# 1NC – UK r1 – Bing PT

## 1

### 1NC – Kritik

#### Blackness exists as a metaaporia that interrogates the cyclical ways violence onto blackness is morphed and ultimately appropriated. The 1AC relies on a redemptive narrative of humanity that is fundamentally inaccessible for blacks. Their project is ultimately meant to hide and recreate moments of black death for the sake of redeeming Human life.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 13-17, JMH]

For most critical theorists writing after 1968, the word aporia is used to designate a contradiction in a text or theoretical undertaking. For example, Jacques Derrida suggests an aporia indicates “a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself.” But when I say that Black people embody a meta-aporia for political thought and action, the addition of the prefix meta- goes beyond what Derrida and the poststructuralists meant—it raises the level of abstraction and, in so doing, raises the stakes. In epistemology, a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge, the prefix meta- is used to mean about (its own category). Metadata, for example, are data about data (who has produced them, when, what format the data are in, and so on). In linguistics, a grammar is considered as being expressed in a metalanguage, language operating on a higher level of abstraction to describe properties of the plain language (and not itself). Metadiscussion is a discussion about discussion (not any one particular topic of discussion but discussion itself). In computer science, a theoretical software engineer might be engaged in the pursuit of metaprogramming (i.e., writing programs that manipulate programs). **Afropessimism**, then, **is** less of a theory and more of **a metatheory: a critical project that, by deploying Blackness as a lens of interpretation, interrogates the unspoken, assumptive logic of Marxism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and feminism through rigorous theoretical consideration of their properties and assumptive logic, such as their foundations, methods, form, and utility; and it does so, again, on a higher level of abstraction than the discourse and methods of the theories it interrogates.** Again, Afropessimism is, in the main, more of a metatheory than a theory. **It is pessimistic about the claims theories of liberation make when these theories try to explain Black suffering or when they analogize Black suffering with the suffering of other oppressed beings. It does this by unearthing and exposing the meta-aporias, strewn like land mines in what these theories of so-called universal liberation hold to be true.** If, as Afropessimism argues, Blacks are not Human subjects, but are instead structurally inert props, implements for the execution of White and non-Black fantasies and sadomasochistic pleasures, then this also means that, at a higher level of abstraction, the claims of universal humanity that the above theories all subscribe to are ~~hobbled~~ [constricted] by a meta-aporia: a contradiction that manifests whenever one looks seriously at the structure of Black suffering in comparison to the presumed universal structure of all sentient beings. Again, Black people embody a meta-aporia for political thought and action— Black people are the wrench in the works. Blacks do not function as political subjects; instead, our flesh and energies are instrumentalized for postcolonial, immigrant, feminist, LGBTQ, transgender, and workers’ agendas. These so-called **allies are never authorized by Black agendas predicated on Black ethical dilemmas. A Black radical agenda is terrifying to most people on the Left**—think Bernie Sanders—**because it emanates from a condition of suffering for which there is no imaginable strategy for redress—no narrative of social, political, or national redemption**. This crisis, no, this catastrophe, this realization that I am a sentient being who can’t use words like “being” or “person” to describe myself without the scare quotes and the threat of raised eyebrows from anyone within earshot, was crippling. I was convinced that if a story of Palestinian redemption could be told . . . its denouement would culminate in the return of the land, a spatial, cartographic redemption; and if a story of class redemption could be told . . . its denouement would culminate in the restoration of the working day so that one stopped working when surplus values were relegated to the dustbin of history, a temporal redemption; in other words, since postcolonial and working-class redemption were possible, then there must be a story to be told through which one could redeem the time and place of Black subjugation. I was wrong. **I had not dug deep enough to see that though Blacks suffer the time and space subjugation of cartographic deracination and the hydraulics of the capitalist working day, we also suffer as the hosts of Human parasites, though they themselves might be the hosts of parasitic capital and colonialism**. I had looked to theory (first as a creative writer, and only much later as a critical theorist) to help me find/create the story of Black liberation—Black political redemption. What I found instead was that **redemption, as a narrative mode, was a parasite that fed upon me for its coherence. Everything meaningful in my life had been housed under the umbrellas called “critical theory” and “radical politics.”** The parasites had been capital, colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia. And now it was clear that I had missed the boat. My parasites were Humans, all Humans—the haves as well as the have-nots. If critical theory and radical politics are to rid themselves of the parasitism that they heretofore have had in common with radical and progressive movements on the Left, that is, if we are to engage, rather than disavow, **the difference between Humans who suffer through an “economy of disposability” and Blacks who suffer by way of “social death,” then we must come to grips with how the redemption of the subaltern** (a narrative, for example, of Palestinian plenitude, loss, and restoration) **is made possible by the (re)instantiation of a regime of violence that bars Black people from the narrative of redemption**. This requires (a) an understanding of the difference between loss and absence, and (b) an understanding of how the narrative of subaltern loss stands on the rubble of Black absence. Sameer and I didn’t share a universal, postcolonial grammar of suffering. Sameer’s loss is tangible, land. The paradigm of his dispossession elaborates capitalism and the colony. When it is not tangible it is at least coherent, as in the loss of labor power. But how does one describe the loss that makes the world if all that can be said of loss is locked within the world? **How does one narrate the loss of loss? What is the “difference between . . . something to save . . . [and nothing] to lose”?** Sameer forced me to face the depth of my isolation in ways I had wanted to avoid; a deep pit from which neither postcolonial theory, nor Marxism, nor a gender politics of unflinching feminism could rescue me. Why is anti-Black violence not a form of racist hatred but the genome of Human renewal; a therapeutic balm that the Human race needs to know and heal itself? Why must the world reproduce this violence, this social death, so that social life can regenerate Humans and prevent them from suffering the catastrophe of psychic incoherence— absence? Why must the world find its nourishment in Black flesh?

