## 1NC

### 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?

#### Their world ordering is one that presents sovereignty as a solution to violence contains an implicit hierarchy that places the civil and properly political subject over the uncivil political insurgent. Their world order constitutes a disavowal of the proximity and urgency of racial terror. . This implicates all their evidence and the arrangement of them into the 1AC as justifications for the plan.

Agathangelou and Killian, 16 – Anna, Professor of Political Science and Women’s Studies @ York University and Kyle, core faculty in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at Capella University. Time, Temporality, and Violence in International Relations: (De)fatalizing the Present, Forging Radical Alternatives. *International relations as a vulnerable space: A conversation with Fanon and Hartman about temporality and violence*. Routledge Press, p. 23-28 – iowa [revised for abelist language]

In the introduction to this book, we explored how dominant IR has conceptualized sovereignty and war (Hobbes 1996; also Ireland and Carvounas 2008) in spatialized terms. This spatialization poses theoretical limitations and practical problems, including masking and displacing time and implicating temporality. In spite of their ostensible differences, realists and critical theorists of sovereignty maintain their existing parameters when spatializing time (Walzer 1977). In this sense, the conventional dichotomy of space and time and the contours of their discourse obscure their shared assumptions and common [limitations] ~~blind spots~~. Many realists present sovereignty as a formal, stable representation of an idealized vision of political order, a solution to war or brute violence; though embodied, these historical relations are rife with tensions (Krasner 2001; Morgenthau 1951; Waltz 1979). They contain an implicit or explicit axiological hierarchy, extrapolate an account of desirable political arrangements, and posit a stable and unified conception of the state and institutional arrangements and subjectivity primed to bring about that order. When sovereignty and war are used to produce certain behaviors, perspectives, or political outcomes, they work together as a particular kind of disciplinary construct that evades time, even though time binds them. The uncritical acceptance of this displacement of time from our conceptualization of the sovereign and war generates problems for our narration of history, the sovereign, war, violence, and political subjects. We must ask whether such limited and politically circumscribed accounts become the drivers of petrified relations and the mark of death, even when espoused otherwise. Engaging with theorists who problematize the narrowly punctuated understandings of sovereignty, war, capital, and subjectivity (Hartman 2007; Marriott 2014; Mbembe 1992; Wilderson 20I0) ought to yield insights. Even more important are Saidiya Hartman's narration of the entanglements of time and slavery and Fanon 's account of violence, sovereignty, and capital. By superimposing time onto various other given states and racialized situations to show their 'difference,' both grapple with time in relation to slavery, colonization, and capitalism. They open up questions about sovereignty by creating theoretical concepts that traverse the gaps among theorists of sovereignty, history, war, violence, and capital. When we think in terms of time and temporality, the parameters of the conceptualization of violence and fatalization of the present change dramatically, allowing us to consider the complexities of lived human experience and highlight dimensions of social life that IR and certain critical postcolonial theorists have seen as irrelevant. In this chapter, in conversation with Fanon and Hartman, we point to the ruptures/tensions accompanying material technologies/the inventions, the 'real leap's in Fanon's words (Fanon 1952: 229). Fanon's real leaps are radically untimely (Marriott 2014: 518). They cannot be speculated or preempted. They are a creative invention of a grammar that grapples with the 'form of antinornies of redemption (a salvational principle that will help us overcome the injury of slavery and the long history of defeat) and irreparability' (Hartman 2002: 759). Thinking of the force of time and the event via Hartman on slavery and colonization stretches our narrow understandings of sovereign power and forces of capture, allowing us to consider imaginaries, as well as the ways institutions such as the state and market consider some subjects mere flesh outside the dialectical movement of history or capital. Although we cannot fully represent or narrate them, forces of time and the event produce problems. To a greater or lesser extent, we can mark their interjections and interruptions into life otherwise experienced as continuity: we can perceive their qualities, analyze indices of their interjection, and even make them somewhat predictable. We are affected by them; we intensify their force; we even precipitate their transformation. This chapter takes seriously Fanon's idea that 'the problem to be considered here is one of time' (Fanon 1952: 226-227). In conversation with Fanon and Hartman, we show the ways time and temporality inflect our imagination and engagement with time and vulnerability in international relations and world politics. One theorist takes the idea of time as a problem of time (Fanon 1952) and as a force, 'arbitrary and violent, that positions [the racialized subject) globally' (Murillo 2013). The other ruptures a linear understanding of the sovereign and the ways we narrate violence to exclude slavery and colonization in its gendered forms: her notion of an 'original generative act,' with the 'centrality' of its 'blood-stained gate,' posits the ontological destruction of the black woman as the 'inaugurating moment in the formation of the enslaved' within modernity's violent arena of value (Hartman 2007: 18). Both authors take seriously the way the concept of time becomes a producer of a globality whose 'ontological horizon is manufactured by scientific signifiers' (the sovereign as analogy or anarchy as metaphor) and 'the political-symbolic weapons' (da Silva 1997: 5) that produce non-Europeans as non-existent 'untimely' subjects. Those 'who thrive in the mark of death' (ibid: 5) are not covered by the ethical principles governing post-Enlightenment social configurations. In the first section, we explore temporality co-produced with a system of global raciality entangled with capital, stretching our understanding of the sovereign and its historicity. This global raciality encodes and embodies multiple orders of violence, with time a problem and a force, 'basically a fundamental feature' (Murillo 2013: 4) of politics that should not be taken for granted. In the second section, we consider colonial and postcolonial events that disrupt immersions into 'temporal continuity,' challenging easy conceptualizations of temporality and co-constituting a material indeterminacy. Slavery; coloniality, and multiple postcolonial struggles inflect the operating forces that disrupt, problematizing a present saturated with ideas about life as derivatives (i.e., financial investing in the future). We conclude with questions devised to contribute to the unthinking and untimeliness of the world, necessary to the collective designing of a decolonial project that recognizes and dismantles the mark of a fatalism and death. We live in times of speculation and preemption. Time, slavery, and colonization are interrelated and co-constituted with the world and world economy. Temporal relations can be drawn on to determine the value of subjects (as commodities) and labor (in Marx's abstract sense) in terms of market principles. Paradoxically, while modernity projects consistently argue their vision is of freedom, security, independence, and democracy for all by means of progress in science and tech­nology, capital is a temporality seeking constant innovation at any price. This market is currently in crisis. Or so we are told. Financial derivatives dominate market scandals, and, in tum, the temporality and politics of debates about the financial crisis and the antbropocene stem from financial derivatives (Agathange­lou 2013).There was a time before capital's spectacular self-imagining had fully colo­nized modem practices of knowledge, politics, and representation; still in the pro­cess of constituting its world, capitalism-to-be could not claim to have reached all natural or social limits to its self-actualization. Karl Marx calls this stage 'primi­tive accumulation' or the 'historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production' (1990: 874-875). Outside Europe, 'primitive' accumulation came as direct force and theft: 'the treasures captured was undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother-country and were turned into capital there' (ibid: 924, 917). As van Fossen perceptively notes, part of the primi­tive accumulation of capital is the use of time to exploit people: Accelerating production, exchange, and consumption raises profits and gives a comparative (or survival) advantage over competitors. The annihilation of spatial boundaries and the movement into new territories are particularly emphasized in crises, when the rate of change increases. In this 'annihilation of space and time' capitalism globalizes further and aggressively socializes new and existing workers into new time disciplines, while imposing novel conceptions of space (van Fossen 1998: 66-67, cited in Russ 2013: 168)For Marx, as Russ points out, capitalism is the degradation of human time on two registers; one 'corresponds to the history of our social relations and the other to the opposite history of our productive progress' (Russ 2013: 170). Marx reads capitalism as the theft of the workers' labor time and the 'extraction of surplus time, converted into profit, which is used to massively expand our productive capacities and infrastructure' (ibid: 170). Marx's argument is circular, Russ says; it reinserts the dichotomy of time and timelessness by focusing on the future, generating what he ca11s the illusions of history or 'privileged attempts by the timeless mind to transcend or annul history' (ibid: 4) The division of intellectual labor among the forefathers of modern reason (Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Foucault) allows punctuations of linearity, hierarchizations, and divisions of past, present, and future. At the same time, it permits dichotomized distinctions between time and space, masculine and feminine, mind and body to be mapped onto the anarchy/sovereign/interstate structure. These produced binaries exist as analogical correlates of time/time­lessness, material/transcendental, mind/body, state of nature/sovereign, and security/insecurity, ultimately associating time and mind with order, health, and purity and associating timelessness with disorder, disease, and impurity. The projection of the sovereign's time imaginary onto a territory and onto the territory of its 'bodies' produces intersecting borders dividing mind from body, modernity from non-modernity, and order from disorder. When time is a lin­ear movement from segmented and bounded 'past' into 'present' and on to the 'future' and vice versa, a progressive or developmental model 'convert[s] historica11y specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines, which in tum organize the value and meaning of time' (Freeman 2007: 3). To problematize this linear understanding of time is to acknowledge that within the lost moments of official history, slavery time generates a discontinuous history best told through the entanglements of mul­tiple 'time[s] out of joint,' 'heterogeneit[ies that] can be felt in the bones, as a kind of skeletal dislocation.' Of course, in 'this metaphor, time has, indeed is, a body' (Freeman 2007: 1). In its newer iterations, IR has systematically evaded grappling with slavery except for a few notable postcolonial theorists (Agathangelou 2009, 2011; Blaney and Inayatullah2010; Du Bois 1999; Fanon 1967; Persuad and Walker 2001; Shil-liam 2004, 2015; Vitalis 2010). Several scholars in other disciplines have written on the 'Middle Passage' as a form through which we can understand capitalism. Some work in the humanities argues the slave trade still haunts the market logic of the twentieth century; Baucom says temporality accumulates rather than recedes, and the 'Middle Passage' represents a passage into modernity (2005: 313). Thus, the slave ship, with all its overtones of illness, bodily corruption, and violence, is originary. A lieu de memoire, it is the birthplace of a modem subjectivity at the junction of slavery and finance capital: [It] needed not only a standard set of exchange mechanisms, but a standard imaginary, a standard grammar of trust, a standard 'habit' of crediting the 'real' existence of abstract values, such as credit, with abstract 'slaves' func-tioning as 'a standard measure' through which to express the value of the range of commodities and currencies available for exchange. <end page 26> He connects this to the Zong case, when the ship's captain murdered African captives by throwing them into the sea so as to translate their bodies and their potential for labor via insurance into currency and evacuated them of their singular characteristics by turning them into abstract (and universal) units of exchange. This facet makes it a 'truth event,' identifying 'not a marginal or local abnormality within the system but the global abnormality of the system itself' (ibid: 118-22). Baucom's reading places the historian as a melanchoic witness to history's aggrieved. History, he says, is not a 'property of the past but the property the present inherits as its structuring material and the property (both affective and instrumental) the past holds in the present' (ibid: 330). The body politics and power relations made possible by working with time, then, link temporality and raciality, temporality and sexuality. As categories, raciality and sexuality are more complex when we think them from the vantage of the slave and slavery, especially the flesh of the enslaved woman. Spillers tells us: I would make a distinction ... between 'body' and 'flesh' and impose that distinction as the central one between captive and liberated subject positions. In that sense, before the 'body' there is the 'flesh,' that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of dis-course, or the reflexes of iconography ... If we think of the 'flesh' as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripped-apartness, riveted to the ship's hole, fallen, or 'escaped' overboard. (1987: 66) Making these distinctions depends on the gratuitous violence upon the slave, the object to whom anything anytime can be done and whose life can be squandered. The timely erection of this New World Order, with its human sequence written in blood, represents for its African and Indigenous peoples a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile. The enslavement marks a theft of the body and land and the willfully violent severing of the captive body from its motive will and its active desire, all the while generating fortunes for the captor. This gratuitous intimacy may take the form of a capture of a body, a source of irresistible, destructive sensuality, its translation into potential pornotroping, a thing, and/or property, as attempts to 'emplot the slave in a narrative' (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 184) or to incorporate slaves as sovereign subjects within official nationalist discourses (Spillers 1987: 66--69) may obliterate them. This distinction between body and flesh (the captive body) is significant for knowledge/power and has a temporal politics in the form of evolutionary notions of flesh, such as throwbacks or 'remnants,' with (white) sexuality's development following a linear trajectory of heterosexual reproduction (Freeman 2007). What precipitates the possibility of a coherent story, Wilderson tells us, following Hartman, is the act of murder and enslavement. The only means of entry into civil society, history, and temporality are entitlements, sovereignty, and immigration or 'narratives of arrival' (Wilderson 2003: 236). However, within these narratives <end page 27> the 'black American subject does not generate historical categories of Entitlement, Sovereignty, and/or Immigration for the record,' as if this 'flesh' constituted through gratuitous violence is 'off the record' (Hartman 1997: 24; Wilderson 2003: 236). So how do we write those 'impossibilities to illuminate those practices that speak to the limits of most available narratives to explain the position of the enslaved' (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 184)? There is, in other words, a temporal gap in the production of a narrative that explains how discourses always articulate the slave as 'lagging' humanity, unable to be co-constituted even with work (Wilderson 2003) or integrated into civil society as a sovereign subject or sovereign laborer. These narrations bind labor in a way that keeps the afterlives of slavery (Hartman 1997) animated. How the black body is narrated has implications for the manner in which temporality becomes a dividing barometer of raciality: 'From the very beginning, we were meant to be accumulated and die' (Wilderson 2003: 238). The theoretical slippages from singular conditions to particularities or identities are one and the same, but Wilderson ruptures them, arguing beginnings in narratives do not entail the same kinds of ends for the slave (Wilderson 2010, 2003). The 'time of slavery,' that is, 'the relation between the past and the present, the horizon of loss, the extant legacy of slavery, the antinomies of redemption (a salvational principle that will help us overcome the injury of slavery and the long history of defeat) and irreparability' (Hartman 1997: 759), has an afterlife. In assembling and narrating the 'primal scene' (Farley 2005: 54), the master inflicts violence on this almost-gone subject, turning it into flesh by appropriating it and transfiguring it into a 'fiction of power' (Hartman and Wilderson 2003: 184). In 'narrat[ing] a certain impossibility,' Hartman speaks to the 'limits of most available narratives' (ibid: 184). It is important that the writing of history not sneak in a liberal sequential registering of more slave entities that could potentially become integrated into a raciality matrix. By bringing the position of the unthought into 'view without making it a locus of positive value,' 'without trying to fill in the void' (ibid: 185), Hartman makes her own work, her own cultural history/literary genre, experiential rather than teleological, simultaneously challenging familiar stories and historical teleological accounts that presume slavery is a memory. Devices such as focalizing the 'unthought' violences toward the making of slaves, the emphasis on the fifteenth century's ongoing effect on the present, and graphic descriptions of the brutality on the ships from Africa to the Americas and Europe are pivotal in making the past present. A description of how the positionality of black and white women was understood and approached differently during the slave trade has implications for how their positionalities are read today, including their rights and possibilities of freedom. Certain technologies of governance consolidated around this time included the evolution of juridical, philosophical, and narrative structures, without taking into account the slave trade. Take the notion of consent, philosophically articulated as universal but apparently disarticulated by blackness. More specifically, descriptions of the lives of slave women in the United States point to how female slaves as fungible objects <end page 28> differed ontologically from white women who might be house servants - subordinated but with the possibility of being free: Being forced to submit to the will of the master in all things defines the predicament of slavery. The opportunity for nonconsent [in this case, sex] is required to establish consent, for consent is meaningless if refusal is not an option ... Consent is unseemly in a context in which the very notion of subjectivity is predicated upon the negation of will. (Hartman 1997: 111) Slavery's temporality does not register in many of our accounts of juridical and international frameworks. Yet the ontological destruction of the body is achieved by violence, while value is formed to effect a complete disavowal of the body's existence. The key to grasping the originary (violent and occluded) moment of the transmutation of flesh into some commodity and value into subjectivity is found in the reconciliation of the binarism that produces and is produced by value. Discussing slavery is important for recognizing the procedural modalities functioning within the ontological disposition of modernity as it relates to blackness: the primacy of carnality and the denial of the flesh structurally. This distinction is nuanced and elusive, but it is important to understanding liberalism as a set of politico-economic discourses that mediate a kind of sovereignty, as well as an experiential protocol that, through its specified a priori version of sovereignty, animates and translates property relations. 'Like women,' writes McClintock, 'Africans (both men and women) are figured not as historic agents but as frames for the commodity, valued for their exhibition alone' (1994: 215). To this, she adds: 'Value, beside itself, finds itself if only for a moment in the place of the Other, who or which is always without value' (1994: 216). Value, then, as both form and force enters the world accompanied by its fungible commodity, but this commodity is effaced by violences of value, thereby suggesting 'value is violence' and 'value is violence disguised or dis-figured' (Barrett 1999: 219; also Marx 1965).

