# 1NC – NDT Round the Fourth – Samford ET

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### 1NC – Kritik

#### Welcome to the church! All are open to confess their sins and atone for their white guilt. The antiblack sins of the past continue to plague our dark futures and the hell hole that is the project of the American dream. The 1AC’s expansion of US antitrust law is not a neutral endeavor but sustains the valorization of the American Dream and the US as the promised land for God’s chosen people.

**Bey 15** [Marquis Bey, Assistant Professor of African American Studies, 2015, Journal of Feminist Scholarship, Volume 9 Issue 9 Fall 2015, “She Had a Name That God Didn’t Give Her: Thinking the Body through Atheistic Black Radical Feminism”, pgs. 6-10, JMH] edited for racialized language\*

It is worth pointing out here the necessity of feminist Blackness. The embodiment of Blackness has profound (a)theological consequences. Historically, Blackness has signified inherent guilt, innate sin, and inner maleficence. Contemporarily, **Blackness still signifies that epidermal “confession” of guilt**. To be Black is to always be guilty of crime. Black bodies “weaponize sidewalks; shoot [them]selves while handcuffed in the back of police cars … [are] incarcerated, assaulted, and stopped and frisked for walking, driving, and breathing while black” (Sharpe 2014, 61). Citations of Black bodies gunned down for nothing more than the purported crime their skin confessed can persist for pages: Tarika Wilson, Rodney King, Sean Bell, Miriam Carey, Oscar Grant, Shantel Davis, Amadou Diallo, Nathaniel Jones, Tyisha Miller, Jordan Davis, Trayvon Martin, Sharmel Edwards, Ezell Ford, Renisha McBride, John Crawford, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Vonderrit Myers…4 These slain Black victims were all subject to the circumscription of their humanity by the insidious white gaze—a manifestation of the transcendental signifier: god—and in the presence of this white gaze Black bodies appear “in the form of a sheer exteriority, implying that the Black body ‘shows up,’ makes itself known in terms of its Black surface” (Yancy 2008, 21). Under the white gaze, people like Garner and Brown are undifferentiated: “All Coons Look Alike to Me,” as the old song goes. Or religiously speaking, as one white Mississippi Yazoo Delta planter said, “I think God intended the ~~niggers~~ [black people] to be slaves. Now since man has deranged God’s plan, I think the best we can do is keep ‘em as near to a state of bondage as possible” (Oshinsky 1996, 11). The interiority of Black bodies undergoes abject erasure and becomes “ontologically mapped,” its cartographical coordinates leading “to that which is always immediately visible: the Black surface” (Yancy 2008, 21). The body, however, is not merely its materiality. It is never divorced from perception, interpretation, and consequently the actions based on those perceptions and interpretations. The body, in effect, is a text onto which scripts and meanings are inscribed. Bodies are the ways in which we constitute the knowledge of the world. The world appears to us through the body. Contrary to the religious mantra “be in the world but not of it,” which is a kind of world denial rooted in greater importance given to divine afterlife—as Eldridge Cleaver’s incarcerated context makes clear, “[religionists] could usher you through the Pearly Gates after you were dead, but not through the prison gate while you were still alive and kicking” (Cleaver 1999, 23; original emphasis)—bodies in the world are how we come to be the various aspects of our identities. One cannot be in the world and not of it, as many Christian discourses urge, since it is precisely because we are in the world that we are, and thus our existence and identities as such stem from our worldly in-ness. While the placards in protest of Brown’s murder read “Black Lives Matter,” I want to underscore that there is no life without the body. That is to say, Black lives can only matter if Black bodies matter first. As the philosopher Drew Leder remarks, “we cannot understand the meaning and form of objects without reference to the bodily powers through which we engage them…. The lived body is not just one thing in the world, but a way in which the world comes to be” (1992, 25). More originary is the body; the body precedes the life of that Black body, thus must be deemed important before the life can. Michael Brown, for instance, is put at war with his body. Extracted from his lived Black embodiment by the white gaze and deified by those who sought to use his death as a pseudocrucifixion, Brown in some sense was denied his enfleshment. The subtle relegation to a topos ouranios, a fate that has befallen many of the (largely male) aforementioned Black people, deemphasizes, in part, the fact that these bodies were born into the world, lived as Black, and died because of that fact. Not only was this characteristic accident (i.e., their incidental existence as Black-skinned) ontologized, it was done so outside of their Black bodies and, after their deaths, repositioned to T-shirts, memes, slogans, and causes. Let me be clear: I am not denigrating these efforts by any means. Black