#### The AFF locates debate as the site for change but fails to take into account how that attachment is cruelly optimistic.

Berlant 7 (Lauren, Prof. of English @ U. of Chicago, “Cruel Optimism: On Marx, Loss, and the Senses”, New Formations, Number 63, Winter, 2007)

‘Cruel optimism' names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility whose realisation is discovered either to be impossible, sheer fantasy, or too possible, and toxic. What's cruel about these attachments, and not merely inconvenient or tragic, is that the subjects who have x in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the content of the attachment is, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world. This phrase points to a condition different than that of melancholia, which is enacted in the subject's desire to temporise an experience of the loss of an object/scene with which she has identified her ego continuity. Cruel optimism is the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object. One more thing: the cruelty of an optimistic attachment is, I think, usually something an analyst observes about someone's or some group's attachment to x, since usually that attachment exists without being an event, or even better, seems to lighten the load for someone/some group.2 But if the cruelty of an attachment is experienced by someone/some group, even in disavowed fashion, the fear is that the loss of the object/scene of promising itself will defeat the capacity to have any hope about anything. Often this fear of loss of a scene of optimism as such is unstated and only experienced in a sudden incapacity to manage startling situations, as we will see below.

One might point out that all objects/scenes of desire are problematic, in that investments in them and projections onto them are less about them than about what cluster of desires and affects we can manage to keep magnetised to them. I have indeed wondered whether all optimism is cruel, because the experience of loss of the conditions of its reproduction can be so breathtakingly bad, just as the threat of the loss of x in the scope of one's attachment drives can feel like a threat to living on itself. But some scenes of optimism are clearly crueller than others: where cruel optimism operates, the very vitalising or animating potency of an object/ scene of desire contributes to the attrition of the very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place. This might point to something as banal as a scouring love, but it also opens out to obsessive appetites, working for a living, patriotism, all kinds of things. One makes affective bargains about the costliness of one's attachments, usually unconscious ones, most of which keep one in proximity to the scene of desire/attrition.

This means that a poetics of attachment always involves some splitting off of the story I can tell about wanting to be near x (as though x has autonomous qualities) from the activity of the emotional habitus I have constructed by having x in my life in order to be able to project out my endurance as proximity to the complex of what x seems to offer and proffer. To understand cruel optimism, therefore, one must embark on an analysis of rhetorical indirection, as a way of thinking about the strange temporalities of projection into an enabling object that is also disabling. I learned how to do this from reading Barbara Johnson's work on apostrophe and free indirect discourse. In her poetics of indirection, each of these rhetorical modes is shaped by the ways a writing subjectivity conjures other ones so that, in a performance of fantasmatic intersubjectivity, the writer gains superhuman observational authority, enabling a performance of being made possible by the proximity of the object. Because this object is something like what I am describing in the optimism of attachment, I'll describe a bit the shape of my transference with her thought.

In Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion,' which will be my key referent here, Johnson tracks the political consequences of apostrophe for what has become foetal personhood: a silent, affectively present but physically displaced interlocutor (a lover, a foetus) is animated in speech as distant enough for a conversation but close enough to be imaginable by the speaker in whose head the entire scene is happening.3 But the condition of projected possibility, of a hearing that cannot take place in the terms of its enunciation (`you' are not here, 'you' are eternally belated to the conversation with you that I am imagining) creates a fake present moment of intersubjectivity in which, nonetheless, a performance of address can take place. The present moment is made possible by the fantasy of you, laden with the x qualities I can project onto you, given your convenient absence. Apostrophe therefore appears to be a reaching out to a you, a direct movement from place x to y, but it is actually a turning back, an animating of a receiver on behalf of the desire to make something happen now that realises something in the speaker, makes the speaker more or differently possible, because she has admitted, in a sense, the importance of speaking for, as, and to, two: but only under the condition, and illusion, that the two is really (in) one.

