## 1AC – Black Transhumanism – NUSO 2021

#### The dice are loaded---Silicon Valley giants have partnered with the state to monopolize and exploit transhumanism’s potential---pseudo-monopolies have already secured self-regulation of transhumanist technology to ensure the commodification of human life for capital through technocracy

Giesen, 20 - Klaus-Gerd Giesen, Professor of Political Science at Université Clermont Auvergne, France; 2020(“The Transhumanist Ideology and the International Political Economy of the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” Ideologies in World Politics, Springer, pp. 143-156, Available to Subscribing Institutions via SpringerLink, bam) \*\*NBIC = Nanotechnologies, Biotechnologies, Informatics and Cognitive Sciences

This is an enormous new market in the world economy, and therefore an additional commodification of human life: we will see the birth of the “body-market” (Lafontaine 2014). It will be the result of the fourth industrial revolution. Indeed, the NBIC technology convergence will undoubtedly introduce an important rupture in the evolution of world capitalism, just like the steam engine (1st industrial revolution), electricity (2nd), and electronics and computing (3rd) (Schwab 2015). Countless new products and services will appear on the market. Faced with the explosion of NBIC supply, the transhumanist discourse tries to convey the message that each new device corresponds to a specific need and demand. In other words, transhumanism serves as the ideology that justifies this expansion into the world capitalist market.

The more further commodification of the (post)human being becomes successful, the more state regulations will inevitably be disrupted, especially by the new inequalities that will soon appear between humans who will have remained “natural”—the “chimpanzees of the future” (as they have been called by transhumanist Kevin Warwick (2002, p. 4)—and the future, technologically enhanced posthuman species. Thus, transhumanism poses an immeasurable challenge to the welfare state insofar as the latter, deeply rooted in meritocracy, has been forged to erase the initial social inequalities as far as possible. Transhumanism is also a challenge for democracy and the rule of law, because of the increasing complexity of all issues related to technological hybridization and the intentional “accelerationism” (Mackay and Avanessian 2014) promoted precisely by the transhumanists: the classical advisors to the political decision-makers (bioethics committees and other technology assessment structures) can probably no longer effectively assist them in order to regulate in real time the new artefacts and their marketing. In other words, we cannot exclude the possibility that there will soon be technological limits to democracy.

In addition, with the human-machine fusion, new perspectives are opening up for capital-labour relations. In the near future the worker and the employee can be fully integrated into productive systems (e.g. through chips implanted under the skin or directly into the nervous system) and better monitored. Their productivity—which is the key to competitiveness between firms—could be boosted. A prevalence of the transhumanist ideology, even partial, will undoubtedly cause further dehumanization of work. This would lead to the total adaptability of the individual to the demands of capital, and the very concept of human resources may become obsolete, insofar as the employee will simply merge with technological resources to become merely a production tool. Another possible consequence of transhumanistic policies: the struggles between employers and trade unions could intensify, focusing more on the degree of autonomy that the worker can still maintain in the face of the new productive system technologies than on wages and working time. Due to the mass unemployment that Artificial Intelligence will soon generate, “Luddite” revolts may arise, but probably remain occasional. Clearly, there is a risk that over the next decades we will gradually turn to a posthuman capitalism that will profoundly transform not only the relationships between individuals, to work and to the state, but also the way we relate to humankind itself.

5 The Ideological Outreach

Transhumanism is above all a major political project for the benefit of those industries and economic sectors which are most heavily involved in the fourth industrial revolution which will probably lead to a complete redistribution of wealth in our societies, a large-scale reconfiguration of social classes, and above all a profound change in the way our societies and the entire world system function. We cannot ignore, however, that considerable parts of both the state apparatus and the private sector are promoting this project.

The same Mihail C. Roco and William Sims Bainbridge who had issued the now famous National Science Foundation’s NBIC report in 2003 raised the entire NBIC issue to the ideological level by publishing ten years later (with Bruce Tonn and Georges Whitesides) the voluminous Converging Knowledge, Technology, and Society (CKTS) report that aims to guide considerable social engineering efforts to contain within narrow margins any possible contestation of the NBIC technologies. The new concept of CKTS Meta-Convergence is part of a resolutely “solutionist” strategy, resulting from the transhumanist thinking of the “techno-progressive” branding which does not envisage the “progress” of technology without immediate benefit for society, or at least for a fraction of society. It expressly states that “the study identified barriers to progress; this report proposes a framework, methods and possible actions to overcome them” (Roco et al. 2013, p. 2). On several occasions, it points towards the urgent need for massive mobilization of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in the targeted dissemination of transhumanist “solutionism”: “traditional institutions have[now] a reduced role, being bypassed by[new] social-media-enabled movements.” (Roco et al. 2013, p. 372). In their view, steering the debate in the desired direction is essential because “emerging technologies have the promise to bring higher than normal returns on public and private investment because of their transforming and disruptive nature. Such returns also depend on the general […] governance methods, and international context.” (Roco et al. 2013, p. 364).

If state agencies and international organizations—including the Council of Europe (Van Est 2014)—are heavily involved in most vectors of ideological diffusion, it is even less surprising that the elite of the big bosses of California’s Silicon Valley both adhere to and promote the transhumanist ideology. The same is true for many entrepreneurs of the countless start-up firms that revolve around them. The extraordinary financial investments made by, among others, billionaires Elon Musk (who has recently founded the Neuralink company for the creation of super-intelligent cyborgs inspired by Warwick’s experience), Peter Diamandis and Peter Thiel, and even more so by the famous GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, and Microsoft), weigh heavily in this social debate, because their economic interests in the future of high tech are directly at stake. These firms have already invested heavily in the fourth industrial revolution, and are now also injecting huge sums into political lobbying and social engineering at the national and international level.

One example is the Partnership on AI, which brings together almost all the giants of Silicon Valley (except Elon Musk and Peter Thiel, who have launched their own structure, named OpenAI and funded by US$ 1 billion) to implement a kind of ethical self-regulation of artificial intelligence technologies. It does this however with the aim at spreading to the general public the message that the transhumanist big business is itself taking care of all possible risks incurred by, and limits to be imposed on, artificial intelligence, and this without any need for state regulation (Partnership on AI 2019). This is what may be called the ideological “valium for the people” function. The Partnership on AI is also well-funded and co-opts many academics, which underlines the extreme care with which the U.S. giants try to prevent any social contestation threatening their big business. And indeed, those who oppose the new NBIC convergence technologies, whatever they are and wherever they come from, simply do not have the same financial means to make their point of view known.