#### Their aims to incorporate socially dead bodies within state-centric frameworks but ignores that the state is exactly why they are helpless. The 1AC performs an act of pornotroping from which they derive entertainment from saving those they are responsible for subjugating

Weheliye (Alexander G., professor of African American Studies at Northwestern University) 2014 (Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human, Duke University Press, pg. 90-91 C.A.)

Spillers has referred to the enactment of black suffering for a shocked and titillated audience as “pornotroping”: “This profound intimacy of in- terlocking detail is disrupted, however, by externally imposed meanings and uses: (1) the captive body as the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; (2) at the same time—in stunning contradiction—it is reduced to a thing, to being for the captor; (3) in this distance from a subject posi- tion, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of ‘otherness’; (4) as a category of ‘otherness,’ the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerless- ness that slides into a more general ‘powerlessness’” (“Mama’s Baby,” 206). Spillers directs our seeing to several facets of the body/flesh, human/not- quite-human, sovereign/bare life, and so on pas des deux in her insistence on the simultaneous thingness and sensuality of the slave, which lays bare the extralegal components of this volatile Ding. Pornotroping unconceals the literally bare, naked, and denuded dimensions of bare life, underscor- ing how political domination frequently produces a sexual dimension that cannot be controlled by the forces that (re)produce it. As Daphne Brooks remarks, “born out of diasporic plight and subject to pornotroping,” black flesh has “countenanced a ‘powerful stillness.’”5 The hieroglyphics of the flesh, embodied here by pornotroping, circumnavigate the connubial abyss of subjection and freedom, displaying at once the physical powerlessness of the dysselected slave subject and the untainted power of the selected mas- ter subject. In order to better follow Spillers’s brilliant coarticulation of porno and trope, a brief etymological detour is in order. Originally porno signified “pros- titute” and in the ancient Greek context whence it sprang, the term referred to female slaves that were sold expressly for prostitution. Also a derivation from Greek, trope, according to Hayden White, refers to “turn” and “way” or “manner”; later, by way of Latin, trope is aligned with “figure of speech.” White states the following of the palimpsestic structure of this word: “Tropes are deviations from literal, conventional, or ‘proper’ language use. . . . It is not only a deviation from one possible, proper, meaning, but also a de- viation towards another meaning.”6 In pornotroping, the double rotation White identifies at the heart of the trope figures the remainder of law and violence linguistically, staging the simultaneous sexualization and brutaliza- tion of the (female) slave, yet—and this marks its complexity—it remains unclear whether the turn or deviation is toward violence or sexuality.7 90 Chapter Six Pornotroping, then, names the becoming-flesh of the (black) body and forms a primary component in the processes by which human beings are converted into bare life. In the words of Saidiya Hartman, it marks “the means by which the wanton use of and the violence directed towards the black body come to be identified as its pleasure and dangers—that is, the expectations of slave property are ontologized as the innate capacities and inner feelings of the enslaved, and moreover, the ascription of excess and enjoyment to the African effaces the violence perpetrated against the enslaved.”8 The violence inflicted upon the enslaved body becomes syn- onymous with the projected surplus pleasure that always already moves in excess of the sovereign subject’s jouissance; pleasure (rapture) and vio- lence (bondage) deviate from and toward each other, setting in motion the historical happening of the slave thing: a potential for pornotroping.9 In Christina Sharpe’s words, the black body and flesh “become the bearers (through violence, regulation, transmission, etc.) of the knowledge of cer- tain subjection as well as the placeholders of freedom for those who would claim freedom as their rightful yield.”10 How does the historical question of violent political domination activate a surplus and excess of sexuality that simultaneously sustains and disfigures said brutality? Or what are the sexual dimensions of objectification in slavery and other forms of extreme political and social domination? My argument is not about erotics per se but dwells in the juxtaposition of violence as the antithesis of the human(e) (bondage) and “normal” sexuality (rapture) as the apposite property of this figure.11 Once again, I am bracketing questions of agency and resistance, since they obfuscate—and not in a productive way—the textures of enfleshment, that is, the modes of being which outlive the dusk of the law and the dawn of political violence.

#### Cooperation and norms ignores that not everyone has an equal vote – blacks are never welcome at the deliberative circle which leads to exclusionary violence

**Wilderson, 03** (Frank, “Gramsci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society” an American writer, dramatist, filmmaker and critic. He is a full professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine. Pp. 6-8) NN

The value of reintroducing the unthought category of the slave, by way of noting the absence of the Black subject, lies in the Black subject’s potential for extending the demand placed on state/capital formations because its reintroduction into the discourse expands the intensity of the antagonism. In other words, the slave makes a demand, which is in excess of the demand made by the worker. The worker demands that productivity be fair and democratic (Gramsci's new hegemony, Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat), the slave, on the other hand, demands that production stop; stop without recourse to its ultimate democratization. Work is not an organic principle for the slave. The absence of Black subjectivity from the crux of marxist discourse is symptomatic of the discourse's inability to cope with the possibility that the generative subject of capitalism, the Black body of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the generative subject that resolves late-capital's over-accumulation crisis, the Black (incarcerated) body of the 20th and 21st centuries, do not reify the basic categories which structure marxist conflict: the categories of work, production, exploitation, historical self-awareness and, above all, hegemony. If, by way of the Black subject, we consider the underlying grammar of the question What does it mean to be free? that grammar being the question What does it mean to suffer? then we come up against a grammar of suffering not only in excess of any semiotics of exploitation, but a grammar of suffering beyond signification itself, a suffering that cannot be spoken because the gratuitous terror of White supremacy is as much contingent upon the irrationality of White fantasies and shared pleasures as it is upon a logic—the logic of capital. It extends beyond texualization. When talking about this terror, Cornel West uses the term “black invisibility and namelessness” to designate, at the level of ontology, what we are calling a scandal at the level of discourse. He writes: [America's] unrelenting assault on black humanity produced the fundamental condition of black culture -- that of black invisibility and namelessness. On the crucial existential level relating to black invisibility and namelessness, the first difficult challenge and demanding discipline is to ward off madness and discredit suicide as a desirable option. A central preoccupation of black culture is that of confronting candidly the ontological wounds, psychic scars, and existential bruises of black people while fending off insanity and selfannihilation. This is why the "ur-text" of black culture is neither a word nor a book, not and architectural monument or a legal brief. Instead, it is a guttural cry and a wrenching moan -- a cry not so much for help as for home, a moan less out of complaint than for recognition. (80-81) Thus, the Black subject position in America is an antagonism, a demand that can not be satisfied through a transfer of ownership/organization of existing rubrics; whereas the Gramscian subject, the worker, represents a demand that can indeed be satisfied by way of a successful War of Position, which brings about the end of exploitation. The worker calls into question the legitimacy of productive practices, the slave calls into question the legitimacy of productivity itself. From the positionality of the worker the question, What does it mean to be free? is raised. But the question hides the process by which the discourse assumes a hidden grammar which has already posed and answered the question, What does it mean to suffer? A

nd that grammar is organized around the categories of exploitation (unfair labor relations or wage slavery). Thus, exploitation (wage slavery) is the only category of oppression which concerns Gramsci: society, Western society, thrives on the exploitation of the Gramscian subject. Full stop. Again, this is inadequate, because it would call White supremacy "racism" and articulate it as a derivative phenomenon of the capitalist matrix, rather than incorporating White supremacy as a matrix constituent to the base, if not the base itself. What I am saying is that the insatiability of the slave demand upon existing structures means that it cannot find its articulation within the modality of hegemony (influence, leadership, consent)—the Black body can not give its consent because “generalized trust,” the precondition for the solicitation of consent, “equals racialized whiteness” (Lindon Barrett). Furthermore, as Orland Patterson points out, slavery is natal alienation by way of social death, which is to say that a slave has no symbolic currency or material labor power to exchange: a slave does not enter into a transaction of value (however asymmetrical) but is subsumed by direct relations of force, which is to say that a slave is an articulation of a despotic irrationality whereas the worker is an articulation of a symbolic rationality. White supremacy’s despotic irrationality is as foundational to American institutionality as capitalism’s symbolic rationality because, as Cornel West writes, it… …dictates the limits of the operation of American democracy -- with black folk the indispensable sacrificial lamb vital to its sustenance. Hence black subordination constitutes the necessary condition for the flourishing of American democracy, the tragic prerequisite for America itself. This is, in part, what Richard Wright meant when he noted, "The Negro is America's metaphor." (72) And it is well known that a metaphor comes into being through a violence which kills, rather than merely exploits, the object, that the concept might live. West's interventions help us see how marxism can only come to grips with America's structuring rationality -- what it calls capitalism, or political economy; but cannot come to grips with America's structuring irrationality: the libidinal economy of White supremacy, and its hyper-discursive violence which kills the Black subject that the concept, civil society, may live. In other words, from the incoherence of Black death, America generates the coherence of White life. This is important when thinking the Gramscian paradigm (and its progenitors in the world of U.S. social movements today) which is so dependent on the empirical status of hegemony and civil society: struggles over hegemony are seldom, if ever, asignifying—at some point they require coherence, they require categories for the record—which means they contain the seeds of anti-Blackness. Let us illustrate this by way of a hypothetical scenario. In the early part of the 20th century, civil society in Chicago grew up, if you will, around emerging industries such as meat packing. In his notes on “Americanism and Fordism” (280-314), Gramsci explores the “scientific management” of Taylorism, the prohibition on alcohol, and Fordist interventions into the working class family, which formed the ideological, value-laden grid of civil society in places like turn of the century Chicago:

#### Slavery morphs and recodes itself in different ways- it relies on the sadism of liberal progress narratives to perfect itself and maintain “life”. Only the alternative can disrupt this project and render these promises incoherent.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 94-96, JMH]

Northup’s book implies, without stating directly, why this generalization of sadism—brutality as the constituent element of family bonding—cannot be understood as being triggered by transgressions. It is as ubiquitous as the air he breathes. “It was rarely a day passed without more whippings . . . It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash and the shrieking of slaves, can be heard from dark till bedtime . . .” Patsey and Solomon, unlike Stella and me, were living in a place and time when civil society and the Human were neither ashamed nor embarrassed by this. A thousand miles upriver and one hundred twenty six years later, Josephine was shocked by this inheritance, but it didn’t take her long to recover, and to claim it. Though the structure of Stella’s “life” (or, better, **the paradigm of social death**, for the quotation marks are essential here) **cannot be reconciled with the** structure of Josephine’s life (or **the paradigm of social life**), there is a connection. But **this connection is parasitic and perverse—regardless of what the socially dead Black person (i.e., Stella and Patsey) or the socially alive Human (i.e., Josephine or Mary Epps) might say about their “relationship.”** It is parasitic because White and non-Black subjectivity cannot be imbued with the capacity for selfknowledge and intersubjective community without anti-Black violence; without, that is, the violence of social death. In other words, **White people and their junior partners need anti-Black violence to know they’re alive.\*** If Hattie McDaniel were to truly die, as Stella proclaimed, it would be tantamount to the death of a parasite’s host. This is what makes social death something more surreal than the end of breath. It is, in the words of David Marriott, a deathliness that saturates life, not an embalming; a resource for Human renewal. **It is perverse for many reasons: one of which is the fact that as civil society matures** (from 1853 to December 1979, when it all went south with Josephine)—and we move historically from the obvious technologies of chattel slavery to universal suffrage, the discourse of human rights, and the concept of universal access to civil society— the anti-Black violence necessary for the elaboration and maintenance of White (and non-Black) subjectivity gets repressed and becomes increasingly unavailable to conscious (as opposed to unconscious) speech. (“I judge people by the quality of their character,” as Dr. King said, “and not the color of their skin”; or the commonly spoken, “At the end of the day, we’re all Americans and we’re in this together”— and other such malarkey of the conscious mind.) But the pageantries of naked and submissive Black flesh, pageantries of bleeding backs and buttocks, whip marks, amputations, and faces closed by horse bits, provide evidence of the role sadism plays in the constitution of White subjectivity, and *12 Years a Slave* makes this visible on the screen, despite its repression in the narrative of both the film and civil society writ large. It is tempting and commonplace to reduce Mary and Edwin Epps’s sadism to individual psychopathology. Or one might think that Edwin Epps is one of a group of exceptionally sadistic people who lived in an exceptionally sadistic time and place. But the film, and to an even greater extent the autobiography, sees (rather than narrates) sadism—the sexual perversion in which gratification is obtained by inflicting physical or mental pain on a love object—not as the individual pathology of a handful of people, but as a generalized condition; generalized in that pleasure, as a constituent element of communal life, cannot be disentangled from anti-Black violence. Conventionally, **the object of sadism can**, tomorrow, **become the subject of sadism**. But the sadism that constitutes the spectacles of *12 Years a Slave*, and which constitutes early nineteenth century society, is not imbued with such reciprocity. The Slaves of social death cannot switch places and make Edwin Epps or his equally cruel wife the love objects of their collective sadism. If they did so in private (if Patsey beat Edwin or Mary in a private bedroom encounter, for example) **it is because such a reversal was occasioned and allowed—in other words, the master used his prerogative and power to play a different game, one in which he suffers because suffering fulfills his fantasy and because, unlike the Slave, his fantasies have “objective value.”** Such role reversals do not imbue the encounter with reciprocity. **The changes that begin to occur after the Civil War and up through the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power, and the American election of a Black president are merely changes in the weather. Despite the fact that the sadism is no longer played out in the open as it was in l840, nothing essential has changed.**

#### Only through embracement of disorder and incoherence via the alternative are we able create revolutionary politics that disrupt the generative mechanism of civil society.

Wilderson 20 [Frank B. Wilderson, professor of Drama and African American studies at the University of California, Irvine, “Afropessimism”, page 249-252, JMH]

Again, though this is a bond between Blacks and Whites (or, more precisely, between Black and non-Blacks), it is produced by a violent intrusion that does not cut both ways. Whereas the phobic bond is an injunction against Black psychic integration and Black filial and affilial relations, it is the lifeblood of White psychic integration and filial (which is to say, domestic) and affilial (or institutional) relations. For whoever says “rape” says Black; whoever says “prison” says Black; and whoever says “AIDS” says Black—the Negro is a phobogenic object: a past without a heritage, the map of gratuitous violence, and a program of complete disorder. If a social movement is to be neither social democratic nor Marxist, in terms of its structure of political desire, then it should grasp the invitation of social death embodied in Black beings. **If we are to be honest with ourselves, we must admit that the “~~Negro~~” “Black” has been inviting Whites, as well as civil society’s junior partners** (for example, Palestinians, Native Americans, Latinx) **to the dance of social death for hundreds of years, but few have wanted to learn the steps.** They have been, and remain today (even in the most anti-racist movements, like anti-colonial insurgency) invested elsewhere. Black liberation, as a prospect, makes radicalism more dangerous to the U.S. and the world. **This is not because it raises the specter of an alternative polity (such as socialism, or community control of existing resources), but because its condition of possibility and gesture of resistance function as a politics of refusal and a refusal to affirm, a program of complete disorder. One must embrace its disorder, its incoherence, and allow oneself to be elaborated by it, if indeed one’s politics are to be underwritten by a revolutionary desire.** What other lines of accountability are there when slaves are in the room? There is nothing foreign, frightening, or even unpracticed about the embrace of disorder and incoherence. The desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by disorder and incoherence is not anathema in and of itself. No one, for example, has ever been known to say, Gee whiz, if only my orgasms would end a little sooner, or maybe not come at all. Few so-called radicals desire to be embraced, and elaborated, by the disorder and incoherence of Blackness—and the state of political movements in the U.S. today is marked by this very Negrophobogenisis: Gee-whiz, if only Black rage could be more coherent, or maybe not come at all. Perhaps there is something more terrifying about the joy of Black than there is in the joy of sex (unless one is talking sex with a Negro). Perhaps coalitions today prefer to remain inorgasmic in the face of civil society—with hegemony as a handy prophylactic, just in case. If, **through this stasis or paralysis, they try to do the work of prison abolition, that work will fail, for it is always work from a position of coherence (such as the worker) on behalf of a position of incoherence of the Black: radical politics morphed into extensions of the master’s prerogative.** In this way, **social formations on the Left remain blind to the contradictions of coalitions between Humans and Slaves. They remain coalitions operating within the logic of civil society and function less as revolutionary promises than as crowding-out scenarios of Black antagonisms, simply feeding Black people’s frustration.** Whereas the positionality of the worker (whether a factory worker demanding a monetary wage, an immigrant, or a white woman demanding a social wage) gestures toward the reconfiguration of civil society, the positionality of the Black subject (whether a prison-slave or a prison-slave-in-waiting) gestures toward the disconfiguration of civil society. From the coherence of civil society, the Black subject beckons with the incoherence of civil war, a war that reclaims Blackness not as a positive value, but as a politically enabling site, to quote Fanon, of “absolute dereliction.” It is a “scandal” that rends civil society asunder. Civil war, then, becomes the unthought, but never forgotten, understudy of hegemony. It is a Black specter waiting in the wings, an endless antagonism that cannot be satisfied (via reform or reparation), but must nonetheless be pursued to the death. But lest we forget, this is not a question of volition. It is not as simple as waking up in the morning and deciding, in one’s conscious mind, to “do the right thing.” **For when we scale up from the terrain of the psyche to the terrain of armed struggle, we may be faced with a situation in which the eradication of the generative mechanism of Black suffering is something that is not in anyone’s interest.** Eradication of the generative mechanisms of Black suffering is not in the interest of Palestinians and Israelis, as my shocking encounter with my friend Sameer, on a placid hillside, suggests; because his anti-Black phobia mobilizes the fantasy of belonging that the Israeli state might otherwise strip him of. For him to secure his status as a relational being (if only in his unconscious), his unconscious must labor to maintain the Black as a genealogical isolate. “The shame and humiliation runs even deeper if the Israeli soldier was an Ethiopian Jew.” The Israelis are killing the Palestinians, literally; but psychic life, Human capacity for relations, is vouchsafed by a libidinal relay between them and their common labor to avoid ~~“niggerization”~~ [~~negroization~~] [racialization] (Fanon). **This relay is the generative mechanism that makes life life. It is also the generative mechanism of Black suffering and isolation. The end of this generative mechanism would mean the end of the world. We would find ourselves peering into the abyss.** This trajectory is too iconoclastic for working-class, post-colonial, and/or radical feminist conceptual frameworks. The Human need to be liberated in the world is not the same as the Black need to be liberated from the world; which is why even their most radical cognitive maps draw borders between the living and the dead. Finally**, if we push this analysis to the wall, it becomes clear that eradication of the generative mechanisms of Black suffering is also not in the interests of Black revolutionaries. For how can we disimbricate Black juridical and political desire from the Black psyche’s desire to destroy the Black imago, a desire that constitutes the psyche?** In short, bonding with Whites and non-Blacks over phobic reactions to the Black imago provides the Black psyche with the only semblance of psychic integration it is likely to have: the need to destroy a Black imago and love a White ideal. “In these circumstances, having a ‘white’ unconscious may be the only way to connect with—or even contain—the overwhelming and irreparable sense of loss. The intruding fantasy offers the medium to connect with the lost internal object, the ego, but there is also no ‘outside’ to this ‘real fantasy’ and the effects of intrusion are irreparable.” This raises the question, who is the speaking subject of Black insurgent testimony; who bears witness when the Black insurgent takes the stand? Who is writing this book?

### 1NC – Advantage

#### Whiteness is an existential threat— (let’s just do the impact debate here)

Preston, 17—Cass School of Education and Communities, University of East London (John, “Rethinking Existential Threats and Education,” Competence Based Education and Training (CBET) and the End of Human Learning pp 61-93, dml)

After Marxism, the second existential threat is one of negation and elimination of the subject and here I shall consider conceptions of this from CRT and black existentialism.