lives must be preserved in their deaths. The rise in poems and protests and activism in the name of Trayvon Martin and Mike Brown signifies the importance and value that Black lives have. What I wish to suggest is that if these victims are not kept in close relation with their lived bodily experiences, which exist in a continual chain of other lived Black experiences that have succumbed to similar fates, we run the risk of dissolving the body that was of utmost importance to their experiences. This kind of martyrdom extracted from the bodies of the martyrs is indicative of specific theological ideologies of denying the world, disassociating oneself from one’s flesh (“Our bodies are just shells for our souls. The body doesn’t matter,” my white Christian friend George once told me), or imprecise renditions of actual people, i.e., demigods and saints. The atheistic perspective of my proffered Black feminism ensures that this deification does not occur. To deify is, quite simply, to dehumanize. As far back as Emmett Till, slain Black bodies often become symbols that stretch across time and the entirety of the Black race, deindividuating the lived, particular, embodied lives of the victims in an effort to make them Christlike. Mamie Till Mobley, Emmett Till’s mother, wanted her son’s death to save other Black boys and men who could have undergone the same fate. This is indeed admirable and useful in a period of overt anti-Black vigilantism, but it still makes Till a Christ figure, no longer a 14-year-old boy who lived but a symbol—i.e., not a human with a body in the world—who saves everyone else through his own nonhumanness: death. **Only through abstraction, the taking of “souls,” do these Black bodies have value.** We must hold in front of us the corporeal, not the abstracted heavenly afterthoughts of pristine, eulogized lives. **We** **must not fall into the pattern of thinking of the dead as angels because, indeed, they were not**. As “the steel-blue ghost standing at the podium” said, “Vonderrit Myers was no angel.” No, he was not. He was human. He “had a name that god didn’t give him” (Bennett 2015). Joshua Bennett’s spoken-word poem “Still Life With Black Death” reveals the necessity of refraining from making angels and holy victims of murdered Black boys, Vonderrit Myers in particular, a Black 18-year-old killed in St. Louis by a police officer. “When he died,” says Bennett, he did not bleed starlight or gold. He was not half-bird. The gun spoke, and no flaxen wings shot from each shoulder as if to carry him beyond the bullet’s swift assignment— No, the boy was not a pillar of white smoke bright enough to break a nonbeliever, make a holy man fall prostrate, heaving, heavy with contrition. Here, Bennett enacts a profound refusal of making an angel or divine entity of Myers. Myers was not a heavenly angel (half-bird), nor did his death cause him to sprout “flaxen wings.” To claim so erases Myers’s humanness, his flawed, (Black-)fleshy, embodied vessel, which was the grounds for his murder. In order to maintain Myers’s ontological integrity, we cannot erase him by painting him as perfect. He must remain “no angel,” i.e., human, flawed. Only here can he be redeemed, because for Vonderrit Myers to be seen as himself he must be seen as he was—Black, human, and flawed. No angel. Bennett also urges listeners to reembody whiteness, unmoor it from its perceived transcendental perspective. The goal is not to reverse the statuses and imbue Myers and other Black bodies with holy omnipotence and divinity while white officers are condemned, demonized, and incarnated in visible white flesh. All must be embodied in themselves. Bennett continues and points to a white epistemology of ignorance and all-knowingness, asking, “How else to erase him if they cannot feign omnipotence, / lay claim to the sky, colonize heaven…” **Indeed, omnipotence, the limits of living (the sky), and the ultimate topos ouranios (heaven) are colonized by whiteness.** Thus they take on a status of unquestioned normality, the standard by which life is measured, and the ideological template structuring the world’s grammar. **What must occur is the reembodiment of the abstracted whiteness used to “colonize” the heavenly, standardizing realms.** Bennett does so by revealing the mundane humanness of Myers’s killer, a proxy for a murderous white gaze that truncates the subjectivity of Black bodies: That killer woke up today, probably ate scrambled eggs for breakfast, brushed his teeth three times or fewer, walked in soft slippers… Checked the mail while a child decomposed underground. Making an (a)theological shift, even though several historically Black denominations called for a “Black Lives Matter” Sunday, it is striking that a majority of churches were, for the most part, relatively silent on the matter.5 Professor of theology Brian Bantum asked poignant questions: “If theology does anything should it not at least speak to the realities that mark our lives together as human beings? And if this is the case, how can theology that confesses who God is, not also acknowledge the bodies that confess?” Bantum’s focus on the body’s importance is estimable. **Theology must not only attend to the body but, I would add, must also hold the body accountable.