6 Conclusion

Obviously, it is clear that the game is not equal. In the societal debate on the world level that has just begun, the dice are loaded: the transhumanist ideology is strongly driven by fractions of state apparatus and even more by those very powerful multinational companies that, objectively, have the greatest interest in ensuring that the NBIC convergence revolution runs smoothly. In this sense, transhumanism is already a dominant ideology, in that it overwhelms all other ideological positions in the face of rapid technological change—especially those of humanists from different backgrounds as well as those with a “deep ecology” stance—merely through the power of money.

#### That technocracy uses big data and automation to cement current oppressive structures through policy change and the introduction of technology as a bait and switch---that furthers surveillance and socially engineers the public towards codifying a bias towards whiteness

Butler, 19 – Philip Butler, Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Posthuman and Artificial Intelligence Systems at the Iliff School of Theology; 2019(“Black Transhuman Liberation Theology,” Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 6-8, bam)

The potential for technology to be utilized as a form of governance can be seen through its roots. For instance, consumer products are often the most basic form of the actual technology used to create them. Many technological comforts taken for granted today, due to their widespread use, began as innovations of war. Global positioning systems were used by the military to track position; digital photography was used for surveillance; and the internet, especially the dark web, was used for communication by the government long before mass consumption. But the existence of these technologies as offshoots of government innovation alludes to the planned obsolescence of era-dependent forms of government. The nocuous and mesmerizing effect of consumer technology is evidenced in the ways in which systemically applied versions of these personal technologies very easily assert influence over human decision-making. Users frequently and willingly secede the luxuries of privacy, autonomy, and personal environmental awareness in order to adhere to technology’s hyper-engaging allure.

The technocracy itself runs on two major components—big data and automation. Big data is the process of collating large data sets composing of user activity within a particular technological medium. These sets necessitate realtime analysis. Real-time analysis allows for greater conceptual understanding of their practical application.10 The computational modeling of these sets can be utilized to determine behavioral trends, providing insightful information regarding user action/interaction in any given space/environment. Through computer modeling, big data can be applied as a means of surveillance, persuasion, and social engineering, geared toward steering mass consumption, public opinion, social norms, and social politics.11

Automation, as a governmental tool, creates avenues to complete tasks without direct observation or engagement through previously written code. It is the foundation of digitally mediated institutions (DMI) operating within the larger government apparatus. DMIs are government organizations characterized by their high degree of digital infrastructure and widespread use of digital applications and tools.12 They rely heavily on policy feedback and the inherent longitudinal dependence of government implementation (path dependence) to allow for the installation and ensuing codification of digitally automated policies in the form of electronic systems.13 It is important to note that the process of digitally reifying government policies is essentially the transformation of said policies into digital ontologies. As digital ontologies, added layers—in the form of technology via programming languages—create further separation between those who are governed and the actual technological components that work to automatically process governance. Meaning, the processing of government becomes a digital ontology, which adds extra layers between the laws being implemented and persons on the ground—increasing the difficulty of political action.14

DMIs utilize big data to streamline the governing process. The automation of computational modeling and of data sets bridges the benefits of big data with the seamlessness of automation. Since DMIs rely on path dependence to sustain their place within the e-governance model, those who initially created their infrastructure are now free to move on to something else entirely. The experts, who construct the automation of government, shrink the size of government solely for the purpose of maintaining current and past forms of order and not to make government smaller for the sake of the governed. The sinister side of automating DMIs is found in the fact that, like many other government officials, the code which runs them is simply doing its job. In this way, finding the person to blame after a policy or law is automated creates another deeply layered process.

Timing and sequence matter in the potential influence of DMIs on society. The endless automation of big data produces a compound analysis that increases the ability to decipher feedback provided by these large unrestricted data sets. This allows for more precise predictions as DMIs seek to effect “political interactions of organized interests and policy makers.” The goal of DMI’s is to influence public policies that affect the “beliefs, preferences, and actions of diffuse mass publics,” because “public policies affect the depth of democracy, the inclusiveness of citizenship, and the degree of societal solidarity.”15 Essentially, the technocracy, or technocratic e-government, works to embed measures of behavioral surveillance in order to track actions/interactions of citizens for the purpose of determining more efficient ways to socially engineer automated methods of control. This is not unlike governing structures of the past. Governmental policies, which maintained a specific position toward certain groups, will still hold those positions. Except this time, marginalized groups can only blame the machines for their predicament. The programmers responsible for reincarnating oppressive structures through digital ontologies only come back to work if there is a glitch in the system, and that is so they can fix the glitch, not the system.

The technocratic e-government is not a novel way to oppress Black folks. In fact it could oppress anyone. It is particularly sinister for that reason, because fundamentally it is no different than the governing system already in place. So, for the American contingent who have and continue to place their faith in the current form of American government as being grounded in fairness and nonbias, an automation of the current system will not be viewed as problematic.

In fact, it will be seen as useful and adding value to everyday life. However, the technocracy’s ability to simply automate the already oppressive structures of Americana (deemed normative) as outlined in Michelle Alexander’s The New Jim Crow, is particularly dangerous for Black folks.16 The added layers that automation creates further increases the distance between lawmakers, law enforcement, and citizens who become abstracted into statistics of criminality. Automated governance will make it harder to fight against the inherently oppressive nature of the American government, literally codifying its inherent bias for Whiteness—through computer language. Technocracy’s ability to render the human element of relationality between those who govern (lawmakers and law enforcement) and those who live under laws (citizens) as opaque creates a dangerous vulnerability for those under the law who already face disproportionate discrimination from its enactment. The state of vulnerability Black folks experience will then be delineated by the preset whims of disinterested machinery running lines of code so that it may simply do its job. This is a distinctly different level of volition than officers, judges, or lawmakers who currently say they are only doing their job. The most treacherous component of technocratic e-governance can be found in how it removes the direct weight of culpability from those who govern onto the technologically embedded layers, via the esoteric logic of computer language that underlies information systems, its software, the hardware that stores it, and the data science which augments its own capabilities. In essence, the promise of new technology distracts from the fact that when it is given the chance to govern it can only generate a snapshot of governmental structures that are dependent upon the temporality in which it was created. So, as society moves into the future, which often assumes a sentiment of social progress, the laws which govern society will more than likely remain in the digital ontology connected to the temporal existence from which they emanated.

