’s narrative suggests that for the progressive economists, race and class were, in important ways, indistinguishable. The biological was the economic, and vice versa. Leonard does not, as other have, push this argument to the conclusion that the regulatory project was always and necessarily bound together with a discourse of human hierarchy, leaving laissez-faire as the only viable path for racial egalitarians today. Instead, he seems to share the progressives’ economic outlook and regret that the will to order one realm of life fostered injustices in another. At times, Illiberal Reformers reads like a cautionary tale for contemporary experts, urging them to resist the odious logics of chauvinism and temper their confidence as agents of rationality. It is as a missive to the economics profession that the book, which covers much that has been explored in existing historical scholarship, makes the most sense. If it succeeds in chastening the field’s more global ambitions, it will have done important work. Those more familiar with the intellectual currents of the Progressive Era will still find much of value here, however. Leonard’s discussion of the Social Gospel as a pervasive influence on progressive social science is a compelling corrective to histories of American modernity that overemphasize secularism and the triumph of the technical. His extensive research in the published writings of turn-of-the-century economists – the primary source basis of the book – yields a wealth of fascinating historical nuggets, like Thorstein Veblen’s belief that the leisure class was genetically disposed to conspicuous accumulation. And though many other texts have considered the period’s vexing status as both the fount of modern liberalism and a highpoint of reactionary and segregationist impulses, Illiberal Reformers makes one of the stronger and more coherent cases for seeing that puzzle as perhaps not so puzzling at all, through the organizing theme of philosophical illiberalism. Yet, there are facets of Leonard’s narrative that call out for additional research and deeper analysis. One issue especially germane to the story of disciplinary hubris is the question of what actually constituted the research agenda of academic economics in the early twentieth century. While Illiberal Reformers brims with tales of the political work of leading economists, there is little indication of how these men defined the boundaries of their scientific community or evaluated the veracity of scientific statements. The interchangeability in the text of terms such as economists, economic progressives, and progressive economists flags an ambiguity about who exactly fit within the professional fold and leads one to wonder both whether the field possessed or ever developed the resources to dismiss eugenics as bad science on its own and whether economics itself was more of a science or a rhetorical cloak in this period – whether, to borrow Andrew Lang’s memorable phrasing, economics was in the business of providing illumination or simply political support. Relatedly, one learns little of how economists were received by other interested professionals in this period, such as medical and public health experts, lawyers, and business leaders, or other political constituencies, such as farmers, wage workers, or socialists. If one open question of modern history is how a discipline with such contested claims to expertise came to command so much influence in public life, one might ask how groups with similar aspirations responded to its ascent and wonder whether the lingua franca of hereditarianism did not help to smooth the field’s passage into the political mix. That preeminent economic organs, such as the Publications of the American Economic Association (est. 1886) and the Journal of Political Economy (est. 1892), served as early clearinghouses for the hereditarian writings of Frederick Hoffman, Carlos Closson, and others invites one to consider whether eugenics played some important role in getting the consuming public in the figurative door. Finally, there is the matter of endings, on which the text has surprisingly little to say. What role did economics play in the midcentury decline of eugenic science? Did the field disavow its racist roots, such as anthropology, and did economists struggle to adjust their discourse to the post-hereditarian culture? Were there ways in which other languages of difference, such as value or risk, served to continue the discriminating work of race in economic thought after the midcentury shift? These queries in particular gesture toward two literatures, which Illiberal Reformers does not engage, but which may provide critical context for fully understanding the meaning of the discipline’s extended entente with hereditarian thought. The first concerns the longer history of economic knowledge, as one among many fields of the natural and human sciences and as a variation on older discourses of commerce and wealth. As Michel Foucault, Philip Mirowski, and others have argued, the modern economics of Adam Smith, J. S. Mill, Irving Fisher, and John Maynard Keynes did not simply build upon the classical foundations of the mercantilists or the Physiocrats (Foucault 1970; Mirowski 1989; Schabas 2006). Instead, the notions of wealth, worth, exchange, and circulation that have ordered economic knowledge since at least the neoclassical turn of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, owe their coherence to deeper themes in Western scientific culture. For Foucault, it was the invention of man as both a transcendental subject and an empirical object of knowledge around the years of the French Revolution that accounted for the epistemological similarities between David Ricardo’s theory of value, Georges Cuvier’s historical taxonomy, and Franz Bopp’s comparative philology. For Mirowski, it was the brief, wondrous life of the law of the conservation of energy, poached from nineteenth-century physics that provided economics with an essential, if flawed, model of systemic stability and historical certainty. Metaphor does not help to organize knowledge in these accounts as much as it produces empirical