Apostrophe is thus an indirect, unstable, physically impossible but phenomenologically vitalising movement of rhetorical animation that permits subjects to suspend themselves in the optimism of a potential occupation of the same psychic space of others, the objects of desire who make you possible (by having some promising qualities, but also by not being there).\* Later work, such as on 'Muteness Envy,' elaborates Johnson's description of the gendered rhetorical politics of this projection of voluble intersubjectivity.5 The paradox remains that the conditions of the lush submerging of one consciousness into another require a double negation: of the speaker's boundaries, so s/he can grow bigger in rhetorical proximity to the object of desire; and of the spoken of, who is more or less a powerful mute placeholder providing an opportunity for the speaker's imagination of her/his/their flourishing.

#### The 1AC’s focus on language as liberation reproduces the same racial hierarchies that they seek to dismantle- not only are their politics not able to capture to true magnitude of antiblackness, but they always assume language as a life force rather than an impossibility.

**Marriott 21** [David Marriott, Professor in the Histories of Consciousness at UC Santa Cruz, 2021, “Lacan Noir, Lacan and Afro-pessimism”, The Palgrave Lacan Series, <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-74978-1#authorsandaffiliationsbook>, Pages 6-10, JMH]

What does a “psychoanalysis of the signifier mean”? Not, primarily, a Saussurean theory of the sign, a grammatology, nor a rhetoric of tropes. Lacan, at the beginning of the Seminar, thus introduces the following algorithm (of the signifier (S)): not to think representation or writing; but to conceive of an entirely new topology; of the signifier as the crossing (of a bar) which also bars any access to its signified (s).7 But this also implies that the bar is the differential principle of resistance. Conversely, **only resistance can decline the signifier, and makes its difference an object of jouis-sens (‘enjoy-meant’) and misrecognition**. This is what the signifier is; the genetic element that reveals how difference is subjected to value. But the subject, even when it submits to the bar, limits active resistance, imposes limitations and partial restrictions on it and is already controlled by the x that (the signifier) represents. For the subject is merely represented in the set of signifiers. I say merely because the signifier is always a false witness to what the Other asks of me, for it is not really there. What the bar makes thinkable as resistant is nothing more than the restoration, without consolation, of a mirage (of a difference synonymous with the segregation of S1 from S2 ) to which the Other bears witness. With this in mind imagine the following illustration: This is not meant to be a parody of Lacan’s famous “image of two twin [toilet] doors”, but is a refection on what is at stake (E, 417). When discussing the image of the twin doors, and their identical appearance, Lacan is of the opinion that the segregation of the twin nouns (“man” and “woman”) is purely nominal, or arbitrary. To conceive of these signs as a naïve nominalism which confuses the signifier with the this, that, here, now of a recognition—like a Hegelian child pointing at the ruins of spirit—does not allow us to enter into gender, insofar it is permissible to write above either door with the appropriate modesty of symbolic law. As if gender had only one referential concept and one representation and all one had to do is choose the right door for its corresponding recognition to take place. But this is what the knowledge of difference is: an imaginary freedom to choose or reject what one believes to be different. **This is why Lacan refers to an imperative which is the signifier’s greatest achievement, but also its conquest as hoax, in its teleology and normative renunciation of failure and non-meaning. For the evaluation of this law, the delicate weighing of each signifier in its pure differentiation, Lacan says it depends on a subjugation and a segregation which the West shares with supposedly “primitive communities” (**E, 417). To interpret the algorithmic function of the signifier is always to weigh that which segregates. (But how are we meant to read the logic by which the primitive is used—that is, segregated—as an illustration of segregation? How are we to read the presumed equality of a universal equivalence? That we are all duped by the need for a fundamental difference whose sign gender is? But such a notion already presumes a universal desire for difference that the signifier represents as sex’s representative and the universal’s represented. But what would it mean to say that the signifier “goes” in the same way as that of gender? That it, too, is subject to the same arbitration, same atavism?) **The notion of (racial) hierarchy does not simply appear here but takes on a rhetorical significance, for not every subjugation has the same value of segregation or of referential difference.** What is the relation, then, between subjection and segregation? Are they synonymous? If segregation operates as a law, that is, as something forcibly enjoined on the speaking subject, are there differences in how different subjects take possession of it and are subjugated by it? There are seemingly forces which can only get a grip on something by giving it a segregated sense and a negative value. Consider the mania over choosing the right door or restroom. If it is a direct product of arbitrariness, why does choosing the wrong door signify the worst, recognized or not? But here again, who can conceive of the signifier as simply the acquisition of formally assignable values? Blackness, on the other hand, will be defined as that one, among all the senses of a right choice, which gives the being of what is said the form with which it has a segregating value. Of therefore being the wrong choice in general. Thus, segregare, meaning to set apart, isolate, divide; a word that shifts from a religious to a racist meaning in 1908 suggests an obvious difference in how modern subjects are subjected to the signifier; it also gives rise not only to the enigmatic question of arbitrary difference as such, but also of the racist historicity of such ordering. But which order has the maximum afinity with the symbolic? Which is the one where we can no longer know who subjugates, since it is subjugated by the force that segregates it? For all things this is a question of weighing, the delicate but rigorous art of knowing the imaginary object of blackness from the ab-sens by which it is necessarily taken away, cast down, served gall rather than the meat of a universal equivalent. Indeed, segregation shows how racial difference is inscribed (Lacan uses the word enters) across the two spaces, but also how the segregation of linguistic values that we find in the illustration is made to symbolize (Lacan uses the words complement, reinforce) racial difference in “the lived experience of truth” (E, 417). Does the image above allow a better understanding of what is being presupposed? **Everything about that illustration that, from the very beginning, was taken up with a linguistic explanation of the signifier, with Saussure, with signification, suggests that its importance resides solely in how difference is inscribed in language**. And yet. Even if we think that the placing of race here is a precarious pursuit, the sign of an inability to read properly, and one that risks being tripped up by the purely formal question of difference—nevertheless, the form in which signifiers are symbolically subjugated does suggest that there is something more going on here than how subjects are placed in language. Why? In the perspective of Lacan’s original reading, the signifier’s autonomy is equally caught between what it metaphorically affirms and at the same time metonymically denies, an ambiguous ambiguity in relation to which all linguistic values are deemed arbitrary. This is why Lacan is so fond of saying that the signifier reveals a hole in meaning. It is not that the signifier makes these holes appear, or that it reveals actual gaps: the signifier veils over a more primordial lack out of which meaning is woven and then draped over being like some discarded pelt. What people want from the signifier is thus what allows them to know without knowing, those pleasures and adventures that allow us to take our minds away from the fact that the signifier signifies nothing but what it lacks. Even if we remain enslaved or chained to the ways in which the signifier insists—and consists—in the signification of the lack of this lack, meaning offers us nothing else other than the lure of its capture. What language teaches us, then, is how our being is burdened by sense and by its expectation. **What meaning offers us, in short, is neither truth nor consolation, but a desire for a certain mastery in which blackness is once again figured as something enslaved, dominated by its appearance**. **That is why its symbol is that of the non-moi, for what it connotes is so fearful as to be inexpressible, like a Jabberwock, or the insatiable savage nature of some mythical beast.** This great fearful thought has often served to show certain truths and thus to prove the symbolic efficacity of blackness. But at the same time, it is impossible to gain access to it, to prove absolutely that it exists, since its sense always seems to be less than its differential value. For what is at stake is not knowledge, or seeing, but the thought that makes blackness itself into a state of terror or wretchedness. It is therefore not surprising to come across the following curious sentence in Lacan’s meditation on the signifier: “[T]he phenomenon is no different, which – making her appear, with the sole postponement of a “but,” as comely as the Shulammite, as honest as a virtuous maiden – adorns and readies the Negress for the wedding and the poor woman for the auction block” (E, 419).