** This, I think, is where Bantum misses the mark: To do theology faithfully, confessionally, we must see how Christianity participates in the social realities of a broken world. We must acknowledge and confess the ways we fail to see ourselves, the world, and Christ faithfully. But we must also confess that in our blindness the eternal Word has come nonetheless. We must confess that we are like the blind who have been made to see, even if in our sight we do not yet understand the images that are before us. In this disorientation of a world that seems more familiar when we close our eyes and return to our broken state of blindness, hoping to regain a familiarity of a world filled only with touch and sound, we must have the courage to keep our eyes open. We must learn to hear anew in the encounter with faces and bodies. In a way, we must be born anew again and again. (Bantum 2014; original emphasis) Kudos to Bantum for shedding a prophetic light on the responsibility of Christianity. That he concedes that Christianity participates in social ills is a theological move that must become more widespread. That he also acknowledges the failures of Christians keeps the church accountable not only for its good deeds but also for its less-than-adequate efforts at times. But Bantum slips into an evasiveness. Admitting that “we’re blind and not living confessionally and prophetically,” which is true in the context of Christian thought, seems to also absolve god and Jesus of any responsibility. It is very common to attribute positive “blessings” in the world to god: good fortune bestowed upon the church in the form of money or larger venues, narrowly escaping a deadly car crash, or acing your calculus exam. But deities seem to be absolved of responsibility for misfortunes, and in fact justified by way of a mysterious plan that subsumes and puts a positive spin on the horrible event. This, however, is no new critique of theism. Atheists and freethinkers have leveled this critique countless times, and I do not intend to proffer it as novel. My intention from a standpoint that is Black and feminist and atheistic is to reveal the implications and consequences of such evasive thinking. Purportedly showing how believers can remedy the horrors of the world like the murder of Mike Brown, rather than not letting it happen in the first place, eschews the importance that would serve better being placed on preventative measures, and also fails, I think, to link Brown’s death with numerous similar historical events that were also not stopped, and thus becomes complicit in providing sanctioned precedent for the continuance of the criminalization of Black bodies. In other words, focusing on bearing honest witness to the troubles of the world and discussing how best to address and protest Brown’s killing—which, to be sure, are incredibly admirable actions that should be continued—deemphasizes the more desired outcome of the living body of Mike Brown. It also fails to adequately place Brown’s murder in a long chain of slain Black bodies killed on the basis of criminalized scripts imposed upon them, which potentially frames contemporary incidents as isolated. Mike Brown, in other words, was by no means the first and, unfortunately, not the last to be killed by white hands (or guns) on the basis of the signified meaning of his Blackness. In short, rather than holding god accountable for the numerous unjust murders of Black people in the practice’s centuries-long history, historical precedents are elided and the hot new murder is treated in a vacuum, god once again not being forced to bear the responsibility for, in part, enabling the historical struggle of Black people living under the murderous gaze of militarized whiteness**. God does not value the embodied lives of Black people, as they only become divinely valid through death. God is one who does not make us “larger, freer, and more loving,” so, by Baldwin’s logic, “it is time we got rid of Him [sic]” (1993, 47).** And this captures what is meant by atheistic feminist Blackness. **So what would it mean to “Blacken” god, to make god and Jesus “Black like me”?** **What might happen if god or Jesus were to become incarnate in the world through the suffering of Black bodies? What would it mean, as this section’s heading asks, for Jesus to be unable to breathe?** Jesus, in effect, is suffocating just like the asthmatic Eric Garner who was put in an (illegal) chokehold by police officers and killed as a result. As one Twitter commenter said, “A state that can choke a man to death, on video, for selling cigarettes is NOT Rom. 13 justice” (Rom. 13:1–2: “1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. 2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”). Rev. Jeff Hood made this comment: “I keep thinking about Eric Garner saying, ‘I can’t breathe.’ It made me think—that’s what Jesus is saying in this culture. Jesus is fundamentally connected to the marginalized and right now Jesus is saying, ‘I can’t breathe’” (Kuruvilla and Blumberg 2014). Jesus here is mortalized, returned to his body, Blackened, and made in the image of Eric Garner, a reversal of the originary divine god-like fashioning of humanity. The move has atheological resonances—**god and Jesus must die; hence they must become mortal if they are to exist, they must suffocate. And with god dead, we have atheism**. **One can say that god is this suffocation precisely because god is deemed immortal—god is death, the antithesis of mortality and finitude. God’s supposed immortality is inseparable from absolute immortality**. In bringing Jesus to mortality through Garner, Rev. Hood’s remark attempts to kill god. Indeed, he must die if he is to be able to be seen in likeness to Garner and other Black bodies. The affirmation of life, the crux of atheistic feminist Blackness, entails the affirmation of mortality. It values bodily being. Consequently, affirming life and mortality—the condition of life—means denouncing immortality, denouncing death—god godself. To paraphrase Langston Hughes’s poem “Dear Lovely Death,” “Dear lovely Death, [god] is thy other name.”6 With this affirmation of Black life inevitably comes fear. Philosopher Jacques Derrida reminds us that the “unconditional affirmation of life,” in which “survival is the most intense life possible,” is filled with pain and fear precisely because of one’s decision to live; life rests on the condition of its own eradication around every corner (quoted in Hägglund 2008, 34). For Black bodies, however, that fear is intensified, heightened because of the way that Black bodies are “seen” as perpetually and inherently criminal, gazed upon not as themselves but as static racial molds that exist ahead of themselves in the white gaze. But this is a negation of Black life since Black lives cannot be affirmed in and of themselves; their ontological value is circumscribed. **So in order to affirm all lives, especially Black lives, they must first exist for themselves rather than as fixed images in the hegemonic purview. This is even more the case with female and trans bodies.**

#### The impact is divine racism. The state is the vehicle through which their racist God cements violence and enslavement onto Black life. So long as we continue to rely on these antiblack technologies

**Finley and Gray 15** [Stephen Finley, associate professor of religious studies and African and African American Studies at LSU, Biko Mandela Gray, Assistant Professor of Religion, African American Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies at Syracuse, 2015, Penn State University Press, “God is a White Racist: Immanent Atheism as a Religious Response to Black Lives Matter and State-Sanctioned Anti-Black Violence”, pgs. 445-448, JMH]

If, as Lewis Gordon points out, Blackness is “the theodicy of European modernity”—and here we extend his reflections on Europe to apply to the United States and other societies wherein Africana peoples are situated as well—then the question of Black life mattering in an anti-Black world gives way to a theodicean mode of questioning because theodicy is, in part, a question about how (Black) lives come to matter within larger normative social contexts.6 William Jones’s work provides some clarification, as he compellingly explored theodicy in his seminal text, Is God a White Racist?7 Jones’s concern with theodicy emerged from his attention to what he called “ethnic suffering”— an intergenerational and enduring form of suffering directed toward and concentrated on one ethnic or racial group. **Such suffering prompts reflection about the cause of suffering and death, which in turn raises questions concerning a person’s (or people’s) relationship to the divine—that is, how the divine perceives and relates to their presence**: in other words, **how they matter to the divine.** Jones directed his attention at his contemporary Black theological counterparts who contended that God is on the side of Black people, working out their liberation from white oppression in a final exaltation or liberation event.8 Jones contends that this position is untenable. **Given the historical record, one can never be sure that God was and is working on behalf of African Americans and against oppression**. Jones argues that since God is the sum of God’s acts, the persistence of ethnic suffering made it appear that Black people only mattered negatively to God—which is say, in the language of Julia Kristeva’s Powers of Horror, **Black people were abject.**9 History did not disclose a God who affirmed the worth and validity of Black life, but rather revealed a God who not only allowed but occasioned and sanctioned the repression and elimination of Black life over extended periods of time.10 Jones thus wondered whether God was—and is—a white racist, for, **as Gordon highlights, race, and particularly Blackness, is about who lives and who dies, whose “showing up” requires their sustained existence and whose “showing up” requires their being-consumed and being-discarded.11** We extend Jones’s theodicean reflections to speak about a more immanent concern—that is, **the state functioning as god**, who, as the ultimate arbiter of guilt or innocence, wields the near-absolute power and authority to do imminent harm to Africana peoples. **Gordon is helpful here: “Even secular societies may have a theodicean mode of rationalization, where the society itself or some system of treasured knowledge or values occupies the deific role.”