Various contemporary educational theories consider the equity and social justice implications of different forms of education with regard to race. The work of Sleeter and Grant (2007) makes the ethical and pragmatic case for multicultural social justice as a key value of education. This has been followed in contemporary work that attempts to consider the various dimensions of social justice. For example, Bhopal and Shain (2014), consider the twin axis of recognition and redistribution as goals of education. Other work examines the role of social distancing from the ‘Other’ by white students as a dynamic process in which Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and working-class students are disadvantaged. In many ways denial of social justice in terms of lack of resources, recognition or access to social space can be considered to be a form of dehumanisation. However, whilst work on social justice and education might consider the lack of humanity in these systems of oppression (applying concepts such as ‘bare life’, Lewis 2006; or ‘othering’ Lebowitz 2016) they do not consider directly existential threats. Threats to humanity on the basis of difference may arise from totalitarianism as much as through war and threats to the environment. The various genocides which have taken place throughout human history have often had a racial, or ethnic, cleansing purpose to them. They have been eugenic threats that are based upon spurious ideas of genetic and moral superiority. Writers on race from Fanon to Du Bois have considered that the threat posed to racial groups may be existential and that there is a short step from psychic, to real extermination. The negation of individuals through economic, social and psychological processes allows for their physical extermination. Du Bois (2014) deals explicitly with existential threat in his short story ‘The Comet’ where humanity is almost wiped out by a threat from space, leaving only a small number of people to carry on. As one of the survivors of the comet is an African American, this leads Du Bois to consider the state of race relations in the USA. The implication of the story is that the existential threat of the comet (which allows the African American character to live in a world entirely free of racial prejudice) allows release from the existential threat of eugenic attitudes. Building on Du Bois, in other work (Preston 2012), I have considered the ways in which preparation for threats, including existential threats such as pandemics and nuclear war, has been in many ways eugenic in that it prioritises the survival of some more than others based upon criteria which include race and ethnicity (Preston 2012). Preparing for disasters and emergencies often prioritises the interests of white people above those of other ethnic minorities. One reason for this is tacit intentionality which means that policymakers and practitioners do not consider human diversity in considering how people may respond to disaster. Policy is often biased as policymakers expect that people will be ‘like me’ which (at least in the UK and USA) means they will often be white, middle-class, educated, English-speaking men. In planning for threats, there will be various ways in which such biases are included. For example, they may not consider publishing advice in a number of languages, the resources necessary to survive a disaster, the mobility of people and the attitudes of emergency responders. This is unwitting prejudice in that by not considering diversity they are actually making it less likely for BAME people to survive, or protect themselves against, the disaster.

Although these biases may lead to a gradient in terms of survival by different groups in a disaster, they do not appear to relate to existential threat. However, existential threat can be interpreted in a different way in perspectives from critical whiteness studies and CRT.

In critical whiteness studies, whiteness is taken to be not a racial identity, but rather a system of power and oppression (Leonardo 2009). Whiteness was created as an identity not simply as a mode of social classification but as a way of exploiting and controlling others. There are obviously periods in history where this was objectively the case. During slavery in the USA, for example, whiteness was used as a means to distinguish between those people who had the right to own property (whites) and those who could not (Africans), Moreover, whiteness was the obverse of property in that only Africans could ‘be’ assets or property. Enslaved Africans were therefore treated as property and did not have access to the basic rights which would constitute humanity in American society (such as access to education, the right to own property, the right to decide who they should have relationships with). There are obviously parallels between this experience and holocaust when Jewish people (and other individuals) were dehumanised by the Nazis and denied access to basic resources. During imperialism there was also a period whereby other races were categorised to be less worthy than white people and this provided the justification for colonial control, exploitation and often extermination.

Advocates of whiteness studies go further than this and consider that whiteness is not merely a past system of oppression, but a continuing system of white supremacy (Leonardo 2009). The economy and society is comprised in such a way that white people will usually benefit, and BAME people will usually not. This is not only an economic and social system but also a psychological system whereby existence as a full human depends upon one’s racial categorisation. This idea has its roots in the work of Fanon (1986) who wrote that black identity was shaped by the white gaze, but also contemporary writers also consider the notion of whiteness as ‘death’, a categorisation that is rooted in past oppression and extermination, whose remnants exist to this day. This perspective on race and existence leads us to consider what is meant by life, and whether we are not currently living to our full potential (as Marxists would also propose) when existential threat is actually amongst us. For Marxists this would be the expansion of the ‘social universe’ of capitalism that flows between and through us, ‘capitalising humanity’. For critical whiteness studies, this existential threat would be one of whiteness and the negation of existence for a racially classified group of people.

In order to make this idea of constant existential threat more tangible (although the term is not used) critical race theorists use what are known as ‘counter-stories’ to consider how racial dynamics might develop in the future, or to highlight inequalities in the present (Delgado 1996). Derrick Bell (1992) who is considered to be the founder of CRT, uses a much cited counter-story ‘The Space Traders’ to consider the ways in which black people’s lives are classed as being not equal to those of whites in the USA. In ‘The Space Traders’ a race of aliens offer the USA a trade: all of America’s black citizens in return for unlimited, environmentally friendly, energy and technology. After some debate, the American people vote on the proposal and decide to give up all of America’s black citizens to the space traders in return for the futuristic technical goods. Of course, Bell is proposing an analogy between slavery in the past and the present situation of black people in the USA, and perhaps even suggesting that such a thing might happen again. On another level, though, there is also the idea that the existence of black people in America is categorised at a different level of metaphysical worth to that of white people. That life could be traded so cheaply, even plausibly (in the thought experiment) makes us pause for thought in terms of how we classify existential threat.

Although the relationship between CRT and black existentialism may not always seem obvious we can see that there is a nihilistic streak in the work of Bell (1992) with regard to the prospects for survival. In addition, the drawing on the work of Fanon by authors who use CRT as part of their work which shows the perpetual violence encountered by people of colour in education as well as the enduring influence of Du Bois on CRT (Delgado and Stefancic 2001) shows the close connection between the two theories. What links CRT and black existentialism is a basic concern with existence and the meaning of human life under constant threat that can be thought to underpin any concern with social justice. From CRT and black existentialism, we therefore see that existential threat is one of negation through economic, social and political systems and there are degrees of graduation between these forms of existential threats and actual genocide or extermination. The links between these points and CBET might be considered as obtuse but, as we shall see in the next chapter, systems of education can play a role in forms of negation. Obviously, there are social justice implications in the way in which people are treated in terms of race and ethnicity in education. The ‘triaging’ by race and ethnicity of access to education courses, the ways in which certain groups are rationed access to educational routes and the fragility of links between education and the labour market for BAME groups are all part of marginalisation, in which vocational education plays a large part. As part of this process, and probably not coincidentally, these groups are also more likely to find themselves in vocational, CBET courses. However, social justice is not the whole story, and there is a more profound form of equality associated with the right to existence. It is this that CBET threatens through the reduction of the subject to a digital organism as I will show in the next chapter.

#### Reject the connection between development and peace---empirical economic literature is descriptive but not prescriptive because of a lack of experimental controls in real world observation---their homogenization is academically bankrupt and epistemologically suspect

#### Its also backwards---civil war determines economic growth, NOT the other way around

#### They can’t solve for poor communities with ANY form of timeframe---their evidence concedes the timeframe has considerable lag and doesn’t create good results for poor people

#### Their narrative of capitalist development separates the violence of racial unfreedom from their forms of liberation through capitalism

Atanasoski and Vora, 19 – Neda Atanasoski, Professor of Feminist Studies and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz; Kalindi Vora, Associate Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at UC Davis; 2019(*Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures*, Duke University Press, Accessed via Michigan Libraries, pg 30-33, bam)

The fear that automation heralds human obsolescence is in one sense as old as the modern systems of labor and production. At the same time, human obsolescence is also always in and of a dystopic future not quite yet upon us. Starting with the Luddites, English workers who destroyed textile mills in a series of riots beginning in 1811 because of fears that they would lose their jobs, there have been waves of response to the development of industrial technologies that have all led to the same question: When will human labor be rendered completely redundant by machine labor? In 1930, the economist John Maynard Keynes coined the term technological unemployment to capture a dilemma similar to that of the Luddites, namely the problem that escalates when technological developments outpace so- ciety’s ability to find new uses for human labor. At the same time, Keynes argued that this was only a temporary phase of maladjustment.

The specter of human obsolescence undergirds both utopic and dystopic approaches to technological modernity and the surrogate effect of technologies that are hoped to liberate, and at the same time feared to obliterate, the human subject. Automation and technological futures make especially legible the ways that labor continues to be a central site through which freedom and unfreedom racially demarcate the bounds of the fully human. If the human condition (in the Arendtian sense) is defined in terms of how one acts in and upon the world, including through work and labor, then dreams of mechanization are never just about efficiency, but also inevitably about the kinds of work and labor that are unfit for a human to perform.4 In this way, we can think of automation as historically tied to the promise and threat of the liberation of human laborers. Put otherwise, even as machines enact the surrogate human effect in areas that can be automated, they also produce a surrogate (nonworker) humanity liberated from prior states of unfreedom. Yet automated utopias in which the human worker has been emancipated from miserable (dull, degrading, and repetitive) work are also tethered to dystopias in which the liberated subject is dissolved as replaceable and, therefore, potentially obsolete.

Hannah Arendt argued that labor, work, and politics were central to how the tensions between human freedom and unfreedom would develop as automation played an ever-increasing role in social and economic struc- tures. In the 1958 preface to The Human Condition, Arendt speculates that automation, “which in a few decades probably will empty factories and liberate mankind from its oldest and most natural burden, the burden of laboring and the bondage to necessity,” will lead to a society that no longer knows its purpose.5 As she elaborates, “It is a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor, and this society does no longer know of those higher and more meaningful activities for the sake of which this freedom would deserve to be won. . . . What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them.”6 Arendt outlines the vita activa, a philosophy detailing three fundamental human activities: labor, work, and action. For Arendt, labor is what must be done to reproduce human life; work creates the world of things; and action, the third human condition, constitutes our social being, and is therefore inherently political. She proposes that as workers entered society and were no longer outside of it (after the granting of an annual wage that transformed a “class society” into a “mass society”), the potential of the radical political movement as a workers’ movement dissipated.7 Arendt’s fears grew out of her contention that we have become a society where to be a subject means being a laborer, but without the step of proletarianization that was the engine of Marx’s teleology of anticapitalist revolution. Proletarianization was the essence of Marx’s new historical subject of labor, which arose out of industrialization and the need to sell labor for a wage. Arendt was concerned that in distinction to what Marxists would believe, without the unifying class experience of laboring for a wage in a laborless society, and without the social and interactive condition of what she calls the vita activa, the promise of technological liberation is empty.

Crucially, Arendt’s figure of the laborer as social-historical subject is based upon her distinction between slavery as a nonmodern economic form and modern capitalism. She writes, “In contrast to ancient slave emancipations, where as a rule the slave ceased to be a laborer when he ceased to be a slave, and where, therefore, slavery remained the social condition of labor- ing no matter how many slaves were emancipated, the modern emancipa- tion of labor was intended to elevate the laboring activity itself, and this was achieved long before the laborer as a person was granted personal and civil rights.” Arendt writes that “the incapacity of the animal laborans for distinction and hence for action and speech seems to be confirmed by the striking absence of serious slave rebellions in ancient and modern times.”8 She distinguishes this from the successes and revolutionary potential of the 1848 European revolutions and the Hungarian revolution of 1956, organized around the working class.

According to Nikhil Pal Singh, the tendency to separate slavery (or the state of unfreedom) from the period of modern capitalist development misses the ways in which “the chattel slave was a new kind of laboring being and a new species of property born with capitalism.”9 The dependence of chattel slavery on race concepts in turn fostered “the material, ideological, and affective infrastructures of appropriation and dispossession that have been indispensable to the rise of capitalism.”10 According to Singh, not only does the “differentiation between slavery and capitalism [widen] the gulf between slaves and workers,” but it also “overlooks how racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies in laboring populations are retained as a mechanism of labor discipline and surplus appropriation, and even as a measure of capitalism’s progressivism, insofar as it purports to render such distinctions anachronistic in the long run.”11 For Arendt, the plurality of a dif- ferentiated polity is the condition of possibility for freedom. Thus, her collapsing of Nazi fascism and Soviet totalitarianism as equivalent conditions of unfreedom for the undifferentiated masses affirms a liberal politics. Instead, Singh proposes that “Capital ceases to be capital without the ongoing differentiation of free labor and slavery, waged labor and unpaid labor as a general creative basis. . . . Only by understanding the indebtedness of freedom to slavery, and the entanglement and coconstitution of the two, can we attain a critical perspective adequate to a genuinely anticapitalist politics.”12 Singh’s critique points not only to the ongoing imbrications of conditions of unfreedom and liberal capitalist development, but also to how the disavowal of the worker without consciousness (the slave, the un- free) depends upon the false dichotomy between fascism and liberalism.