#### Performative modes of counter-hegemonic resistance use a unique form of terror on black thought as it ignores any possibility for realizing black desires further locking the absolute dereliction of blackness.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 220-222, JMH]

It would be misguided, even mendacious, to have said to the people in the van that the Patriot Act did not affect Black people; or to champion an anti-immigration sentiment of any sort. But it would be just as misguided and mendacious to suggest that the Patriot Act’s relative corruption of the integrity of the Bill of Rights, or the relative rigidity or elasticity of access to (and within) the institutionality of civil society, can help us think through Black folks’s unique grammar of suffering. Put another way, **Black thought (and therefore Black liberation) is threatened not only by the state, but by the interests and actions of the loyal opposition in the airport shuttle.** In fact, Black thought is threatened by a three-tiered ensemble of terror. Our intellectual capability to do the work is not what’s at issue here. What’s at stake is our capacity to work against the constraints of analogy, the terrorism of intra-Human exchange—the hydraulics of my ride to the airport. **First, there is the terrorism of what Gramsci referred to as “political society”: the police, the army, the prison-industrial complex. Second, there is the terror of civil society’s hegemonic blocs and its clusters of affilial formations: like the mainstream media, the university, or the megachurch.** But **there is also a third tier of terror with which Black thought must contend. And that is the terror of counter-hegemonic and revolutionary thought: the logic of White feminism, the logic of working-class struggle, the logic of multicultural coalitions, and the logic of immigrant rights. The unrelenting terror elaborated whenever Black people’s so-called allies think out loud.** The stakes of this three-tiered terror are high because of their impact upon Black people’s capacity to capture and be captured by our own imaginations. **These three tiers scaffold the death of Black desire. And our capacity to imagine and to fantasize while assuming our position is imbricated in our capacity to think theoretically: to give our political desire “objective value.”** This third tier of terror that threatens the imagination and the enunciation of Black thought—the terror of left-wing counterhegemonic alliances—should not be dismissed as incidental or inessential, nor should it be trivialized as an ensemble of bad attitudes that can be overcome through dialogue, as the Race Rave conference in Santa Cruz had assumed. For it is an essential terror; it is as constitutive of an anti-Black world as the military and the megachurch. It doesn’t simply kill or warehouse Black thought the way the first tier kills and warehouses the Black body. Nor does it simply crowd out a Black emancipatory ensemble of questions the way traditional organs of hegemony crowd out the performance of the common man or woman’s ensemble of questions. **This third tier terrorizes through an interdiction against Black performance, coupled with a demand for Black performance—dance, Johnny, dance. We might say that it demands the performance of Black thought, albeit under erasure**. It wants us to sing the blues; but instead of those Ain’t Got No Life Worth Living Blues (instead of the social death blues), it wants Black folks singing the:

—Ain’t Got No Green Card Blues —Ain’t Got No Abortion Blues —Ain’t Got No Right to Privacy Blues —Ain’t Got No Border-Crossing Blues —Ain’t Got No Same-Sex Weddin’ Blues —Ain’t Got No Ciba Lubbaties Blues

Civil society expands and contracts to accommodate or diminish (but never banish carte blanche) a multitude of positions and identities—Jews, Arabs, Asian Immigrants, Latinos, Italians, White women, and Native Americans. The annals of history show nineteenth century transitions from territories to states as being manifest with a great and conflicting diversity of views with respect to all of these groups. These fledgling fifty states even found themselves, on rare occasion (as in the case of California), debating the civic and social membership of Native Americans. But civil society would not know the boundary, the frontier, of such debates, which is to say it would lose all coherence and not be able to draw the line between social life and social death, if not for the presence of Black folks. Black people hold that line for White people and for everyone else. **Blacks give even the most degraded position a sense of human possibility because we are the locus of human impossibility. Whatever grace others may fall from, they will never be Black**. This is a comforting thought. The flame of human warmth. There’s something organic to Blackness that makes it essential to the construction of civil society. But there’s also something organic to Blackness that portends the destruction of civil society. There’s nothing willful or speculative in this statement, for one could just as well state the claim the other way around: there’s something organic to civil society that makes it essential to the destruction of the Black body. Blackness is a positionality of “absolute dereliction,” abandonment, in the face of civil society, and therefore cannot be liberated or be made legible through counter-hegemonic interventions. Black suffering is not a function of the performance(s) of civil society, but of the existence of civil society. For the Pakistani driver, the White professor, and his White wife, civil society is an ensemble of constraints and opportunities. But for the Black, civil society is a murderous projection. In light of this, **coalitions and social movements—even radical social movements like the Prison Abolition Movement—bound up in the solicitation of hegemony, so as to fortify and extend the interlocutory life of civil society, ultimately accommodate only the satiable demands and legible conflicts of civil society’s junior partners** (such as immigrants, White women, the working class), **but foreclose upon the insatiable demands and illegible antagonisms of Blacks.** In short, **whereas such coalitions and social movements cannot be called the outright handmaidens of anti-Blackness, their rhetorical structures, political desire, and their emancipatory horizon are bolstered by a lifeaffirming anti-Blackness; the death of Black desire.**

#### Only the alternative’s unflinching interrogation into the continual enslavement of blackness can overcome the failures of past, present, and future systems of reform that describe enslavement as a contingent event and not a flat lined existence.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 100-104, JMH]