#### This reprogramming culminates in cybernetic enslavement---maximally efficient policing that exploits every perceived protection to further the goals of the prison industrial complex

Butler, 19 – Philip Butler, Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Posthuman and Artificial Intelligence Systems at the Iliff School of Theology; 2019(“Black Transhuman Liberation Theology,” Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 139-140, bam)

Black transhuman dystopia

Black transhuman liberation theology recognizes that, socially, the United States is on the cusp of another shift in oppressive structural stratification. In reality it is already happening. The impending technocracy, which is currently taking shape, is mostly white and mostly male. It has the ability to reify socially oppressive structures through automation. Automating oppression adds another level of distance, further separating the benefactors of oppressive privilege from the technological re-enforcement of oppressive hierarchies. These added levels of distance make it easier for the benefactors of oppression to defend their goodness. So, regardless of whether automation leads to a complete social collapse, or not, the gradual reduction of people in the workforce is most likely to have the greatest impact on those from historically marginalized communities. Greater technology will undoubtedly extend the reach of surveillance. Police units, which may evolve into a combination of people, robots, computerized weaponry, facial recognition, emotional and artificial intelligence, will have an even greater potential to fill the prison industrial complex. Those who have been economically displaced due to an automation of the law will never be seen for the vitality which makes them people worthy of compassion or consideration. The racism maintained through biased algorithms might have less chance to persist if Black folks are leading the teams that implement technocratically automated processes.28 Without Black biotechnology creating tech with Black folks in mind all context will be completely lost in the pursuit of a suspect (in the case of policing). Futuristic modes of law enforcement—automated or otherwise—will continue doing their “jobs” at rapid pace. Those who do not have the extended privileges of humanity, basic income, or basic assets will probably not see the leisure promised by the technocratic elite. So, while technocratic elites present an image of leisure and liberal pursuit (stemming from automation), the embodied remnants of the “Negro Problem” will probably be locked away in high security facilities, enslaved once again, but this time by robots. Although this section is filled with hypothetical dystopian postulation, the history between the United States government and Black biotech does not make this a far-fetched imagination.

Here is the most important thing to remember—**God is not coming to liberate.** Black transhuman liberation theology assumes that God is not coming to save Black folks from tyranny. **There are too many instances in history where God did not intervene on the side of the oppressed**—Egypt, Jewish conquest(s), Babylonian conquest(s), Rome, The Ottoman Empire, Persia, the Crusades, Colonialism, genocide (pick one), Antebellum Slavery, the Holocaust, Rwanda, Biko Haram, Libya, Sudan, etc. Now, there may be a significant contingent of Black folks that would attest to the demonstration of God’s power in their individual lives. I do not contest that. I too have had countless instances where God has shown up in my life. I would compare these individual instances of God’s demonstrable power to act in the world to events that occur at the quantum level (using physics terminology). On the quantum level, physical anomalies occur that are not easily demonstrable or replicable at the level of perception. Likewise, while God has demonstrated God’s ability on the individual level, the individual level is incommensurate to the level of whole societies, cultures, and the trajectory of history. God has not interrupted history on the larger levels that comprise societal relationality. One could argue that the Allied powers were an example of God showing up for a historicized group. Even if I were to go along with that, how many Jewish folks had to die before God could intervene? That still is not an instance of God saving Black folks from a regime. This is not to say God is not capable, or that God is unwilling. This is simply a rethinking of the way that God participates in the material world based on an honest assessment of history. And if that were the case, **God has not shown up for the entirety of Black folks. We just “celebrated” 400 years of shitty tyranny in the United States.** Anthony Pinn would suggest that the use of the term “God” is not even necessary in the conversation of liberation.29 Some folks who embody the spirit of revolt may not even believe in God. That is perfectly fine. Let us remember that this theistic transhumanist approach accepts multiple iterations of belief. It affirms other terms for the word “God.” The term “God,” “Spirit,” “Self,” that which is beyond the Self, etc., is useful in this proposition because although the action of people are responsible for cultivating the condition of people, something has to be the thrust for biotechnological action. Here we reinsert the vitalistic qualities of the body’s electrochemistry as the causal agent within human biotechnology. Theologically, there has to be a causal agent, or that which infuses action. Historically this causal agent has been understood through classical designations (God, Spirit, universe, community, vitality, etc.). For the sake of Black transhuman liberation theology, these blanket terms are classified as sacred entities. In this theistic transhumanism grounded in biology sacred entities, or the thrust behind embodied action, are defined as the electrochemical response of the body. Again, the electrochemical response of the body is the impetus for thought, action, intention, etc. In order for this vitalistic assertion to be maintained we must remember these entities are present through electrochemistry while enlivening biological systems. The panpsychic animism of this theistic transhumanism would still allow for these entities to manifest in other ways to maintain the integrity of nonbiological systems as they fight against entropy. Thus, as the bearer of various names which fall under the vitalist umbrella, sacred entities give space for bodies to be cultivated through social relationships and personal perception. So, even though the electrochemical response is a secondary action, it is entangled with vitality, previous personal responses, and experiences. The Spirit/God/that which is beyond the Self/any other sacred entity creates space for personally cultivated iterations of embodiment over time. This cultivation is based on an individual or community’s experience with the combination of their sacred entity and the world—even if the self is their sacred entity. This is in recognition of the material aspects of divinity in nature and in biology. They are inseparable because sacred entities are not someone else or somewhere else.30 They become incarnate within physical systems, and in this case Black biotechnological systems. Conceptualizing Black folks as biotechnology proposes that vitality (functioning as the body’s electrical impulse) situates heart rhythms, sets neurons and muscles into motion, and initiates the body’s biochemistry, while creating individual and communally transposed emotionality—the spiritual disposition. Black transhuman liberation theology claims that vitality is the indeterministic causal agent. Life is indeterminately vital. More plainly, Black life is vital. And for Black transhuman liberation theology, the origin of the vitalistic spring which creates space for the electrical pulse grounding Black biotechnological life is not a major concern. Because for this theology, **what someone does with their life is much more important than where that life originates.** However, some might argue that life’s origin matters because people may want to pay homage to the giver of life. To that I would say that due to concepts of relationality, it may be best to live in a way that brings honor to those who are directly responsible for your life—such as parents and grandparents. This would also speak to one’s identity (community, ethnicity, gender, etc.). Some might even suggest that a declaration of futility regarding the need to search for causality is problematic. However, I would suggest that the need for a declaration of causality is an attempt to assert control over questions whose answers are not readily available. More specifically, I would propose that whatever belief system someone chooses is constructed according to the parameters of satisfaction that coincide with their cognitive operators which situate reality for them. Essentially, belief systems represent the collection of internally cohesive intellectual systematics that help one selfidentify in the midst of a complex and often unintelligible/ineffable world.

#### Technocratic domination cements the afterlife of slavery and genocidal clearing through the process of techno-liberalism, attempting to make the racial post-racial

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In the desire for enchanted technologies that intuit human needs and serve human desires, labor becomes something that is intentionally obfuscated so as to create the effect of machine autonomy (as in the example of the “magic” of robot intelligence and the necessarily hidden human work behind it). Unfree and invisible labor have been the hidden source of support propping up the apparent autonomy of the liberal subject through its history, including indentured and enslaved labor as well as gendered domestic and service labor. 6 The technoliberal desire to resolutely see technology as magical rather than the product of human work relies on the liberal notion of labor as that performed by the recognizable human autonomous subject, and not those obscured labors supporting it. Therefore, the category of labor has been complicit with the technoliberal desire to hide the worker behind the curtain of enchanted technologies, advancing this innovated form of the liberal human subject and its investments in racial unfreedom through the very categories of consciousness, autonomy, and humanity, and attendant categories of the subject of rights, of labor, and of property.