This elision of the entanglement of fascism, racial violence, and liberal developmentalism is replicated in the technoliberal imaginary of human obsolescence in a postlabor world. The racial and gendered structures of production, both material and social, that continue to demand an abject and totally submissive workforce reevidence themselves in the practices and fantasies surrounding the role of robot workers. Utopic hopes of freeing human workers through evolving iterations of unfree labor (as automated solutions to the racial contradictions upon which free labor is predicated) also bring forward colonial fantasies of the other as a nonsubject. Lacking political consciousness, the robot, which stands in for colonized and enslaved labor, cannot stage a revolution. In this sense, the freedom of the fully human liberal subject cannot come to be without the unfreedom of the less than human or the nonhuman.

#### That post-racial understanding of economics cements the racial order of humanism and accelerates capitalist exploitation of the Global South

Atanasoski and Vora, 19 – Neda Atanasoski, Professor of Feminist Studies and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz; Kalindi Vora, Associate Professor of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at UC Davis; 2019( “Introduction: The Surrogate Human Effects of Technoliberalism,” *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures*, Duke University Press, Accessed via Michigan Libraries, pg 12-14, bam)

Autonomy and consciousness, even when projected onto techno-objects that populate accounts of capitalist futurity, continue to depend on a racial relational structure of object and subject. We describe this symbolic ordering of the racial grammar of the liberal subject the “surrogate human effect.” As technology displaces the human chattel-turned-man with man- made objects that hold the potential to become conscious (and therefore autonomous, rights-bearing liberal subjects freed from their exploitative conditions), the racial and gendered form of the human as an unstable category is further obscured. Technoliberalism’s version of universal humanity heralds a postrace and postgender world enabled by technology, even as that technology holds the place of a racial order of things in which humanity can be affirmed only through degraded categories created for use, exploitation, dispossession, and capitalist accumulation. As Lisa Lowe articulates, “racial capitalism suggests that capitalism expands not through rendering all labor, resources, and markets across the world identical, but by precisely seizing upon colonial divisions, identifying particular regions for production and others for neglect, certain populations for exploitation, and others for disposal.”23 As we show throughout the chapters of this book—which range in scope from examining how technological progress is deployed as a critique of white supremacy since the advent of Trumpism, effectively masking how the fourth industrial revolution and the second machine age have accelerated racialized and gendered differentiation, to how the language of the sharing economy has appropriated socialist conceptions of collaboration and sharing to further the development of capitalist exploitation—within present-day fantasies of techno-futurity there is a reification of imperial and racial divisions within capitalism. This is the case even though such divisions are claimed to be overcome through technology.

Surrogate Humanity contends that the engineering imaginaries of our technological future rehearse (even as they refigure) liberalism’s production of the fully human at the racial interstices of states of freedom and unfreedom. We use the term technoliberalism to encompass the techniques through which liberal modernity’s simultaneous and contradictory obsession with race and its irrelevance has once again been innovated at the start of the twenty-first century, with its promises of a more just future enabled by technology that will ostensibly result in a postrace, postlabor world. This is also a world in which warfare and social relations are performed by machines that can take on humanity’s burdens. Technological objects that are shorthand for what the future should look like inherit liberalism’s version of an aspirational humanity such that technology now mediates the freedom–unfreedom dynamic that has structured liberal futurity since the post-Enlightenment era. Put otherwise, technoliberalism proposes that we are entering a completely new phase of human eman- cipation (in which the human is freed from the embodied constraints of race, gender, and even labor) enabled through technological development. However, as we insist, the racial and imperial governing logics of liberalism continue to be at the core of technoliberal modes of figuring human freedom. As Ruha Benjamin puts it, “technology . . . is . . . a metaphor for innovating inequity.”24 To make this argument, she builds on David Theo Goldberg’s assessment of postraciality in the present, which exists “today alongside the conventionally or historically racial. . . . In this, it is one with contemporary political economy’s utterly avaricious and limitless appetites for the new.”25 Yet amid assertions of technological newness, as Benjamin demonstrates, white supremacy is the default setting.

Technoliberalism embraces the “post”-racial logic of racial liberalism and its conception of historical, economic, and social newness, limiting the engineering, cultural, and political imaginaries of what a more just and equal future looks like within technological modernity. As we propose, race and its disciplining and governing logics are engineered into the form and function of the technological objects that occupy the political, cultural, and social armature of technoliberalism. Rather than questioning the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the human, fantasies about what media outlets commonly refer to as the revolutionary nature of tech- nological developments carry forward and reuniversalize the historical specificity of the category human whose bounds they claim to surpass.

#### Their empirics of economic growth ignore a growing inequality gap globally, despite the drive for growth over centuries

#### Their frame of economic growth as a moral imperative DISPROVES try or die frames---says we should not focus on the NOW or NEAR FUTURE which proves our impacts outweighs

#### Legal focus based on private suits replicates a cycle of cruel optimism and empirical failures that solidify the settler state’s authority and redirect black energy from community-building to courtrooms.

Ramsey 21, J.D.-M.Div. candidate at Harvard Law School and Harvard Divinity School. (James Stevenson, “Lawyering in the Wake: Theorizing the Practice of Law in the Midst of Anti-Black Catastrophe”, 24 *Cuny L. Rev. Footnote Forum* 12, pg. 18-22)

Conversely, wake work is about paradoxically clinging to life amidst death and catastrophe. The game has been lost. There is no pre-slavery Blackness. There is no un-murdering, no un-spilling of blood. There is no available expulsion of a foreign power, as in the case of Gandhi's India, nor is there any reason to foresee or hope for a surrender of our government structures to Indigenous folk, as in Mandela's South Africa; apartheid is perfected here. Outside of worldwide upheaval, the state – this crystallized settler colony – is here to stay, as are the scars on the peoples residing in the underbelly of society, which holds up the rest of it. 30 The hold is sturdy, and those who have been disposable are still disposable; as a matter of policy, the starved in history can still be starved, the historically captured can still be captured (e.g., arrested and incarcerated), and so on. 31 What would it mean for lawyers to practice from this place of containment, from apparent defeat? Not primarily from an obligation to universal ideals or political affiliations as Delmas describes, but from a collective mourning and hunger? How might "politics" and "obligations" be recast in the wake, and how might we triage them? Starting from the first analysis of divided loyalties, how might lawyers thinking from within the wake determine the relative weights of our obligations to the law and to those on the margins? What does the law mean to us who are already always the living dead, those whose deaths make the world possible?32

As scholars and movement lawyers have long explained, a singular focus on legal remedies for the marginalized in our context has several pitfalls and other shortcomings. First, concentrating solely or even primarily on the systemic reform of the legal system and/or direct client services has not worked. To be sure, it is no longer legal, strictly speaking, to segregate schools based on race, 33 but housing and school segregation persist.34 Lynching is technically illegal, but it persists. 35 Police still kill Black people, Black children, legally and illegally. 36 Mass incarceration has been decried by some, 37 and yet prisons, along with a visceral, systemic need to punish, also persist and are levied against Black people in particular, who have always been necessarily capturable.38 Some voting rights for Black people were secured on paper,39 but they have since been both resisted in practice and rolled back formally. 40 Wealth inequality between Black people and white people has ballooned over time, and, even more harrowingly, inequalities in life expectancy between Black people and white people still exist. 41 I do not mean to dismiss the steps toward reducing these inequities that have been made through the law or by legal actors. But, as discussed earlier, these injustices are not accidents or anomalies; they are constitutive parts of the system as it currently exists, and they mean something about who in this country can (still) be hurt and stolen from and about what this country is. Appealing to such a system to change itself has not been proven effective on its own, as many scholars have observed; forms of state oppression merely shift from one form to another.42 These so-called reforms leave the violent core of the nation intact because they must; the underlying, necessary penchant for anti-Blackness and the domination of Indigenous peoples has remained as the lifeblood of the nation-state. 43

Second, along these lines, appealing to the state for relief reinscribes the state, the coercive power it uses to effectuate its ends, and our own status as Black (non)subjects. 44 As Anthony Farley explains, praying to the state for relief is to accept the power of the state to say "yes" but also its power to say "no": "To request equality is to surrender before one begins. To request equality is to grant one's owners the power to grant or deny one's request. To grant one's owners such a power is to surrender oneself to one's owners entirely and completely." 45 To recognize this power is to submit to the law's (necessary) privileging of its interests those that give it coherence and legitimacy: the erasure of Native American peoples and the infliction of perpetual suffering upon Black people as punishable, malleable, detestable flesh 46 -over our own:

To pray for legal redress is to bow before the authority of law .... Law is only the relation of white-over-black to white-over-black to white-over-black. When we follow a legal rule we follow only the track that we have ourselves laid down. In other words, we ourselves are track, we become the track when we lay down, and we follow that track white-over-black into the future that lasts forever.47

Third, as various scholars have observed, focusing on legal redress to the exclusion of other tactics and remedies, which lawyers are prone to do, has the potential to block the building of power in the communities those lawyers serve, creating serious problems in movement work.48 For example, such a focus often contains social action and energy within the domain of the courts, as opposed to building sustainable structures and practices within the community itself." There is a lurking tendency for lawyers, because of our conservative, risk-averse training, to quell radical thought and tactics-in the name of precedent and rationality-and instead bow to the law.5 Because strictly legal approaches often rely on the unique credentials, skill set, and language of lawyers, such approaches can center and empower lawyers in movement strategy, rather than empower activists and members of the community.51 A law-focused approach tempts lawyers and community members alike to conflate the lawyer's role with that of an organizer, which is problematic because lawyers and organizers tend to employ different frameworks and techniques." Our legal system tends to atomize legal disputes and claims, often forcing legal proceedings into person-against-person conflicts and making it difficult for collective legal action, coalition building, and redress of harms on a community level.53

## Block

### Kritik

#### We straight turn this.

Kelley, 15—Gary B. Nash Professor of American History at UCLA (Robin D.G., “Beyond Black Lives Matter,” Kalfou, Vol. 2, Iss. 2, (Fall 2015): 330-337, dml)

This implicit appeal to acknowledge us-to recognize our humanity, our dignity, and our right to live-is understandable in a world where the statesanctioned killing and caging of Black bodies is routine. But as George Lipsitz observed, such appeals are embedded in a humanist logic that emphasizes "interiority" and feeling, thereby elevating "the cultivation of sympathy over the creation of social justice."7 That is to say, our feelings of empathy in any representation of suffering are designed to be understood and individually felt rather than transformed into collective praxis. This is partly why concepts like reparations are so antithetical to modern liberalism. Given the trauma produced by an endless video loop of Black people dying at the hands of police officers who are almost never indicted, let alone prosecuted and convicted, collective healing and the cultivation of sympathy are to be expected. On one hand, this makes the movement's counterslogan, "All Lives Matter," all the more offensive and painful. "All Lives Matter" is heard and felt as a belittling or decentering of anti-Black racism. It trades on postracial myths of equivalency in suffering. On the other hand, sometimes we react to "All Lives Matter" with such hostility that it stands in as an unambiguous expression of anti-Black racism. Can we salvage these words? Don't we want to build a world in which every life is valuable, cherished, and sustained? Are we not seeking a world that recognizes multiple sites of dispossession and recognizes that state violence inside US borders is inseparable from US militarism around the world? The fact that we are compelled to a defensive position is a consequence of focusing on proving our value rather than critiquing the system that devalues all of us and destroys the world in the process.

The veracity of our humanity was never the issue-then or now. The problem lies with Western civilization's very construction of the human. As Sylvia Wynter, Cedric Robinson, Aimé Césaire and others have been saying for decades, the "Negro" was an invention, a fiction-like that of the Indian, the Oriental, the "Mexican," etc. Or in Frantz Fanon's oft-quoted line from The Wretched of the Earth: "It is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject."8 Indeed, the entire structure of global white supremacy depends on such inventions, like the fictions of the Arab as non- or anti-Western and the "Immigrant" as essentially Latino/a, or the notion that indigenous people (in North America at least) are all dead. This is why we have such a hard time acknowledging that most so-called immigrants from Mexico and Central America are, in fact, indigenous.