When in Dr. Zhou’s office, Stella had said, “What’s the matter, Frank? Are you afraid we’ll tarnish your father’s reputation?” she had put her finger on the pulse of a desire to be special that beat inside my heart. In my unconscious I wanted to latch on to an element of Whiteness, or Humanness (since Dr. Zhou wasn’t White), that would set me apart from other Blacks. But this desire was deeper than Stella or I suspected at the time. An unconscious wish for my father’s prestige (which was as faux as the prestige Solomon thought he had accrued from his skills as an engineer and his talents as a musician) to seep into my being by osmosis. I had dropped his name to get us the appointment. I would drop his name in the weeks and months to come to open other doors as well. This kind of reasoning is universal. But what is not universal, what belongs to Black people and Black people alone, is a deeper desire sparked by a deeper structure of oppression**. When you intuit for the first time in your life that you live in a soup of violence that is prelogical,** a kind of violence that is as legitimate if it’s wielded by “ordinary” citizens, such as Josephine, as it is if wielded by sanctioned enforcers of the law, and that your father’s position and prestige are no more the keys to a sanctuary than the position and prestige of someone who is Black and orphaned, **you are faced with two choices: stare unflinchingly at the abyss as it stares unflinchingly at you, or take it out on the Black person near you who won’t leave you to your fantasy of being truly alive.** Anything to not have to face the fact that your sense of presence is no more than “borrowed institutionality.”\* This dynamic, this intra-Black imbroglio, is harder to discern in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, for the simple fact that the personas of the master class are no longer solidified in evil White men and evil White women who wield real whips on a real plantation. The master has been dispersed across the entire racial spectrum of people who are not Black. Dr. Zhou is as much a master as Edwin and Mary Epps, the antagonists in *12 Years a Slave*. In fact, the twentieth century shot the Eppses through a prism—they are not just people, they are ideas. They are ideas and personas that a young middle-class Black man like me had consciously fought against to the point of being kicked out of college, while deep in my unconscious I was a loyal supplicant who cared more about not simply the master’s feelings, but the stability of the master’s world, than I did about my own suffering and the suffering of Stella. It is hard to be a slave and feel that you are worthy, truly worthy, of your suffering as a slave. One hundred twenty-seven years before Josephine, before Cody, before Urban Risers, and before Dr. Zhou, the riff between Stella and me would have been clearer to see. We wouldn’t have walked home in symptomatic silence; our discord would have been played out in the open. At times, Stella would throw her sense of herself as a being from a special, quasi-Black dimension at me the way I threw my father’s status and my Dartmouth pedigree at her. She would let me know of the competence exhibited by the White men she had been with and the Jew she had married; she held them up as object lessons that I could never be or learn. That’s how most Black couples fight and argue, by firing White and non-Black people at each other. No, it’s more subtle than that. The bullets aren’t the White or non-Black people themselves but the ambience of recognition and incorporation in a world beyond the plantation. **We load our guns with deadly intangibles and shoot straight for the heart. Anyone who thinks nineteenth century slave narratives are reports on the past isn’t paying attention.** **Such a person will experience the analysis of Afropessimism as though they are being mugged, rather than enlightened; that is because they can’t imagine a plantation in the here and now.** But Afropessimism is premised on a comprehensive and iconoclastic claim: **that Blackness is coterminous with Slaveness: Blackness is social death**: which is to say that **there was never a prior metamoment of plenitude, never equilibrium: never a moment of social life**. Blackness, as a paradigmatic position (rather than as a set of cultural practices, anthropological accoutrements**) is elaborated through slavery. The narrative arc of the slave who is Black** (unlike Orlando Patterson’s generic Slave, who may be of any race) **is not an arc at all, but a flat line, what Hortense Spillers calls “historical stillness”: a flat line that moves from disequilibrium, to a moment in the narrative of faux-equilibrium, to disequilibrium restored and/ or rearticulated.** This kind of change, the transformative promise of a narrative arc, belongs to White men and their junior partners in civil society (non-Black immigrants, White and non-Black people who are queer, and non-Black women) but only in relation to each other. By transformative capacity I mean that, through struggle, non-citizens (in the legal and libidinal sense of the word—legal being Latinx undocumented immigrants, for example, and libidinal being anyone from a documented immigrant of color to a gay person to a nonBlack woman) can become citizens, because they are still Human; they are simply oppressed and therefore not so fully vested. But their transformative capacity stems not from their positive attributes but from the fact that they are not Black, they are not slaves. These fully vested citizens and not-so-fully vested citizens live through intra-communal narrative arcs of transformation; but where the Black is concerned, their collective unconscious calls upon Blacks as props, which they harness as necessary implements to help bring about their psychic and social transformation, and to vouchsafe the coherence of their own Human subjectivity. Nevertheless, the slave is a sentient being. Therefore, an existence void of transformative promise, which narrative holds out to human subjects, is a painful lesson for the slave to learn, much less accept. **I am not suggesting that Black people should resign themselves to the inevitability of social death—it is inevitable, in the sense that one is born into social death just as one is born into a gender or a class; but it is also constructed by the violence and imagination of other sentient beings**. Thus, like class and gender, which are also constructs, not divine designations, **social death can be destroyed. But the first step toward the destruction is to assume one’s position** (assume, not celebrate or disavow), and **then burn the ship or the plantation, in its past and present incarnations, from the inside out**. However, as Black people we are often psychically unable and unwilling to assume this position. This is as understandable as it is impossible. I was a lot like that when I met Stella. Stella was skeptical about the willingness of the FBI to help us unravel the skeins of aggression that were coming our way (from Josephine and Cody’s violence to the violence of whoever did not want Stella to bring her evidence against Urban Risers to court). Looking back, I realize that I believed that my father had standing in the community, that his position on multiple boards and his vice presidency at the university had somehow imbued us both with Human capacity, the capacity to be recognized and incorporated as something other than Black. I had no idea that the FBI had tracked me for four years, that there was a file on me; nor did it dawn on me that Stella’s social-change activism, especially her civil disobedience against the war and her plethora of counterculture and revolutionary friends, would militate against our being helped. But those aren’t even the fundamental reasons why I should have been skeptical: If the FBI has been tracking Black creative writers since 1919, if the FBI has been constantly updating and revising its list of Black writers earmarked for preventative detention (concentration camps**?),\* if the FBI, like every law enforcement agency in the United States, is organically anti-Black, then where is the line between prison and home?**

## Case

### 1NC – Case

#### Vote NEG on presumption-

#### Black death- the 1AC speaks on instances of black death and ontological violence without any material ways to solve them- that makes the violence fungible and turns the case

#### Debatability- they provide no concrete or new strategy that hasn’t already been done- that makes them undebatable because we can never predict what the 2AC spin will be

#### Academy- scholarship and performance for the sake of performance is bad because it makes the affect intelligible for white academics that will use and attempt to identify with it- turns their offense because white people will attempt to find their own forms of conjuring based on what they find out