**12 Gordon traces the theodicean line of questioning historically; he connects it to the question of race, ultimately showing that race was about what was natural and what was outside of the natural order. Blackness, as that which was supposed to be outside of the natural order, fell outside the purview of normativity, rendering it something to be eliminated (again, Kristeva’s “abjection”). He thus **concludes with the quote that began this section: “Blackness is fundamental to the formation of European modernity as it is one that imagines itself legitimate and pure through the expurgation of Blackness**. It is, in other words, the theodicy of European modernity.”13 Black life, thus, **has come to matter negatively within the context of our sociopolitical life, emerging as always already guilty in the eyes of a state that sanctions Black death as necessary to the maintenance of social order**—in other words, as a theodicy or defense of the goodness and sanctity of the state: the state-as-god is a white racist! one of the primary reasons we understand the state as god is because the state, like God in God’s response to Job out of the whirlwind, protects itself against any self-indictment.14 Consider, for example, President obama’s rather apologetic remarks during his recent “Selma” speech: Just this week, I was asked whether I thought the Department of Justice’s Ferguson report shows that, with respect to race, little has changed in this country. And I understood the question; the report’s narrative was sadly familiar. It evoked the kind of abuse and disregard for citizens that spawned the Civil Rights Movement. But I rejected the notion that nothing’s changed. What happened in Ferguson may not be unique, but it’s no longer endemic. It’s no longer sanctioned by law or by custom. 15 Either the president is incorrect in his interpretation of state-sanctioned violence against Black people, or he totally misses how such sanctioning functions and the various modalities of sanction that justify Black death. Despite his claims, violence against Black bodies is a matter of law and custom; that police officers or white citizens acting in the mode of policing are rarely, if ever, charged with a crime and are even less commonly convicted when they are tried is an indication of state sanction, custom, and general consent. Consider the Mike Brown case in Ferguson. Darren Wilson (the officer who killed Mike Brown) claimed that Brown was so angry that he looked like a demon and therefore that Wilson had to kill him for fear of his life. Invoking the demonic ultimately occasioned eliminating the demonic for the sake of maintaining the good and valued (read: “white” and privileged) collectives of the society.16 The hyperbole of Brown’s demonic anger was ultimately translated into and served as a rationalization for his own death, and occasioned Wilson’s non-indictment. By not indicting Wilson, the state sanctioned his actions, absolving him of guilt and rendering him an acolyte—an agent of the deified state, who, with his gun, ceremoniously and theodically cleansed the society of a known contagion.17 But the problem with this scene is that Brown’s disposition—whether angry or not, we will never know, now that he is no longer with us—was instantiated not by Brown, but by Wilson. The Ferguson case invokes philosopher Louis Althusser’s doctrine of interpellation, wherein an officer of the state calls a person into being by hailing that person. This occurs, however, only to subject that being to the state’s ideological constraints and structures.18 Althusser’s doctrine is interestingly qualified by a footnote: “Hailing . . . takes a quite ‘special’ form in the policeman’s practice of ‘hailing’ which concerns the hailing of ‘suspects.’”19 The scene of interpellation is one that, as Judith Butler highlights, inscribes guilt on the hailed; as a matter of fact, guilt is the condition for the possibility of hailing, and thus the condition for the possibility of subjectivity within the structures of the state.20 Responding to the hailing is, therefore, a self-ascription of guilt**. If theodicy is the defense of God’s goodness and power, then police hailing is a theodicean venture, as it upholds the goodness and power of the state-as-god over against the life of individuals.** The interpellation of Black people, reduced to their Black bodies by police officers and “neighborhood watch officers,” traps Black people in the realm of the always-already guilty—again, a juridico-political form of mattering negatively within our contemporary context. **Within this anti-Black world then, Black lives matter negatively to the state**. **The state, acting as a form of absolute divine sovereignty, is a divine racist, and a world wherein the state-as-god is a white racist requires**, on the part of those of us who have been kissed by the sun, a different disposition— one that affirms the positive mattering of Black life at all costs. This disposition pushes against the state-as-god, the god-state, by refusing to give it analytic and normative legitimacy. We call this disposition immanent atheism.