Our usage of the concept of the surrogate throughout this book foregrounds the longer history of human surrogates in post-Enlightenment modernity, including the body of the enslaved standing in for the master, the vanishing of native bodies necessary for colonial expansion, as well as invisibilized labor including indenture, immigration, and outsourcing. The claim that technologies can act as surrogates recapitulates histories of disappearance, erasure, and elimination necessary to maintain the liberal subject as the agent of historical progress. Thus, framing the surrogate human effect as the racial grammar of technoliberalism brings a feminist and critical race perspective to bear on notions of technological development, especially in the design and imagination of techno-objects and platforms that claim to reenchant those tasks understood as tedious or miserable through the marvels of technological progress—ostensibly dull, dirty, repetitive, and uncreative work.

To understand how claims of human freedom and human loss enabled by technological development allow for the retrenchment of the liberal subject as the universal human, Surrogate Humanity foregrounds the obfuscated connections between the human–machine divide in US technological modernity and the racial production of the fully human in US political modernity. Focusing on the material, social, and political consequences of the mutual generation of “the human” and “the machine” from the US post–World War II standardization of automation into the present, we explore both the social impact of design and engineering practices intended to replace human bodies and functions with machines and the shift in the definition of productivity, efficiency, value, and “the racial” that these technologies demand in their relation to the post-Enlightenment figure of the human. We begin with the second half of the twentieth century because this is the moment when the United States ascends to global political and economic supremacy and cultural influence, inheriting the mantle of its own and Western European settler imperial social structures. At this same historical juncture, the racial architecture of US modes of governance and geopolitical ascendancy were erased in the logics of post–civil rights racial liberalism and multiculturalism.7 Crucially, the advent of what can be termed, ironically, a “postracial” domination translates directly into the perception of new technologies as neutral and disembodied, even as these technologies are anchored in, and anchor, contemporary US imperial power. In short, the technological sphere has been separated from the racial scaffolding of the social in the Cold War and post–Cold War eras. Yet, as we argue, it is essential to assess the racial and gendered architecture of post-Enlightenment modernity as engineered into the form and function of given technologies. This calls for situating techno-objects and platforms in a social relation to what is experienced as a “human.” Thus, although our book is primarily focused on present-day claims about the revolutionary nature of new digital technologies, robotics, and AI, throughout our analysis of techno-objects and the social and political discourses that frame them, we unearth the obscured histories that delimit technoliberal engineering projects focused on efficiency, productivity, and further accumulation through dispossession.

Throughout this book, we insist on the infusion of a seemingly neutral technological modernity with the racial, gendered, and sexual politics of political modernity, based as they are in racial slavery, colonial conquest and genocide, and forced mobility through ongoing racial imperial practices of labor allocation and warcraft. To accomplish this, we extend critical ethnic studies analyses of gendered racialization to include machine “others.” By focusing on machines, we take the weight of an ethnic studies analysis off of racialized people so that we can see how this relationship functions even in their absence. Tracking the surrogate human effect within technoliberal politics enables us to attend to techniques through which difference (whether human–nonhuman or interhuman) is produced, while understanding categories of difference as historically specific.

By tracking how the surrogate human effect functions as the racial grammar of technoliberalism, we connect critiques of historical and political consciousness, freedom, and agency, whether of the machine or of the liberal subject, to calls for thinking beyond the limits of liberal humanist visions of more just futures. We thus position our critique of technoliberalism in relation to how technologies can be used to create relations between the human and the machine that are outside of the use–value–efficiency triad of capitalist modes of production. We see this work of redescribing value, and what or who is valuable, outside of the parameters of racial capitalism and its modes of waging war and staging social relations already happening in artistic and engineering projects focused on creating technologies that blur the boundaries between subject and object, the productive and unproductive, and value and valuelessness, thereby advancing structures of relation that are unimaginable in the present. Pushing against the limits of the imagination imposed by the symbolic logics of the surrogate human effect, the artistic, literary, engineering, and scientific projects we include in juxtaposition with those we critique refuse existing frames for recognizing full humanity, particularly the categories of the liberal politics of recognition such as the subject of labor or human rights.

The Surrogate Human Effect

Like the “others” of the (white) liberal subject analyzed by decolonial and postcolonial scholarship, the surrogate human effect of technology functions first to consolidate something as “the human,” and second to colonize “the human” by advancing the post-Enlightenment liberal subject of modernity as universal.8 The concept of the surrogate brings together technoliberal claims that technological objects and platforms are increasingly standing in for what the human does, thus rendering the human obsolete, while also foregrounding the history of racial unfreedom that is overwritten by claims of a postrace and postgender future generated by that obsolescence. In our usage, the longer history of the surrogate human effect in post-Enlightenment modernity stretches from the disappearance of native bodies necessary for the production of the fully human, through the production of the fungibility of the slave’s body as standing in for the master, and therefore also into the structures of racial oppression that continue into the post-slavery and post-Jim Crow periods, and into the disavowal of gendered and racialized labor supporting outsourcing, crowdsourcing, and sharing economy platforms. Framing technologies through the lens of the surrogate effect brings a feminist and critical race perspective to bear on notions of technological development, especially in the design and imagination of techno-objects and platforms that claim a stand-in role for undesirable human tasks.

As part of the surrogate effect, the surrogate is a racialized and gendered form defining the limits of human consciousness and autonomy. Saidya Hartman conceptualizes the surrogate by citing Toni Morrison’s formulation of slaves as “surrogate selves for the meditation on the problems of human freedom.”9 Hartman proposes that “the value of blackness resided in its metaphorical aptitude, whether literally understood as the fungibility of the commodity or understood as the imaginative surface upon which the master and the nation came to understand themselves.”10 The slave, the racialized fungible body, also acts as a “surrogate for the master’s body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and domination.”11 As Hartman elaborates, these racialized structures of the surrogate did not simply disappear after emancipation. Rather, “the absolute dominion of the master, predicated on the annexation of the captive body, yielded to an economy of bodies, yoked and harnessed, through the exercise of autonomy, self-interest, and consent. . . . Although no longer the extension and instrument of the master’s absolute right or dominion, the laboring black body remained a medium of others’ power and representation.”12

While Hartman is referencing the rise of new modes of bonded labor following emancipation that were encapsulated by the liberal formalities of contract, consent, and rights, her theorization of surrogacy as a racialized and gendered arrangement producing autonomy and universality of and for the master is useful for thinking about the contemporary desire for technology to perform the surrogate human effect. The racialized and gendered scaffolding of the surrogate effect continues to assert a “disembodied universality” that actually offers the position of “human” to limited human actors, thereby guaranteeing power and domination through defining the limits of work, violence, use, and even who or what can be visible labor and laboring subjects.