#### The battle over reliance of intimate self-knowledge is over and lost – corporations have seized control and turned it into a for-profit business that reproduces depression on a massive scale---turns their impact and results in ever-increasing despair

Han 15. Byung-Chul Han, professor of philosophy and cultural studies at the Universität der Künste Berlin, The Transparency Society, 2015: 34

The world of the eighteenth century was a theatrum mundi. The public sphere resembled a stage. Scenic distance hindered immediate contact between bodies and souls. The theatrical stands opposed to the tactile. Communication occurs through ritual forms and signs; this unburdens the soul. In modernity, theatrical distance is increasingly abandoned in favor of intimacy. Richard Sennett sees a fateful development here, which deprives one o f the ability to “play with and invest feeling in external images of the self.”1 Formalization, conventionalization, and ritualization do not exclude expressivity. The theater is a site of expression. But acts of expression here are objective feelings and not manifestations of psychic interiority. Therefore they are represented and not exhibited. The world today is no theater where actions and feelings are represented and interpreted, but a market on which intimacies are exhibited, sold, and consumed. The theater is a site of representation, whereas the market is a site of exhibition. Today theatrical representation is yielding to pornographic exhibition.

Sennett assumes “that theatricality has a special, hostile relation to intimacy; theatricality has an equally special, friendly relation to a strong public life.”2 The culture of intimacy ascends when the objective-public world, which does not concern intimate feelings and sensations, experiences a fall. According to the ideology of intimacy, social relations prove more real, genuine, credible, and authentic the more closely they approach the inner psychic needs of individuals. Intimacy is the psychological formula of transparency. One believes that one attains transparency of the soul by revealing intimate feelings and emotions, by laying the soul bare.

Social media and personalized search engines set up, in the inter­ net, a space of absolute closeness [Nahraum]; here the outside has been eliminated. One encounters only oneself and one’s own life. No negativity stands available to make change possible. This digital vicinity [Nachbarschaft] offers users only sectors of the world that please them. In this fashion, it dismantles the public sphere [Offent- lichkeit]— indeed, it dismantles public, critical consciousness— and it privatizes the world. The internet transforms into an intimate sphere or comfort zone. Proximity, from which all distance has been eliminated, is another form in which transparency finds expression.

The tyranny of intimacy psychologizes and personalizes everything. Even politics cannot escape its grasp. Accordingly, politicians are no longer measured by their actions. Instead, general interest concerns their persons; this entails compulsive staging on their part. The loss of the public sphere leaves behind a void; intimate details and private matters pour into it. Publicizing a persona takes the place o f the public sphere. In the process, the public sphere becomes an exhibition space. It grows more and more distant from the space of communal action.

“Person” (in Latin, persona) originally means “mask.” It gives the voice sounding through it (per-sonare) character; indeed, it lends the voice shape and form. As a society of revealing and denuding, the society of transparency works against all forms of the mask, against symbolic appearance [Schein]. The mounting deritualization and denarrativization o f society also strip it o f forms o f symbolic appearance and render it naked. Objective rules, not subjective psychic states, determine play and ritual. Whenever one plays with others, one subordinates oneself to the rules of the game. The sociability of play is not based on mutual self-disclosure.

Instead, human beings become sociable when they preserve distance from one another. Intimacy, in contrast, destroys distance.

The society of intimacy mistrusts ritualized gestures and ceremonial conduct. They strike it as external and inauthentic. Ritual takes place as action with externalized forms of expression that have a de-individualizing, depersonalizing, and depsychologizing effect. Those who participate in ritual practice “expressive action,” yet this does not mean that they have to put themselves on display and stand exposed. The society of intimacy is a psychologized, deritualized society. It is a society of confession, laying-bare, and the pornographic lack of distance.

Intimacy eliminates objective room for play in order to make way for subjective stirrings of affect. Objective signs circulate in a ritual-ceremonial space. This space cannot be narcissistically cathected. In a certain respect, it proves empty and absent. Narcissism expresses distanceless intimacy with oneself, that is, lack of self-distance. Narcissistic subjects who lack the ability of scenic distantiation populate the society of intimacy. Sennett notes: “The narcissist is not hungry for experiences, he is hungry for Experience. Looking for an expression or reflection of himself in Experience, he devalues each particular interaction or scene.”4 According to Sennett, narcissistic disorder is on the rise “because a new kind of society encourages the growth of its psychic components and erases a sense of meaningful social encounter outside its terms, outside the boundaries of the single self, in public.”5 “Intimate society” does away with the ritualistic, ceremonial signs through which one might escape oneself, lose oneself. Experience [Erfahrung] means facing the Other. Experiencing [Erlebnis\, in con­ trast, means encountering oneself everywhere. The narcissistic subject cannot fence itself off. The borders o f its being grow hazy. In consequence, no stable self-image emerges. The narcissistic subject melts into itself to such an extent that it proves impossible to play with identity [mit sich zu spielen). Grown depressive, the narcissist drowns in his borderless self-intimacy. No void or absence distances the narcissist from himself.