relationships and governs the boundary between fact and fiction. Yet, for both Foucault and Mirowski, epistemic regimes are unsteady contraptions, and in the latter’s account, the early decades of the twentieth century were especially heady times for economics, as it was in this period that physics began to abandon the doctrine of conservation, leaving the dismal science clinging to a language of predictable finitude that had lost its primary referent. Might racial determinism, a theory of history with broad abilities to account for all manner of human and social data, from war and prosperity to artistic capacity and political trends, have played some role in preserving the foundations of economic knowledge in these years? Could the migration of economists away from the avowed, if fundamentally incomplete, egalitarianism of Smith and Mill and toward a powerful new model of transhistorical difference at the turn of the century indicate an epistemic vulnerability patched up by eugenic thought? If what economics borrowed from physics, in Mirowski’s reading, was an ‘idea of persistence, of invariance, and of independence from the passage of time’, then it seems worth considering whether hereditarianism, a worldview touting the supremacy of inborn dispositions over the passing influences of the environment, was enlisted to perform similar work in a moment of drift and doubt (Mirowski 1989, p. 60). An inquiry into that possibility would seem to point not simply toward the eugenic origins of the regulatory state but, on a deeper level, to the troubling moorings of modern economic knowledge. Moreover, it would invite deliberation on the relationship between race and ‘the economy’, the idea advanced in a second literature, associated with Timothy Mitchell and others, that at some point between the end of the Progressive Era and the dawning of the postwar era, ‘the economy’ emerged as an autonomous object of study and administrative care (Mitchell 1998). For Mitchell, this dramatic turn in political discourse was intimately linked to the ascendant economics profession, the interwar collapse of the gold standard, and the postwar project of decolonization. It was particularly as the global taxonomy of the imperial order was disintegrating that ‘economies’ became conceptualized as self-contained, semi-organic entities that nations were responsible for nurturing and whose conditions could be compared and evaluated. Economics, in this reading, supplied a language of difference that sustained international hierarchies, sanctioned neo-imperial interventions, and redefined the primary role of the state, in the developed as well as the developing world, as the custodian of its economy rather than a guarantor of rights or a vehicle of popular will. The job of government was increasingly understood as keeping the lines of credit lubricated, steadying cyclical turbulence, and yoking social goals to the engine of commerce through carefully engineered incentive structures. Alexandra Minna Stern has persuasively argued for hereditarianism’s persistence into the 1940s and 1950s as a binding substance in the ‘family-nation-civilization triumvirate’ of postwar liberalism (Stern 2005, p. 183). Leonard’s study seems to provide a point of departure for further revision, linking race, reproduction, and the family to the intellectual hegemony of ‘the economy’ as well. After all, it was likely not from physics or philology that ‘growth’, the keyword of American political economy from the Keynesian 1950s to the Clintonian 1990s and beyond, stemmed but from such life sciences as biology and demography, which were so central to eugenics in the first place.

## 2 – Cap

### 2AC – AT: Alternative

#### Leftist movements are racist.

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From an Anarkata- I went to the Midwest Leftist Assembly to present a workshop with my homie —— on Black Anarchisms, and to connect with other Black radicals working in different parts of the region. I came with a lot of excitement and hope that folks would engage with us and the material. I wound up facing down an armed white leftist who was visibly agitated that attention had been brought to the rampant anti Blackness of security, organizers, and other participants by my friend, a Black woman, who had been profiled and targeted for harassment throughout the weekend. So when I tell you that the white left has a problem with racism, I’m telling you so that other Black, Brown & Indigenous folx are not put into dangerous situations just by being near you people. And when I say that we are not safe around you, I’m not being hyperbolic. This was one group of incredibly unprepared, non-trauma informed, white “leftists” who did not give an ounce of fuck about unpacking their anti-Blackness before urging Black folks to attend an event they bottom lined. But the screwed up thing is that many leftist orgs create and foster the same type of anti-Blackness that allow for the safety of Black participants – like those who attended the MLA with me last weekend – to constantly be put in sketchy situations. We are constantly placed in settings where we are demanded to interact in good faith and agree to empty, formless non apologies for incredibly racist words and (in)actions by white leftists – all the while being cast as “hostile”, “criminal”, and “threatening”, even as our access to platforms and ability to participate in organizing spaces are routinely stripped away through procedural death… The leftist bureaucratization that allows the same fuckin discrimination we experience everywhere else to happen in supposedly radical spaces. This is how the white left polices Black bodies while maintaining the optics of equitable, revolutionary praxis, simultaneously upholding white supremacy and the privileges it gives them. MLA was fucked up. But IWW? Y’all better take the warning now. From an anonymous Black Anarchist Long post about the Midwest Left Assembly I haven’t really been posting a lot of positive stuff about Midwest Left Assembly the past few days. It’s sad because this was an event that I had been promoting and supporting for the past months leading up to it. I’ve