Tracking the endurance of the racial form of slavery as the (not so) repressed or spectral frame for the imaginary of what surrogate technologies do, or who or what they are meant to replace, we insist throughout this book that human emancipation (from work, violence, and oppressive social relations) is a racialized aspiration for proper humanity in the postEnlightenment era. In the US context, reading technologies as they reflect the dominant imagination of what it means to be a human thus means that they are situated in social relations of race, gender, and sexuality, as these derive from embodied histories of labor, Atlantic chattel slavery, settler colonialism, and European and US imperialism, to name the most dominant. The preeminent questions of the politics of the subject, and the derivative politics of difference that consume critical theory—questions that are about political consciousness, autonomy with its attendant concepts of freedom and unfreedom, and the problem of recognition—also drive the preeminent questions we must ask of technologies that perform the surrogate human effect.

The surrogate effect of technological objects inherits the simultaneously seeming irrelevance yet all-encompassing centrality of race and histories of enslavement and indenture against which the liberal subject is defined. As Lisa Lowe writes:

During the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, liberal colonial discourses improvised racial terms for the non-European peoples whom settlers, traders, and colonial personnel encountered. We can link the emergence of liberties defined in the abstract terms of citizenship, rights, wage labor, free trade, and sovereignty with the attribution of racial difference to those subjects, regions, and populations that liberal doctrine describes as unfit for liberty or incapable of civilization, placed at the margins of liberal humanity.13

Lowe explains that while it is tempting to read the history of emancipation from slave labor as a progress narrative of liberal development toward individual rights and universal citizenship, in fact, “to the contrary, this linear conception of historical progress—in which the slavery of the past would be overcome and replaced by modern freedom—concealed the persistence of enslavement and dispossession for the enslaved and indentured” and racialized populations necessary to the new British-led impe- rial forms of trade and governance “expanding across Asia, Africa, and the Americas under the liberal rubric of free trade.”14 Moreover, according to Lowe, “the liberal experiment that began with abolition and emancipation continued with the development of free wage labor as a utilitarian discipline for freed slaves and contract laborers in the colonies, as well as the English workforce at home, and then the expanded British Empire through opening free trade and the development of liberal government.”15 While the history of capitalism tends to be written as the overcoming of serf, slave, and indentured labor through free contract and wage labor, that is, as freedom overcoming unfreedom, as Lowe demonstrates, it is actually the racialized coupling of freedom and unfreedom that undergird and justify capitalist and imperial expansionism.

Rather than freedom being on the side of modernity, which overcomes the unfreedom that is the condition of premodernity, in fact the states of both freedom and unfreedom are part of the violent processes of extraction and expropriation marking progress toward universality. Undergirding Euro-American coloniality, political liberalism maintains the racial temporality of post-Enlightenment modernity that depends on innovating both bodies and resources (and how each will be deployed). David Theo Goldberg argues that liberalism is the “defining doctrine of self and society for modernity,” through which articulations of historical progress, universality, and freedom are articulated.16 Because liberalism’s developmental account of Euro-American moral progress has historically been premised on the transcending of racial difference, as Goldberg puts it, under the tenets of liberalism, “race is irrelevant, but all is race.”17

To articulate freedom and abstract universal equality as the twin pillars of liberal modes of governance, racial identity categories and how they are utilized for economic development under racial capitalism are continually disavowed even as they are innovated. In her writing about how such innovations played out in the post–World War II context, the historical period in which we locate our study, Jodi Melamed has argued that US advancement toward equality, as evidenced by liberal antiracism such as civil rights law and the professional accomplishments of black and other minority citizens, was meant to establish the moral authority of US democracy as superior to socialist and communist nations.18 Highlighting antiracism as the central tenet of US democracy, the US thus morally underwrote its imperial projects as a struggle for achieving states of freedom abroad over illiberal states of unfreedom, racializing illiberal systems of belief as a supplement to the racialization of bodies under Western European imperialism.19 The assertion that the US is a space of racial freedom, of course, covered over ongoing material inequalities based on race at home. As part of the articulation of US empire as an exceptional empire whose violence is justified because it spreads freedom, the history of slavery is always acknowledged, but only insofar as it can be rendered irrelevant to the present day—that is, the history of slavery is framed as a story of US national overcoming of a past aberrant from the ideals of US democracy, and as a story of redemption and progress toward an inclusion as rights-bearing subjects of an ever-proliferating list of others (women, black people, gay people, disabled people, etc.).

#### Linguistic expressions towards a “collective humanity” fail to understand the complexities of black death in relation to white life---only understanding blackness through the lens of transhumanism rejects practices of assimilation in favor of accepting the fluid nature of blackness.

Butler 19 [Philip Butler, Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Posthuman and Artificial Intelligence Systems at the Iliff School of Theology, December 12, 2020, “Black Transhuman Liberation Theology”, pg. 29-31, JMH]

I do recognize that the term “human” is the primary mode of linguistic currency when referring to bi-pedal, predominantly hairless and self-aware beings with supposedly superior intellects. I also recognize that certain rights are given to those who are classified as human. But, in America, those rights and protections evaporate in disparate proportions when the recipient is Black. The utility of the term “human” also evaporates when presented as currency for liberative exchange. Similar to the offering of Anthony Pinn’s reflection on the utility of the term “God,” I would like to move a step further. **I propose that the term “human” which has been employed as a tool for claiming one’s worth has not served to produce any concrete manifestation of Black liberation.**

In his book Black Skin White Masks, Fanon claims that “Black [folks] wants to be white. [Yet, white folks] slave to reach a human level.” While Fanon was attempting to speak to the fleeting relationship that both Black and white folks have with this term, it is also an allusion to the limitations of the term “human.”3 While Fanon claims that Black folks ought to forge a new (hu)man, which I argue has transhumanist implications, the reasoning he employs creates a doublelayered conundrum that highlights the depth to which Black folks are buried in the struggle to break free from the white gaze. The first layer arises through the relationship Fanon rightfully exposes. Black folks want to be white, and white folks want to be human. For Fanon, **this serves as a statement of clarity, because it exposes the never-ending problem of assimilation. Assimilation into white culture does not protect Black humanity.** The second, and most entangling, layer of this conundrum can be found in Fanon’s use of the term “human”:

But, if we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries. . . . We must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new [hu]man.4

Fanon’s declarative search for a new human hints at his recognition of the inherently problematic nature of the term. However, his maintenance of the term “human” only recycles the dilemma he highlights earlier. Trying to fit Black existence within Eurocentric codices confines the constructive potential of the chosen descriptor. So, **when I say that Black folks are not human I am suggesting that the deeply racist and exclusivist history attached to the term needs to be considered.** This is especially true since **the use of the term continues to impose boundaries upon Black bodies regarding how we ought to live. The boundaries** associated with the term **stems from its weaponization.** Molly RandellMoon and Ryan Tippet call attention to the necropolitics associated with this weaponization in the introduction of Security, Race, Biopower, suggesting **the human designation was used for the “economisation of . . . resources in favour of those who ‘deserve life.’5** Essentially, the human classification functions to protect the proto-normativity of white supremacy by upholding epistemological systems of anti-blackness, which are dependent upon the meaning disproportionately imbued upon those who bear its monicker. When we consider the role that the technological apparatus of language plays in undergirding anti-blackness, it could also be inferred that white people are not human either. White people are simply the benefactors of this technology, given their status within the cultural milieu in which it is employed. So, when Black folks insist upon participating within the supposedly protective schema of this term, Black folks are actively reifying anti-Black hierarchies inherently embedded within its cybernetic reach.

So, what is a new (hu)man? And why maintain the use of the term (hu)man at all? Why lay claim to a terminology that has been used to leave so many out of its designation, and create hierarchies of race? Why buy into a term that is part of the larger Eurocentric linguistic machinery? Most importantly, why employ a technology that was meant to subjugate the “Other” when it cannot adequately communicate the complexities of embodiment, let alone Black existence? Now, one could easily argue that the use of any European linguistic derivative maintains a connection to Eurocentric power dynamics. I would not disagree with that argument at all. This is not a departure from a term for the sake of being provocative. It is an intentional departure from the cognitive limitations associated with what it means to be human and Black. Nevertheless, **until Black folks become linguistically liberated** (something that I will not be able to unpack here) **the very components that comprise the reality in which Black folks understand themselves will be influenced by Eurocentrism. The term “human” functions as an elusive value marker, of which Black folks have been unable to grasp due to our lack of control of the term**. In this temporality, it is not a derivative of Black epistemic technology. So, in this invitation to unsubscribe to the use of the term “human,” I am taking into account the tumultuous history of the term and positing a temporary marker in its place, something a bit more generative—something a bit more true to form. W. E. B. DuBois’s testament to Black tenacity may be an indicator of the willingness of Black folks to combat maladaptive narratives surrounding Blackness, in order to usurp the suffocation of anti-Black power structures. It is with that in mind that Black transhuman liberation theology calls for a further deconstruction from the term “human,” and ultimately a separation from it**. Black folks are transhuman, flexible, and adaptable.** But why transhuman? Why utilize the very term I am asking Black folks to unsubscribe from as the root of this new label? Simply put**, transhumans do not carry the same boundaries as humans. They are not limited by the constraints of their form, or situation. Transhumans are transcendent, yet grounded in materiality.** Nevertheless, an adoption of the designation of transhuman for Black folks is rooted in the idea that Black bodies are technology—complex auto-/allopoietic biological systems undergoing constant change. But ever more so**, it is a recognition that since transhumans are always in a state of becoming, the term “transhuman” is only a placeholder for categorizing Blackness.** Thus, it is an invitation not only to depart from the human designation but also to wrestle with the uneasiness and potentiality of what Black folks might be. This is also an assertion that futuristic iterations of Blackness are unbounded. So, it has yet to be determined what Black folks are. We are just not human.6

#### The only way to actualize black liberation is through a spirituality of revolt, one that utilizes black biotechnology to imagine liberative possibilities both individually and communally to fight against the technocratic regime

Butler, 19 – Philip Butler, Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Posthuman and Artificial Intelligence Systems at the Iliff School of Theology; 2019(“Black Transhuman Liberation Theology,” Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 129-130, bam)

Black Transhumanism as Revolt Spirituality

This entire project has led to this point. So far, we have engaged in four distinct explorations: (1) a trek into Black transhumanism; (2) a theoretical outline of panpsychic vitalism which is intended to ground Black bodies as biotechnology; (3) a reflection upon the potential effects of Black spiritual practices on Black biotechnology as a preemptive means to combat a racist white supremacist world; and (4) an exploration of the ways that Black folks are already transhuman, which imagines the potential for emergent technology to interact with Black biotechnology. This chapter will attempt to bring all of these together through the underlying idea that in order for Black folks to materialize liberating realities it is imperative that Black folks operate from a disposition that I call the spirituality of revolt. This chapter will begin with an exploration of the spirituality of revolt. Then it will imagine two futures: a Black transhuman dystopia and an illustration of Black transhuman liberation.

Revolt spirituality

The spirituality of revolt is embodied by nonconformity, rebellion to indoctrination of docility in all forms, and the insistence of absolute justice. It is dependent upon the action of transhumans for the liberation of transhumans. In the case of Blackness, it is dependent on the actions of Black biotech for the liberation of Black biotech. It does not look to God, or the hills, for help. The spirituality of revolt becomes a spiritual disposition originating from individual and communal remembrance. Biotechnology remembers. It combines a recollection of historical pain and ancestral histories. It assesses the limitations of historical actions as it imagines liberative possibilities. It knows that liberation will not come from a God who is somewhere else. God is us. We are . . . incarnate with life itself. Revolt spirituality results in a posthuman spawn that acknowledges the convergence of spiritualities, actions, and complexities toward the goal of freedom. It recognizes the potential for teaming up with others in the fight for freedom and acknowledges historical alliances demonstrated by Bacon’s Rebellion, the Populist Party, and the Poor People’s Campaign. However, based on the fragility of those alliances, it takes seriously the belief that the action of Black biotechnology is key to Black freedom. Realistically, it realizes the fragility of organizing actions that are intended to topple power structures (think COINTELPRO or the betrayal of Denmark Vesey). And so, it employs a mixture of skepticism, foresight, and strategy. It considers technological trends and imagines synchronistic and projective measures to work with while imagining unforeseen tech to fit its own needs. Imagine it as the merger of Black biotech, spirituality, and technology as a means to embody (through the totality of action and thought) the directed evolution of Black biotech, Black spirituality, and Black life, for the freedom of Black folks from organisms of oppression.

#### Blackness is the focal point for the creating of life within white supremacist power structures, connecting cultural and historical embodiment of racial pigmentation into the complex system of the black body---Only the starting point of black transhumanism understand the complexities of racial technologies and access a liberated black body as a technology against whiteness.