#### This outweighs the aff—coercive mimeticism violently positions identity in a way that not only colludes with institutional racism, but also suppresses difference and confirms the status quo and its limitless forces of psychic oppression

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Part of what I am talking about here is what the Lacanian Latino Studies scholar Antonio Viego (2007) refers to as “coercive mimeticism,” an institutional and social practice whereby there are certain ways in which ethnic minorities must act, believe, dress, and be in order to present themselves as “recognizably ethnic,” as Latino-enough, as Black-enough, as Asian-enough, and so forth. It is mimetic insofar as one has to look into the mirror of ethnic identity and adapt oneself to that image, reproducing a very particular ego-identity, one that is often a poor fit to one’s more immediate subjective experience. It is also coercive in that there are institutional, cultural, and societal pressures to conform to that notion of identity in order to find one’s place in the coordinates of race and ethnicity – essentially, to be allotted a place on the color line. We are to take up our respective place on the chessboard as Black or White, pawns in a much bigger and deadlier game. Here we can glean both the imaginary and symbolic functions of racial object maps. These object maps provide coherence and integration in the imaginary to an otherwise chaotic collection of signifiers – the racialized bodies in which we exist. At the same time, racial object maps yield symbolic categories of me and not-me, Black and White, and a language with which to organize and regulate closeness, distance, and racial desire. Conversely, what is contained, or to be more precise, excluded, through the symbolic and imaginary operations of the object map is the Real dimension of race – the ever shifting, anxiety-producing, formless nature of the color line. When ambiguously ethnic subjects fail to see their image in the mirror, when they are unable to play the language games of race and racial signification, there is a noticeable discomfort and anxiety that sets in among those who partake in the production of coercive mimeticism. The illusion of the color line comes into focus, disrupting how we see and define racialized bodies, evoking the fragmented and uncoordinated nature of the child’s body prior to Lacan’s (2005a, b) mirror stage. The illusion of wholeness, of being a whole body-ego – whether White, Black, or Brown – falters, revealing the destitute, undifferentiated, and broken nature of race and racial identity. To survive the encounter with the Real of race, I argue, paves the way for a unique kind of freedom. To give one example, a Puerto Rican-ness is more malleable, flexible, and non-linear than one bound into one static form and yields a fluidity that fosters experimental and novel ways of responding to oppression. This fluidity at the same time can validate the ghosts of one’s ancestors while integrating their wisdom into new, emancipatory potentialities. To be clear, I am not denying the importance of addressing colorism, racism, and the privileging of white skin that exists in the Latino community and other ethnic minorities (not to mention society as a whole). It is important for us to have that conversation, and point out how notions of mestizaje, of hybridity in the Latino experience, may mask underlying tensions around race and skin color, and render the relative privilege of light-skinned Latinos such as myself invisible. At the same time, I am proposing that we also have a conversation that is perpendicular to a critique of racism and colorism, intersecting with it but going towards a different vector. How we exclude one another based on not meeting certain expectations about what it means to be Latino, Asian, Black, etc., threatens to disempower us further, limiting our political power by carving out a “minority of a minority” as opposed to sustaining often difficult conversations about our sameness and difference. Similarly, as Baratunde Thurston (2011) points out in his recent book, How to be Black, often this kind of black-checking or color-checking narrows our vision of what it means to be Black (or Latino, or Asian, etc.). Reflecting on his own sense of his Blackness, he writes, “One of the most consistent themes in my own experience… is this notion of discovering your own Blackness by embracing the new, the different, the uncommon, and, simply, yourself” (p. 218). Color-checking prevents us from experimenting with different forms of dis-identification which enrich, challenge, and nourish us, and which hold the promise of new forms of resistance, emancipation, and psychosocial revolt. As I argue, these perpendicular conversations push and pull toward different trajectories, but have as their intersection the most crucial nexus of political, cultural, and social justice. So what am I, in the end? I am whatever you want me to be: oppressor, oppressed, cracker, spic, enemy, friend, White, Black, lover, fighter, masculine, effeminate, strong, weak, dead or alive. Just know that with each turn, each attempt to define me, to mark me, to confine and bind me, you free me. Like the hysteric who produces ever shifting configurations of symptoms in order to throw the obsessive physician off guard (see Gherovici, 2003), I will keep producing knowledge of something else, something other, something that is incalculable and undefinable. Something Real. For you I’ll become a Hispanic hysteric, screeching Foucault (1972) with each symptom, with each episode of acting out, “Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same” (p. 17). Because in the end this is not really about me, or where I stand on the color line. It is about your illusion about where you stand and where you place yourself in the coordinates of race and ethnicity, of self and other, of Black and White. In that sense I function as your blank screen, receiving your projections and identifications, hopefully returning them to you as knowledge productions that question, destabilize, and decenter your ego, paving the way for the subject that slides in the link between signifier and signified, that does not know if it is caused by the signifier or the signified of race, but is instead, its own cause.