The very foundations of Western civilization were built on such fabrications and enacted through violence. Once they crumble, so goes Western civilization's conceit as well as the massive philosophical smokescreen that enables (racial) capitalism-the greatest, most destructive, most violent crime wave in history-to masquerade as the engine of progress, a pure expression of freedom and liberty, the only path to human emancipation. The modern world that invented the Negro, the Oriental, the Indian, and the Savage as a means of inventing European Man was built on the theft of humans, theft of land and water, indiscriminate murder, violation of customary rights, moral economy, enclosure of the commons, destruction of the planet-outright lawlessness, justified by supposed rationality or what Weber might call instrumental rationality. To leave it at Black Lives Matter unintentionally conceals the crime. After all, these were the very processes that birthed the liberal humanism to which BLM activists seem to appeal.

In his book Forgeries of Memory and Meaning, Cedric Robinson further elaborates on the systems of racial maintenance and myth making, the "racial regimes" responsible for the inventions of the Negro (the Indian, the Oriental) and their relation to capital. What exactly are racial regimes? In Robinson's words, they "are constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power." The power is real and formidable but surprisingly unstable. For Robinson, "the covering conceit of a racial regime is a makeshift patchwork masquerading as memory and the immutable. Nevertheless, racial regimes do possess history, that is, discernible origins and mechanisms of assembly. But racial regimes are unrelentingly hostile to their exhibition."9 In other words, to say that anti-Blackness is foundational to Western civilization is not to say that it is fixed or permanent. On the contrary, it is incredibly fragile and must be constantly remade; it is epiphenomenal to the production of Blackness-which is an essential component of modern racial regimes, but not its totality. In the last century alone, racial regimes have been remade, reconfigured, destabilized, and consolidated many times, employing new technologies to circulate old racial fabulations and new fictions in the process of capitalist expansion.

Proving one's humanity will not uproot racial regimes, for the very evidence of our humanity is their raison d'etre. Our exploitation is evidence of our value, but it requires enormous intellectual, juridical, and psychic resources to conceal our humanity. Slavery was not just social death, but was based on a cost-benefit analysis that assumed the disposability of Black lives. The system of extracting surplus emerged within a logic of racial hierarchy and racial subjugation that dragged Africans, Asians, and Europeans proletarianized by enclosure to the lands of the Americas, Oceania, parts of South Asia and Africa, and the Eastern Mediterranean-where indigenous people were dispossessed, enslaved, or exploited by other means. Enclosure is yet another example of theft and violence masking as "law, order, security": backed by the rule of law, the state employs violence to discipline, to reclassify, to criminalize, and to destroy sovereignty and create disorder. Enclosure is part of this process of war-a war on the commons, which ultimately turns some of the expropriated people into a proletariat (including European industrial, maritime, and landless rural labor, as well as prostitutes and beggars), turns a portion into settlers, and sends a portion to the workhouse. Some are merely casualties whose flesh mingles with the earth and whose bodies-sometimes hanging from a tree or broken on the wheel-serve to terrorize those who resist the new discipline.10

While the value of Black labor may have ebbed and flowed with the changing character of the global economy, there has never been a moment in US history when our humanity mattered, when Black people could enjoy full privileges and protections of citizenship. But the same can be said of most of the planet-at least until the mid-twentieth century, although I would venture to say this is still the case. What Black resistance calls into question is the inhumanity of the system, the inhumanity of those who subjugate in the name of civilization; it insists that the survival of humanity (and this is not the humanity defined by the Enlightenment) depends on the complete destruction of racial capitalism, patriarchy, and regimes of normativity.

As I wrote in the aftermath of the George Zimmerman verdict, unless we come to terms with this history, we will continue to believe that the system just needs to be tweaked, or the right-wing fringe defeated, or our humanity acknowledged.11 We will miss the routine character of state violence; its origins in the very formation of colonialism, slavery, and capitalism; and the ways in which routine violence has become a central component of US policies, including drone warfare and targeted killing. We cannot change the situation simply by finding the right legal strategy, the best policies, or recognition.

#### Libidinal economy is true

Chico et al 11 (A Primer on "Libidinal Economy" in Relation to Black Folks. Cosmic Hoboes: An Afropessimist Meditation (No)Space. <https://cosmichoboes.blogspot.com/2011/08/primer-on-libidinal-economy-in-relation.html>)

People who are interested in struggle need to understand the "libidinal economy." Coalition politicos like Al Sharpton like to tell us to put the unique experiences of black folks in the backseat to the interests of poor folks more generally. Such politicians expect us to submerge our interests as black people on the assumption that if poor people in general benefit from a political concession, poor black people will share equally in such benefits. Such politicos will continue to ignore the repeated evidence that a lot of nonblack people hate black people, even if doing so costs them money. If someone tells you that the problems black folks face are really just the problems that poor people face, they are telling you to ignore the libidinal economy. They are telling you that the political economy of capitalism is more important than the libidinal economy of antiblack racism. What is "libidinal economy"? In Red, White, and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms (2010, Duke University Press), black political theorist Frank Wilderson highlights the distinction between political economy and libidinal economy (p. 9): Jared Sexton describes libidinal economy as “the economy, or distribution and arrangement, of desire and identification (their condensation and displacement), and the complex relationship between sexuality and the unconscious.” Needless to say, libidinal economy functions variously across scales and is as “objective” as political economy. Importantly, it is linked not only to forms of attraction, affection and alliance, but also to aggression, destruction, and the violence of lethal consumption. He emphasizes that it is “the whole structure of psychic and emotional life,” something more than, but inclusive of or traversed by, what Gramsci and other marxists call a “structure of feeling”; it is “a dispensation of energies, concerns, points of attention, anxieties, pleasures, appetites, revulsions, and phobias capable of both great mobility and tenacious fixation.” What does all this mean? Let's interpret this elaborate definition and get to how it thinks of "economy." When we think of economy, we usually think of something having to do with money. Wilderson uses the term political economy to refer to economy in the ways that we usually think of it: the ways people exchange materials and decide on how things are valued. Economy doesn't just mean the economy in the sense of the stock market or banks, but also any means of determining whether something is worth doing or possessing based on how much capital and labor power it yields. In struggle, we see over and over that money talks and bullshit walks. Economy has to do with what they value moves people to act. Economies are therefore very important to political action. But can there be an economy that exchanges something other than money or capital? Yes. To understand "economy" as Wilderson and Sexton use it, we have to think of economy in a more general way as things of all kinds that we can trade or save. You can accumulate not only cash or material items, but also fears and desires. Certain people accumulate more fear (the black athlete) and desire (the blonde cheerleader) than others. The term libidinal economy refers to the systems of exchange and valuation for fantasies, desires, fears, aversions, and enjoyment. Economy is about exchange and accumulation. Everyone feels fear and aggression, but where is it directed? The libidinal is about both people's desires, fantasies, and pleasures AND their phobias, fears, and violent consumptions. A libidinal economy has to do with which groups a subject is attracted to, which groups it is willing to form alliances with, and which people it is willing to provide affection to. Where can we see this libidinal economy? How can we illustrate this distinction? The libido is the collection of things like phobias and desires that are unconscious and invisible but that have a visible effect on the world, including the money economy. Some examples: We see libidinal economies at work any time there is a response by state that is out of all proportion to the material effects of any practice they are regulating. The USA incarcerates three million people, despite the fact that doing so has an adverse impact on US financial security. Hence the libidinal economy of the fear of black and brown people (who together comprise the overwhelming majority of inmates) trumps the political economy of the cost-benefit analysis of maintaining prisons. Let's take another example of the powder - versus crack-cocaine distinction, in which the same drug is punished differently at the federal level. Because the two drugs are chemically identical, there shouldn't be any distinction between how their use and sale is punished. In 2010, the law made it so that these two drugs were punished the same, although the Obama administration isn't in any hurry to make the abolition of this distinction retroactive so that the mostly black and brown people who are locked up because of it will get released. But the legal abolition of this distinction is not essential for us to look at. What is essential is why that distinction was made in the first place. Wilderson's work suggests that, for civil society, black people pose a threat that has nothing to do with the chemical content or the social and cultural effects of crack. Simply by being associated with black people, crack is seen as 100 times more threatening than is powder cocaine. The financial and social costs of locking all those black and brown people up and the financial and social costs of allowing all those white people to go free and continue to sell does not really matter to civil society. What the powder- versus crack-cocaine distinction shows is the desire to contain the threat that blackness symbolizes. This is the mark of libidinal economy. Cops, soldiers, firemen are considered sexually desirable because they become the heroes of civil society. The Oscar Grant shooting. Amadou Diallo was a victim of a extreme kind of violence because of the phobias that converged on his body. What is the exchange? Civil society has an anxiety about crime, and crime is always attached to black in urban areas. Police don't have to get a monetary award, but they get the gratitude of civil society. How does this play out in ways that don't have to do strictly with money? The desire for them may not show up in the amount of money they make. Cops get rewarded for their aggression. When the cop slammed dude into the glass at BART. Prison guards, thought of as having the toughest beat on the planet. They get rewarded for being the last line of defense against George Jackson. Oscar Grant was an accumulation of aggression and phobias. Why are the black people in Prince George's County, Maryland, segregated from white people in their same socioeconomic bracket with the same kinds of high-value real estate, and the same kinds of political-economic values? Living around white people has a value that cannot be explained in strictly monetary terms. AFDC benefited mostly white single mothers, and enjoyed a long history of support from 1936-the 1960s. It initially excluded black people. By the 1960s, when black people started getting it, attitudes changed toward it, making it seem like it was undeserved and a drain on national prosperity, and by 1984, when Ronald Reagan referred to "welfare queens in Cadillacs," it was clear that AFDC was "a black thing." In actual statistical terms, it was still used mostly by white women. But once it became associated with poor black women, it was seen as in need of drastic, radical reforms. But is this "libidinal economy" really that important? Frank Wilderson is using the distinction between a money economy and an economy of desire over and over again throughout this book. Wilderson talks about this by talking about the difference between word and deed. This is not the hypocrisy of the system. It IS the logic of the system. So Europeans tried to resolve the lack of labor power by passing laws that reduced homeless white people to the status of slaves. In the end, however, they never really enforced these laws. Wilderson quotes David Eltis, an economic historian, who says that the costs of settling the "new world" would have been significantly reduced if Europeans has simply enslaved other Europeans. But, Wilderson points out, "what Whites would have gained in economic value, they would have lost in symbolic value; and it is the [symbolic value] which structures the libidinal economy of civil society." In other words, the symbolic costs of Europeans enslaving other Europeans would have been too great. Instead, they went to Africa for their slaves, even though the financial cost of doing so was much, much greater. The radical left doesn't make this distinction. Cornel West and Tavis Smiley say they want to organize a new Poor People's Campaign, but they won't be able to explain why this is a failed project from the start. This is because they won't think about the aspects of coalition building that have nothing to do with money or the lack of money. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the so-called "Reagan Democrats" were poor and working-class white people, many of them in unions, who voted overwhelmingly for Reagan against their own economic interest. The white left mistakenly thinks about the Reagan Democrats as people who were duped. They view them as an example of what Marx called "false consciousness" and they see it as their duty to inform the white poor and working class of why they should vote left. But there were all kinds of signs that white poor and working-class folks simply hated black people and didn't want to live anywhere that there was a large community of black people, even if those black people are of the same or higher socioeconomic status. The Reagan Democrats were excited by Reagan's antiblack rhetoric of law and order, a rhetoric that was in response against the activities of the Black Liberation Army, Weather Underground, Black Panthers, and Black Guerilla Family. Marxists think a person is in a state of false consciousness if her political or social interests go another way than her material or financial interests. If you adopt this view, then you probably think that the Reagan Democrats just need to be educated correctly about what they have in common with the black poor and working class. You have to think that their hatred of black people is somehow "false" simply because it runs counter to their financial interests. But this would be to ignore their interest in maintaining white supremacy and antiblack racism. One of the things white men would lose would be access to black bodies for sexual pleasure and amusement. These examples are not just isolated cases of false consciousness, ignorance, media manipulation, or some mystical thing called "prejudice." They are all of those things, but they are also something much, much greater that any student of struggle needs to be aware of. These examples reveal the contours of an economy of desires that is not primarily concerned with money. It's not that the political economy isn't also antiblack. In fact, both economies are antiblack.