Butler 19 [Philip Butler, Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Posthuman and Artificial Intelligence Systems at the Iliff School of Theology, December 12, 2019, “Black Transhuman Liberation Theology”, pg. 41-45, JMH]

**Blackness stands as a loci of experience whose mere existence implicates power structures which support white supremacy**. Regardless of the continued disproportionate inequities experienced by Black folks in America, our being/ existence continues to counter the capitalist white supremacist neoliberal narrative that everything is just fine.1 In “Dunham Possessed,” Stephanie Batiste infers that the creation and maintenance of stock versions of Blackness signify an imperial process of identifying the native, appropriating culture, and reifying stock versions of Black identity.2 While considerable work has been done to demonstrate how monolithic approaches to Blackness are a problematic fallacy, what Batiste is referring to further implicates Blackness, specifically stock versions of Blackness, as the result of imperial social production. That being the case, the intricate manner in which Blackness is connected to identity forces the society which constructed its stock caricaturization to wrestle with the historical outcomes, and lingering present-day consequences, of its function in society. Nevertheless, Blackness stands as an important Other in the case for the conditioning of social normativity.

Postmodernist and poststructuralist scholarship both assert the need to emphasize the multiplicity of embodied existence.3 And, **if Blackness is to operate beyond society’s ontological monolith as an expression of Black individuality, then the complexity of Black embodiment will find helpful support from evolutionary biology’s assertion that the greatest level of biodiversity occurs within groups.4** This same finding concerning genetic variance is also used to support claims denying the existence of racial difference, because of its ability to be interpreted as a proposition that human beings are fundamentally the same. While genetics research has historically moved from the racism of biological determinism to neoliberal notions of genetic similitude this shift only functions as a color-blind assertion of universal biologies.

The reality is this, problematic racial differences do occur at the genetic level. In 2018, a team at Johns Hopkins University constructed an African PanGenome (APG) from a composite of 910 deeply sequenced African diasporic genetic samples. Samples were received from the Consortium on Asthma among African-Ancestry Populations in the Americas. The study was conducted in an effort to reenforce the call to diversify the human reference genome. The “current human reference genome derives primarily from a single individual,” who so happens to be white and male.5 After comparing the African Pan-Genome to the human reference genome the team discovered 296.5 Mega-basepairs (296,485,284 basepairs to be exact) that were unique to the APG.6 The reference genome consists of 3235.84 Mega-basepairs. This study suggests that African descending genetics contain nearly 10 percent more genetic information than the reference genome. Furthermore, genetic structural testing reveals that African descending genetics aligns much more closely with Korean and Chinese genomes. Out of the 296.5 Mega-base pairs that were unique to the APG, 204.9 (204,928,334) were distinctly novel from the human reference genome! To this point the research team was clear in stating that “a better idea would be to create reference genomes for all distinct human populations.”7 The team who constructed this study also made it clear that the 910 genomes which comprised the APG did not fit within the scope of current human reference genome. One may assert that these issues are not very significant. But the sheer amount of base pair possibilities suggests otherwise. On a practical level, precision medicine is a burgeoning field which is examining the possibility of catering therapeutic medicine to individual genetic profiles. If the reference genome is primarily made from one white male, and doctors attempt to create genetically significant pharmaceutics for individuals of African descent the probability of success seems highly unlikely. Medicine applied to people whose genetic profile consists of regionally defined genetic variables that have not been rigorously explored could prove extremely deleterious. Until genetically oriented medicine addresses these issues more thoroughly precision medicine could function as biochemical warfare against Black bodies—given the unintended consequences of genetic research. While it may not be shocking that, even scientifically, “human” still means white male the extent to which this study may teach us about genetic difference has yet to be determined. So, any continued mention of a human “sameness” is essentially insisting on a universal human experience through the lens of a genetic framework. **And the majority of those who assert a universal human experience adamantly disregard the role race, culture, or ethnicity play in influencing human needs.** Given new directions in genetic research it is important to recognize that racial embodiment is also an embodiment of history’s impingement upon biology. So, I think that **in order to take race seriously an acknowledgment of the relational impact historical temporalities have had on biological systems is required.** Specifically, in the case of Black biologies that originate from the African continent, the reality is that these bodies carry the amalgamative biological response to various temporally dependent elements. The convergence of lands, animals, sociocultural contexts, preexisting embodiments, etc., on Black biological systems is important. These dynamic interactions result in a perpetual state of becoming. Similarities among Black biologies that share a history of slavery in the United States also stem from a history of Blackness originating out of the infinitely complex environments of both the geo-specific and bio-reflective markers, which are related to ancestral lineage on the African continent and the migration patterns of genealogical family members after entering the United States.8 The African diaspora into the United States connects biologically Black folks via physiological markers stemming from that historical connection. Still, this does not lump the experience of all Black folks in America into one biological cartography. It merely opens the discussion through an acknowledgment of the infinitely complex components that construct biological Blackness.

But what is biological Blackness? **Biological Blackness is the Black body. And what is the body if not a set of complex systems,** such as the central nervous system, cardiovascular system, respiratory system, digestive system, endocrine system, etc., which collectively converge upon the intricacies which undergird and promote Black life? Now, one could insert any race or ethnicity into the last sentence, which points to the fact that all bodies function as sets of complex systems. And, in connection with the definition of technology for Black transhuman liberation theology, a biological understanding of the body as an open set of complex systems would situate the body as a technology. Even more to the point, Black transhuman liberation theology is constructed for the transhumanist liberation of Black bodies, which further centers Black bodies in this conversation as technology. Black bodies are technology, and as technology Black bodies function as the means through which those who embody Blackness experience life. All experience happens within the bounds of the body. Even experiences thought to be had out of the body are mediated through the neurophysiology of the body. If the body is technology, where does this line of thought end? Can technology have a soul? Does technology embody a spirit? Are concepts such as the soul or spirit even relevant anymore? If the body is technology then what determines cognition or personality? If there is not a significant amount of genetic variance between Black and non-Black bodies then what makes Black bodies Black?

Since Black bodies are capable of manifesting through a wide spectrum of melanated hues one cannot always preclude, with certainty, whose body is Black. But, as the above description maintains, a stance of racialized derivatives suggests that there is more to determining inclusion within the sphere of Blackness than phenotypical expression. In this sense biological literature provides a space to critique critical race theory, supplying evidence (at the genetic level) to support racial difference. Hence, it is important to consider the role of one’s historical lineage. This is of particular import. The manner in which direct ancestral lineage was or is entangled with various sociocultures, both intrapersonal (internally) and interpersonal (at various levels), the environmental factors that actively converge upon embodiment are expressed through individual neurochemistries and genetics.