been a member of Horizontal Stateline since it began and helped set up the land trust prior to the even this year. Anyone can tell you my enthusiasm prior to the event. I invited a number of people from across the country including fellow black anarchists to facilitate a discussion about black anarchism with me. I drove and picked up black folks from around rockford, arranged travel, arranged housing so people could attend. I believed in this event. I’m saying all of this because I know how white leftists can come at people for attempting to “wreck” and I want to make it clear that my intentions were the best. However, despite the positive experiences of the first day (I’ll talk about in a later post), I’m writing this as a record for accountability. That’s because I had to leave early because one of my friends (a black woman) was repeatedly harassed by the security because they “mistook” her identity for someone else. That’s racial fucking profiling. We were stopped twice at the gate even though security should have known that my friend was not banned from the assembly. She had been promoting it with me in the upcoming months. It was traumatizing to my friend who was confronted again by security about not belonging at the event (something about her driving a car around the land trust even though she drove to the trust with me both days) while myself and another homie were about to play a show. She grabbed the mic and began to address the assembly about what happened. Many white folks weren’t taking what she was saying seriously and had to be silenced by other black attendees. (this isn’t just coming from me and her by the way, there were a number of other black folks who saw this happen and left as a result) From what I understand, none of the organizers or security team has even offered her an apology. I wish they had taken her and my concerns more seriously. Furthermore, the event organizers should not have treated my friend like a situation to be handled. The only situation that should have been handled was the chauvinistic behavior of the security team. ———— should not have been the person yelling at the white folks after that happened, that should have been the organizers. White people need to keep other white people in line. I sincerely regret bringing her and inviting other black people into the space (despite all of the good connections that I made). Activist spaces are meant to be safe and they need to be safe for everyone, especially black women and black queer folks. I understand the need for security at events like this but the security apparatus must be horizontal and needs to be grounded in anti-oppressive politics. (repeatedly stopping a black woman is not a good look when ya’ll radical white folks claiming to be somehow different from these killer cops). I don’t know what accountability looks like at this point but I know it has to involve formal apologies from the security team, the organizers and I believe some sort of financial compensation for my friend to support her organizing work (been telling yall to pay reparations). Frankly, what is even more fucked up is that my identity as a fair skinned college educated biracial man makes yall take this more seriously while if she had posted this, ya’ll wouldn’t have given a flying fuck. Once again, the misogynoir in this situation is palpable. We can’t claim to support black women and femmes in our rhetoric while not doing it in our actions. Star is not a troublemaker, she is not lying about this to start drama, if yall even attempt to insinuate that bullshit, I am going to block you. She and I had been repeatedly talking over the past few months about how to bring black people out to the event and how to support it as a whole. Passing this repeated harassment off as a misunderstanding and not taking it seriously is deeply anti-black and racist. As the black anarchist Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin says “I give white radicals the tools to work with, a theoretical framework, and some analysis of racial oppression. I cannot, however, make them take the steps to actually use in dismantling racism inside radical movements. I just tell them that their lip service and feeble attempts to this point are unacceptable, and one day it will all be taken out of their hands. So they had better act now, or they will find themselves on the wrong side, when these decisive battles take place.” If you want to speak more to me about what happened in length, engage in some sort accountability, please send me a private message. More importantly, please apologize to the black women and femmes that were harmed. Also, please don’t bother them needlessly, they are both very busy people with lots of important work to do. I don’t believe in callout culture but I can’t see explicit anti-blackness exist in so-called radical spaces and not call it out. It is completely unacceptable that my friend felt like she didn’t belong in that space which lead to her, myself and others to leave early. I’m not really going to be engaging with white comments (I’m actually going to delete them) on this post but if you’re black, feel free to comment and ask any questions. White people should go read the progressive plantation right now. Our spaces must be informed by a committed intersectional politic. I hope white organizers take this lesson to grow and confront white supremacy within their own spaces. “These people want to demand ideological conformity, to make those incoming people of color toe the line. I believe they are threatened by the idea of possibly large numbers of people of color joining the Anarchist movement and especially by the idea they might create autonomous tendencies that would challenge white hegemony of the overall movement. Predictably, there will those among them who will rise up in mock alarm at the very notion… “how dare you say this?” “See there, he’s making trouble again!” But I have seen it happen numerous times over the years and am frankly sick of it. There is no use pretending there is no racism in the Anarchist scene, or trying to discredit me for raising the issue. I have both seen and experienced it myself.”