#### The call to do more and lead to more action leads to racial battle fatigure

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IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, significant racial inequalities and anti-black violence continue to be rampant in the United States. Decades, even centuries, of political and legal struggle have done little to change that fact. This chapter will argue that **black Americans need new tactics and strategies for responding to the white class privilege and white supremacy that fundamentally structure the country.** **They need to increase the number and type of tools in their racial justice toolkit, expanding beyond liberal faith in civil rights and white people's good intentions to cooperate with racial change**. **The political and legal work that black and other people of color** (along with some white people) **have done to eliminate antiblack racism isn't working. Pragmatists in particular need to be able to face up to that fact given that we value the practical work that ideas, concepts, and truths can do. Why then**, as Calvin Warren pragmatically asks in the epigraph above, **would we expect people fighting racism to keep doing the same thing?** Why would anyone hope that the same failed actions and strategies would turn out any different in the future? **This kind of hope can function as a cruel optimism that "works" by keeping black people focused on the very thing that undercuts their flourishing** (Warren 2015, 221). In line with Warren's concerns, **I argue that black Americans' hope that political struggle can achieve racial justice tends to be a harmful emotion they should avoid. I make my case in a pragmatist spirit that opposes Cornel West's influential argument for black hope. In contrast to West, I contend that pragmatists and others concerned about racial injustice would do better to draw on Derrick Bell's racial realism and Warren's black nihilism to develop alternative strategies for addressing antiblack racism**. In related ways, Bell and Warren urge their readers to reckon with the permanence of racism and to give up hope that additional political struggle will eliminate it. After exploring their complementary accounts, **I augment them with concrete evidence from the health sciences that black hope can be physically harmful to black people, weathering their bodies and damaging their psychosomatic health such that they are less able to withstand the inequities of antiblack racism. I conclude by arguing for the advantages of reading Bell's and Warren's claims about the permanence of racism pragmatically, that is, by assessing the truth of their claims via their effects**. **The result is the working hypothesis that black people will have a much greater chance of developing new practices, habits, and strategies of flourishing in an antiblack world if they no longer hope that political struggle will eliminate racism.**

[6 pages later]

While Warren's argument against the politics of hope primarily targets its metaphysical nature, **the destruction of black bodies that he analyzes is no mere abstraction**. Neither, of course, are the intractable racial in- equalities described by Bell. In both cases, **antiblackness involves "the literal destruction of black bodies that provide the psychic, economic, and philosophical resources for modernity to objectify, forget, and ultimately obliterate Being** (nonmetaphysical Being)" (Warren 2015, 327). This occurred initially through the transatlantic transformation of human beings into things (slaves) and then subsequently through other social, legal, and extralegal ways of annihilating black people and communities, including political tactics such as poll taxes, literacy tests, and the convict leasing system (2015, 216). **Recent developments in the medical health sciences reveal another material way to see how the metaphysical, legal, and economic destruction of black people via hope is both literal and physical**. A concrete connection between hope and poor health and death exists for black Americans, and I now turn to that connection to bodily situate Bell's and Warren's accounts. Psychologists and other social scientists in the United States recently have focused on how African Americans cope with so-called mundane racism: not the big-booted racism of chattel slavery, lynching, or even legalized segregation, but rather the more mundane and subtle or 'invisible" racial attacks that increasingly are being documented in post—Jim Crow America. Examples include the student who rolls his eyes in class when he realizes that the black woman at the front of the room will be his professor or the black person checking out at the grocery store who gets hassled to show several forms of identification to cash her check when the white person in front of her did not. In many ways, microaggressions such as these are minor in comparison to the major assaults that African Americans historically have experienced and still do experience. At mini- mum, racial microaggressions are not spectacularly horrific in the way that the overt violence of shootings and chokeholds is. **But just because we tend not to notice the destructiveness of racial microaggressions does not mean they are trivial. Racial microaggressions can be deadly, although we** (especially white people) **often don't recognize or want to acknowledge their violent effects.** De facto white class privilege in the form of racial microaggressions contributes to people of color's "**racial battle fatigue**," which entails "the constant use or redirection of energy for coping against mundane racism which **depletes psychological and physiological resources needed in other important, creative, and productive areas of life**" (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2012, 40). Racial battle fatigue has been **linked empirically to depression, tension, and generalized anxiety disorder in African Americans, and the stress associated with all of these psychological problems also contributes to physiological weathering that harms black health, contribut- ing to high rates of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, pre-term birth rates, and infant mortality to name a few** (Smith, Hung and Franklin 2012, 37, 40; D. Smith 2012**). The effects of white racism literally get inside and help constitute the bodies of black people in harmful ways. They wear down the body's various systems by creating a high allostatic load via stressors that accumulate over time**. The results are health problems such as disproportionately high rates of pre-term birth, infant mortality, cardio- vascular disease, diabetes, and accelerated physiological aging (Blitstein 2009). **Racism hurts—literally—and it also kills in ways that are subtler but no less deadly than the lyncher's noose or the neighbor's bullet** (Drexler 2007). **These effects,** moreover, **can be transgenerational, physiologically passed onto subsequent generations through various epigenetic changes** (Sullivan 2013). So what can black people do to mitigate the harmful effects of de facto white supremacy and racial microaggressions and to ward off racial battle fatigue? As the same study documents, the first answer is simply for them to realize the need for coping strategies that build resilience. Black people living in countries that formally have eliminated racial discrimination and yet that are still informally structured by white class privilege need to actively seek out ways to manage and resist racial battle fatigue. The second answer is that Social support systems that, for example, provide **communal spaces for emotional expression and processing of experiences of racial microaggressions were most effective in helping African American people cope with race-related stress, as one recent study demonstrated about African American college students** (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2012, 39). This advice might seem rather obvious, but it turns out that **students in the study with high levels of hope that they could achieve their goals in life, school, and work generally did not use active coping strategies**. They tended not to seek out social support or find venues in which they could share their experiences of white racism with others. The explanation for this behavior is that hope on the part of black students was empirically correlated with a sense of personal efficacy: the more that students thought they could individually surmount obstacles in their path, the greater their sense of hope for the future, and vice versa. And **the greater their hope and sense of individual efficacy, the less likely a person was to seek out communities and networks with other black people** On the flip side, **low-hope individuals** did actively seek out social support systems. Because they did not have much hope that they could overcome the race-based obstacles in their path, they **tended to seek out collective avenues for expressing their anger and frustration and for taking action against racism** (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2012, 39). **The upshot here is that black hope not only did not serve as an effective coping strategy for black people, but it actually decreased the likelihood that they would seek out coping strategies that were effective**. This study of a mixed-gender group Of African American college students is supported by another study focusing on African American men, which underscores that **hope is not always or necessarily a healthy response to an unjust world**. African American men with high to moderate levels of hope that racial justice would prevail experienced more stress when confronted with racial microaggressions than did African American men with low to moderate levels of hopefulness (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2012, 50). It was low-hope African American men who best recognized the perva- siveness of racist discrimination in US society and thus developed racial socialization techniques that allowed them to keep the pernicious effects of racism at bay long enough to develop counterstrategies to it (2012, 50). **While some scientific studies that do not consider race have lauded the health benefits of hope**, demonstrating how hope can help the body reduce physical pain by triggering the release of natural analgesics such as en- dorphins and enkephalins (Groopman 2005, 175—179), **we should not necessarily universalize these conclusions. "Hope [simply] does not have the same function in the context of African American men dealing with race-related stress and racial microaggressions as it does in previously studied contexts,**" **and thus promoting hope as a way for black Americans to combat the effects of white racism can be counterproductive to racial justice** (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2012, 51). It can tear down, rather than undergird black people by indirectly damaging their health and leading them to neglect effective social strategies for coping with white racism. **These studies provide concrete support for the claim that black hope is not a good alternative to the despair diagnosed by West in black American communities**. **It does not tend to help African Americans cope well with the insidious effects of white racism, and it even can contribute to a decline in black people's psychological and physiological health**. While West likely is right that black communities are crucial for black people to be able to withstand antiblack racism, it is important to note, in accordance with the above studies, that those communities that helped mitigate the harmful physiological effects of antiblack racism were not particularly based on hoping. They instead were based on coping. They were collective outlets for sharing experiences of and venting frustration about stressful racial encounters, for example, which is not the same thing as generating hope that antiblack racism can be eliminated. What might black communities that cope look like? For starters, "coping" as used here does not mean surtendering, selling out, or merely getting by. **Communities that cope would be communities that recognize that "nothing has worked" against antiblack racism and that black people "have exhausted the discourses of humanism and the strategies of equality"** (Warren 2015, 228). **I want to underscore the pragmatic significance of this recognition. Pragmatically understood, the value of things is found in their effects**—including the ultimate effect of whether they enable flourishing (Sullivan 2001) **and the effect of humanism hasn't been the flourishing of black people. Pursuing strategies of racial equality hasn't worked**. **These realizations are important for the effects they can have: they allow a very different set of strategies in relationship to antiblack racism to emerge. Rather than defeatist, letting go of the goal of racial equality can be liberating and invigorating for black peop**le. **It can free them up to envision new goals, to develop new truths about how best to respond to racism, and thus to stop banging their heads against a wall that will not budge**. "Casting off the equality ideology," Bell urges, "will lift the sights.... From this broadened perspective on events and problems, [black people] can better appreciate and cope with racial subordination" (1992b, 378). For example, Bell claims that rather than spend energy and time trying to fully integrate American schools—which still has not happened sixty years after Brown v. Board of Education and has been reversed in some major cities (see, e.g., Michelson, Smith, and Nelson people should work on raising money for and strengthening all-black schools (1992a, 63). More generally, racial realism would urge that black people devise strategies that acknowledge the "white self-interest principle": white people will never do anything to improve the lives of black people unless it first and foremost benefits themselves as well, particularly economically (Bell 1992a, 54). In many ways, then, successfully fighting white racism is a very crude, nonsophisticated business. It isn't about devising fancy moral arguments or ideal forms of jurisprudence; it instead involves "making a shameless appeal to the predictable self-interest of whites" and their wallets (1992a, 107). One could add that it also relies on the predictable self-delusion, self- grandeur, and racial ignorance of white people. Bell (1992a, 62) argues that **black people—both individuals and communities—need to be like Brer Rabbit of the Uncle Remus stories**, who tricks Brer Fox into setting him free by convincing Brer Fox that throwing Brer Rabbit into the briar patch is the worst thing that Brer Fox could ever do to him. Brer Fox acts in what he thinks is his own best interest—an interest in harming Brer Rabbit by keeping him captive—and in so doing, he does the very thing that enables Brer Rabbit to escape. A masterful tactician at manipulating the canine ignorance and solipsistic focus of Brer Fox, **Brer Rabbit doesn't rely on rational argumentation, nor does he depend on the law** or any universal rights of animal kind to obtain his freedom. **He instead is ruthlessly realistic about the malicious self-interest that motivates Brer Fox, and for that reason** he **is able to devise an effective strategy for getting out of his clutches.** Brer Rabbit doesn't succeed in making any sort of large-scale or structural change in the relationship between foxes and rabbits, nor does he particularly hope to. He instead focuses practically on how to save his life in the midst of a particular struggle with Brer Fox, and through his struggle, he is able to flourish even if the overarching tyranny of foxes has not been eliminated. Because struggle is central to racial realism, racial realism is neither passive nor apathetic. It is not nihilist in the sense that West uses the term. But neither is it hopeful. Even though they might bear a superficial similar- ity, the struggle involved in racial realism isn't the same struggle encour- aged by West's politics of hope. The struggle of political hope is for the fantastical object of a future without antiblack racism. It insists that "legitimate action takes place in the political" and that "a refusal to 'do poli- tics" is equivalent to 'doing nothing' " (Warren 2015, 223). The struggle of racial realism, in contrast, doesn't involve believing that the right thing will win out. Bell's racial realism invokes a different kind of existentialism than that of West, appealing to Camus (Bell 1992a, x). As Camus's main character from The Plague (1991) understands, one resists and must resist the plague—whether in the form of mass death, the Nazi Holocaust, or in this case white class privilege and white supremacy—even though, or per- haps precisely because, one cannot conquer it. There is no ultimate progress or victory to anticipate, no matter whether human struggle is assisted by the divine. The plague might be beaten back for a while, but it always will return. Fighting it is absurd if the goal of the fight is to eliminate it. On Camus's view, one fights the plague for different reasons, ones that have to do with affirming the dignity and value of humanity. Likewise, on Bell's view, black people's "struggle for freedom, is bottom, a manifestation of our humanity that survives and grows stronger through resistance to oppression, even if that oppression is never overcome" (1992b, 378). If this is a kind of humanism, it is absurd rather than progressive.