For Black transhuman liberation theology genetic evolutions, generationally passed down through both genetic inheritance and nongenetic inheritance, situates each body’s basic functionality as technological structures equipped to provide increasingly amenable access to life on earth. But if Black bodies are technology, then how does Black transhuman liberation theology avoid the continuance of transhumanism’s mind-body dualism? Furthermore, where is the soul**? Black transhuman liberation theology is grounded in the material lens of nonreductive physicalism, which asserts that the multiple levels of existence are deeply connected to the complexity of the material world.9 So, within this framework an assertion of the body as technology—particularly the Black body—locates the Black body as the gateway for experiencing life on earth.** This includes the entirety of the human body, including the mind. While some argue that the mind is not a physical entity, much like the soul, Black transhuman liberation theology’s nonreductive physicalist approach recognizes that there is not a 1:1 correlation between matter and mind, such that one could point to the mind in an x-ray or functional magnetic resonance imaging device (fMRI). Nonreductive physicalism would assert that the mind is housed within the body and therefore is a part of the body.10 It can be said that either the mind is in a localized place within the body, or it is present through a synchronized gradient of physiological activations which implicate the entire body as housing the mind, or minds, of the body.11 So, what we understand to be the mind appears to be the output of biological systems configurations. Also, if the mind and body are singular that would also suggest that the once intangible element of the mind has become a bit more tangible through human materiality. And, if the body in its entirety can be thought of as singular, in terms of incorporating the intangibility of the mind, then it might also hold that the other intangible elements which historically were connected to the body, but were not one with the body (i.e., soul and spirit), may find immanence through embodied materiality. Still, this line of thought might raise an important question: If the body is technology and there is no dualistic premise undermining the connection between body and mind, then what does the Black body carry? What is given access to the material world through the Black body? The short answer is vitality.

#### We might not know our final strategy, but we know that we must be ourselves, no matter how indignant we have to be---that is our spirit of revolt, the way to overcome the oppressive structures of the future by utilizing the resistances of the past

Butler, 19 – Philip Butler, Assistant Professor of Theology and Black Posthuman and Artificial Intelligence Systems at the Iliff School of Theology; 2019(“Black Transhuman Liberation Theology,” Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 137-139, bam)

Let’s circle back to revolt spirituality. Given the variable nature of life one cannot determine for others which route to take. The apparatuses of nonviolent love/peace, potentially anti-white supremacist assimilation, or active violence each become wildly acceptable means of engagement. So, I’ll reaffirm what was said in Chapter 2. Vitality justifies biotechnology, even meta-biotechnology and its use. Revolt spirituality is an opportunity to live from radical modes of being one’s self. Revolt spirituality is a switch in biotechnology, preoutfitted with existing overlays (programming) that make being one’s self the most generative option, regardless of the outcome. This is not being yourself as in just randomly doing what you want. This is a call to demand the most of what makes you you while engaging in the absolute violence that dismantles the system. Since being one’s self is a mode of violence it becomes an epistemological affront to proto-normative modes of existence. Colonial frameworks work in the binary. Revolt spirituality works in the multivariate. It is an everyday way of pushing against the grain as a way to combat harmful modes of existence that maintain white supremacy. It is a commitment to the expansion of one’s self into the very essence of their Blackness (potentiality). It affirms oppression as a viable means to establish and reassert dominance in the social sphere. So, be you in the most indignant way. Engage in the violence of being yourself. I think the late Neighborhood Nipsey Hustle (Nip tha Great) might have described Revolt Spirituality the best. Revolt Spirituality is being “disrespectful and arrogant, but who gon’ stop us.”23 It signifies a violently antagonistic approach to organisms which seek to subjugate. It’s engages in the violent tactics of oppression for the sake of liberation. And its paradox is a statement to its complexity. But that should not discourage from its embodiment.

Historically embodied revolt spirituality

Revolt spirituality requires a consideration of what may be thought as its former embodiments. Nat Turner can be seen as an example of historical revolt spirituality. His vision of fighting spirits that represented what he perceived as an impending apocalypse ignited his plan which culminated in his all-out attempt to overthrow slavery on August 21, 1831. Harriet Tubman’s clandestine network was an example of revolt spirituality, as a communal practice. The boldness of Ida B. Wells to risk life and limb through her journalism and through her systematic documentation of the lynchings of Black folks across the United States was another example, too. W. E. B. DuBois’s scholarship provided a strategic vision of self-determination which became part of the foundation of decolonial discourse.24 Bishop Henry McNeal Turner embodied revolt spirituality through his insistence on self-consciousness, which he urged was key to revolution. The legendary punch thrown by Stormé DeLarverie that sparked the Stonewall Riots was another example. So are Octavia Butler’s speculative visions, and Assata Shakur’s willingness to participate in self-defense. It is important to note that these are not the only examples of revolt spirituality in history. It is also important to note that the Black spirit of revolt requires a “hundred year plan,” that simultaneously carries the weight of more than 250 slave revolts (conspired or materialized) during the antebellum period, the cunning wisdom of the Marooners, the defiant fortitude of the Deacons for Defense and Justice, the economic strategy of Robert F. Smith, along with the strategic fire of the Black Panther Party.25 The necessary coupling of patience and intensity that an intergeneration plan like revolt spirituality requires can be considered an upward apocalypse; accumulating positions of power and physically dismantling systems of inequity. Because before Black revolt spirituality can make itself known, the moving variables need to be accounted for. The wisdom provided by a hindsight view of the civil rights movement informs Black revolt spirituality. Its manifestation cannot afford the loss of its leaders. It also cannot afford to have just any leaders. Most importantly, it cannot wait and act in reply to acts of injustice. Black revolt spirituality must materialize as an intentionally relentless holistically calculated strategic plan that culminates in a spiritual disposition that will accept nothing less than freedom—nothing less than justice.

I think complete and utter freedom has not been attained because the line of freedom is elusive and continues to move. So, while tremendous organizers like Angela Y. Davis, Fannie Lou Hamer, Shaun King, W. E. B. DuBois, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Marcus Garvey have been able to rile the people, garnering strong support not only from the Black community but also from people all around the globe, Dick Gregory so rightfully stated, “Civil rights [are] what black folks are given in the U.S. on the installment plan, [of] civil-rights bills. [They are] not to be confused with human rights, which are the dignity, stature, [personhood], respect, and freedom belonging to all people by right of their birth.”26 The stark reality is that dialogue has not brought freedom. Marching has not brought freedom. Speeches have not brought freedom. Legislation has not brought freedom. Riots have not brought freedom. Slave revolts have not brought freedom. Advocating for the humanity of Black folks has not brought freedom.27 Black folks have historically found themselves contentiously staring at a gaping ravine. Freedom is on the other side, but there is a constant struggle to define what we see and decide on the right action that will get us there.