### Case

#### And, development is responsible for drastic improvements in global living standards, and is the only path for future improvements.

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How good is growth, anyway ?

The history of economic growth indicates that, with some qualifications, growth alleviates misery, improves happiness and opportunity, and lengthens lives. Wealthier societies have better living standards, better medicines, and offer greater personal autonomy, greater fulfillment, and more sources of fun. While measured wealth does not exactly correspond to Wealth Plus, these two concepts have come pretty close to one another in the past, especially across the range of outcomes we have observed (as opposed to hypothetical thought experiments and counterfactuals).

We often forget how overwhelmingly positive the effects of economic growth have been. Economist Russ Roberts reports that he frequently polls journalists about how much economic growth there has been since the year 1900. According to Russ, the typical response is that the standard of living has gone up by around fifty percent. In reality, the U.S. standard of living has increased by a factor of five to seven, estimated conservatively, and possibly much more, depending on how we measure prices and the values of outputs over time, a highly inexact science.

The data show just how much living standards have gone up. In 1900, for instance, almost half of all U.S. households (forty-nine percent) had more than one occupant per room and almost one quarter (twenty-three percent) had over 3.5 persons per sleeping room. Slightly less than one quarter (twenty-four percent) of all U.S. households had running water, eighteen percent had refrigerators, and twelve percent had gas or electric lighting. Today, the figures for all of these stand at ninety-nine percent or higher. Back then, only five percent of households had telephones, and none of them had radio or TV. The high school graduation rate was only about six percent, and most jobs were physically arduous and had high rates of disability or even death. In the mid-nineteenth century, a typical worker might have put in somewhere between 2,800 and 3,300 hours of work a year; that estimate is now closer to 1,400 to 2,000 hours a year. 6

Until recently, polio, tuberculosis, and typhoid were common ailments, even among the rich. U.S. presidents George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Ulysses S. Grant, and James A. Garfield all caught malaria during their lives. Antibiotics and vaccines have existed for only a tiny fraction of human history, and it is no coincidence that they emerged in the wealthiest time period humanity has ever seen. There is also a strong and consistent relationship between wealth and rates of infant mortality; small children do best when they are born into wealthier countries, and that is because wealth supplies the resources to take better care of them.

As recently as the end of the nineteenth century, life expectancy in Western Europe was roughly forty years of age, and food took up fifty to seventy-five percent of a typical family budget. The typical diet in eighteenth-century France had about the same energy value as that of Rwanda in 1965, the most malnourished nation for that year. One effect of this deprivation was that most people simply did not have much energy for life.

In earlier time periods, most individuals performed hard physical labor, and a college or university education—or even a high school education—was a luxury. Leisure time has risen with economic growth. In 1880, about four-fifths of individuals’ discretionary time was spent working, according to economist Robert Fogel. Today we spend about fifty-nine percent of our time doing what we like, and that may rise to seventy-five percent by 2040. 8

The splendors of the modern world are not just frivolous baubles; they are important sources of human comfort and well-being. Imagine that a time traveler from the eighteenth century were to pay a visit to Bill Gates today. He would find televisions, automobiles, refrigerators, central heating, antibiotics, plentiful food, flush toilets, cell phones, personal computers, and affordable air travel, among other remarkable benefits. The most impressive features of Gates’s life, seen from the point of view of a person from the eighteenth century, are those shared by most citizens of wealthy countries today. My smartphone is as good as his. The very existence of an advanced civilization—the product of cumulative economic growth—confers immense benefits to ordinary citizens, including their ability to educate and entertain themselves and choose one life path over another. For further arguments along these lines, I recommend Steven Pinker’s recent book, Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress . 9

The economic growth of the wealthier countries benefits the very poor as well, though sometimes with considerable lags. The distribution of wealth changes over time, and not all growth trickles down, but as an overall historical average, the bottom quintile of an economy shares in growth. 10 You can see this by comparing the bottom quintile in, say, the United States to the bottom quintile in India or Mexico.

The richer economy can also do more to elevate the living standards of immigrants. Poor people who move to rich countries usually receive higher incomes and have better living conditions, and their children do better still. The richer the receiving country, the more new immigrants tend to benefit. Central American immigrants to the United States do better than Central American immigrants to Mexico or Nepalese immigrants to India. Immigrants also send remittances back home at a rate that far exceeds governmental foreign aid. Actual upward mobility in the United States far exceeds what the usual numbers indicate, because published statistics on upward mobility do not typically include a comparison with pre-immigration outcomes.

But the chain of benefits does not stop there. Migrants will often return to their home countries, bringing new skills and new business connections. Both India and Israel have developed vibrant technology and software scenes precisely because of their close ties with the start-up scene of the United States. English-language universities in English-speaking countries have trained many thousands of Asian students in science and engineering, again leading to new businesses and, eventually, higher economic growth in their home countries.

New medicines and technologies developed in wealthy nations also make their way to the rest of the world, as illustrated most conspicuously by the rapid spread of the cell phone and now the smartphone. One study predicts that if the leading twenty-one industrial countries were to boost their R&D by half a percentage point of GDP, U.S. output alone would grow by fifteen percent. But it doesn’t end there: output in Canada and Italy would grow by about twenty-five percent, and the output of all industrial nations would increase by 17.5 percent, on average. In the less economically developed countries, output would increase by about 10.6 percent on average. 11

Although these historical processes have often embodied unfairness and long lags of decades or more, economic growth has nonetheless brought wealth to the poor and elevated their status. The Greek city-states and the Roman Empire benefited from maritime trade across the Mediterranean; those regions in turn spread growth-enhancing institutions around Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East. The commercial revolution of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance reopened many of the trade routes of antiquity, and eventually human beings started to climb out of the Malthusian trap of very low per capita incomes at subsistence. The wealth of the West helped to enable the export miracles of the East Asian economies. Today, most poor countries seek greater access to wealthier Western and Asian markets, and flourish if they can achieve it. 12

For all the recent increases in inequality within individual nations, global inequality has declined over the last few decades, in large part because of growth in China and India. And the growth in these emerging nations was largely driven by earlier growth in the West and in East Asia. China, for instance, engaged in “catch-up” growth by adopting Western technologies and exporting to the wealthier nations. China has gone from being a quite poor nation to a “middle-income” nation with a sizable middle and upper class.

Although recent media coverage has focused almost exclusively on within-nation magnitudes, recent world history has been an extraordinarily egalitarian time. It is above all else a story about how global economic growth helps the poor. There has been a squeezing of the middle class in the wealthier nations, in part because of increasing global competition. Still, we have seen economic growth, aggregate wealth, and global income equality all rising together over the last twenty-five years. Many citizens in East Asia, South Asia, and Latin America have seen significant gains in their standard of living, and much of this has been a trickle-down effect from the earlier growth of the wealthier countries. Much of Africa is now following suit, bolstered in part by China’s demand for raw materials, and also by the spread of modern technologies such as affordable cell phones. 13

Sometimes extended periods of growth do not confer full or fair benefits to the poor or lower classes, for instance during the early phase of the British Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Still, the historical record suggests that it was better for Britain to push ahead with economic growth, as this eventually drove the greatest boost in living standards the world has ever seen. To be sure, there were probably better policies which, had they been adopted, would have distributed the benefits of growth more widely (e.g., fewer wars and Poor Law reform and free trade for the British). But even taking misguided policies into account, Britain fared better by pursuing economic growth rather than turning its back on the idea, even though significant real wage gains for the working class often did not arrive until the 1840s.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has promoted the idea of “capabilities” as, if not quite a substitute for economic growth, then an alternative focus. Sen points out that our positive opportunities in life often matter more than the amount of cash in our bank accounts. He also notes that some parts of the world, such as the state of Kerala in India, have relatively good health and education indicators, even though their per capita incomes are relatively low.

Sen’s points are well taken, but they do not put a fundamental dent in the relevance of wealth, or, as I am calling it here, Wealth Plus. The significant benefits accrued from capabilities, such as health benefits, are accounted for in Wealth Plus, even if they are not properly represented in current GDP measures. In other words, Kerala is wealthier than some limited statistical measures imply. Wealth and good social outcomes are still strongly correlated on average, and this correlation is stronger over longer time horizons. For instance, if Kerala does not grow much in more narrow economic terms, it is unlikely to look so impressive in its social indicators fifty or one hundred years from now. Even today, Kerala manages as well as it does in large part because so many Keralans take jobs in wealthier countries, especially in the Gulf States, and send money back home. And compared to other Indian states, Kerala has an above-average measure of wealth, as well as above-average consumption expenditures, both of which are accounted for in traditional statistics. 14

The truth is that economic growth is the only permanent path out of squalor. Economic growth is how the Western world climbed out of the poverty of the year 1000 A.D. or 5000 B.C. It is how much of East Asia became remarkably prosperous. And it is how our living standards will improve in the future. Just as the present appears remarkable from the vantage point of the past, the future, at least provided growth continues, will offer comparable advances, including, perhaps, greater life expectancies, cures for debilitating diseases, and cognitive enhancements. Billions of people will have much better and longer lives. Many features of modern life might someday seem as backward as we now regard the large number of women in earlier centuries who died in childbirth for lack of proper care.

I myself have written of the great stagnation, a slowdown in growth which overtook the Western world starting in about 1973. It would be a failure of imagination, however, to believe that human progress has run its course. The more plausible view is that progress is unevenly bunched, we have been in a slow period as of late, various new developments are percolating, and we should do our best to help them along. Whether we like it or not, economic growth and technological progress do not always arrive at a steady pace.

World history offers various precedents for the idea of a “great transformation” leading to enormous increases in the quality and quantity of human lives. Our ancestors did not foresee the evolution of humans, the agricultural revolution, the “urban revolution” (Sumeria and Mesopotamia, circa 4000 B.C.), or the Industrial Revolution. For that matter, the East Asian revolution in economic growth was not widely anticipated. Each development development dramatically changed the human condition over time, and eventually very much for the better. The history of economic growth, to some extent, is the history of working out the consequences of such unforeseen transformations. It is unlikely that we have seen the last of such revolutions, at least provided that civilization manages to stay afloat.

Looking into the more distant future makes the question of the economic growth rate all the more important. For instance, a two percent rate of economic growth, as opposed to a one percent rate, makes only a small difference across the time horizon of a single year. But as time passes, the higher growth rate eventually brings about a very large boost to well-being. To make this concrete, here’s an experiment: redo U.S. history, but assume the country’s economy had grown one percentage point less each year between 1870 and 1990. In that scenario, the United States of 1990 would be no richer than the Mexico of 1990. 15

It is also worth pondering some comparisons with higher rates of economic growth, of the sort we often see in emerging economies. At a growth rate of ten percent per annum, as has been common in China, real per capita income doubles about once every seven years. At a much lower growth rate of one percent, such an improvement takes about sixty-nine years.

Robert E. Lucas, Nobel Laureate in Economics, put the point succinctly: “The consequences for human welfare involved in questions like these are staggering: once one starts to think about [exponential growth], it is hard to think about anything else.” 16

Even if you don’t regard material wealth as central to human well-being, economic growth brings many other values, including, for instance, much greater access to the arts and education. Economic growth also gives individuals greater autonomy and minimizes the chance that their destiny will be determined by the time and place in which they were born. It remains true that many individuals are born poor or are born into families that do not much respect formal education or are born far away from cities. Still, ask yourself a simple question: has there ever been a time in human history when so many individuals had such a good chance of becoming world-class scientists ?

Individuals today are more able to shape their futures, choose their friends, communicate with the outside world, and weave together diverse cultural strands when building out their personal narratives. Benjamin M. Friedman, in his brilliant The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth , shows just how many of the virtues of the modern world depend on higher and indeed growing levels of wealth. 17

The bottom line is this: the more rapidly growing economy will, at some point, bring about much higher levels of human well-being—and other plural values—on a consistent basis. If some set of choices or policies gives us a higher rate of economic growth, those same choices or policies are akin to a Crusonia plant.