#### The 1AC’s invocation of class action suits and private antitrust as a move towards black liberation participates in the practice of iconography whereby black people are turned into icons and superheroes. This not only deradicalizes any praxis the aff energizes but it also represents as an iconographic act of pornotroping black success stories as a move toward divine liberation.

Anthanasopolous-Sugino’19 (Second-year graduate student Charles Athanasopoulos-Sugino has recently been published in the Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism. Their article titled “Smashing the icon of Black Lives Matter: afropessimism & religious iconolatry” seeks to intervene in the critical conversations surrounding Black Lives Matter (BLM) to urge scholars to challenge the very political calculus from which we (dis)count lives and ascribe value or matter as a mechanism of anti-Black power. This essay argues that we must abandon the axiological framework of the Human, by situating the Human as the centerpiece of rituals of anti-Blackness that occur in the most basic of social interactions. In exploring ritual at the core of its operations Athanasopoulos-Sugino argues that anti-Blackness should be understood as a religious system. ““Smashing the icon of Black Lives Matter: afropessimism & religious iconolatry” 2019)NAE

My aim here is to describe how ritual functions to maintain religions absent the explicit proclamation of belief, and that ritual and religion are a lens from which we can interpret both the upholding of the anti-Black status quo and the acts of resistance that seek to challenge it. Icons are usually understood in their specific Christian context regarding the dispute between iconolatry, which argued Christians should intensely venerate religious paintings as material manifestations of God, and iconoclasm which argued that these images should be shattered because they cannot capture the transcendent nature of God (Shedlock; Ostrogorsky). Yet, I would like to part from this narrow definition of the debate and instead push us to think of icons beyond their literal meaning for the Church. Εικονολατρία (icono-latria) is the etymological fusion of two Greek words Εικόνα (icona) meaning icon and Λατρεία (latria) meaning love or worship. Iconolatry is thus the process of falling in love with an icon through ritual adoration. I am arguing that we should understand icons as being able to manifest as images, texts, speeches, movements, and statues insofar as they are symbols that inspire the ritualistic affirmation of Civil Society through a negation of Blackness. This broader definition would allow us to properly situate the Marine rifleman’s weapon as one icon of Judeo-Christianity and American freedom along with other icons such as the Statue of Liberty and the American flag, or the statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Washington D.C. as an icon of racial progress in the United States. The importance of centering iconolatry is highlighting how these icons lull Blacks and non-Blacks alike into a pacified state of celebration and optimism through a narrative of gradual progress and feel-good politics so that we even want to become icons ourselves. In addition, I am attempting to push scholars of rhetoric and Blackness to conceptualize anti-Blackness as a religion and BLM as a form of liberation theology. In locating BLM as a liberation theology in the face of the religion of anti-Blackness, it is important to highlight how ritual and faith play a part in their organizing. Many BLM activists explain that faith and spirituality play a pivotal role insofar as Christian theology embeds a ritual practice of activism by “letting the Word [of God] push you” (Edgar and Johnson 47). One could argue that BLM as a liberation theology is attempting to shatter icons of white supremacy and establish its own icons that affirm the humanity of Black people. One example of this is how BLM has attempted to shatter the icon of the police officer by exposing the brutality inflicted on Black people at the hand of law enforcement or how Colin Kaepernick’s kneeling during the national anthem is an act of shattering the icon of the American flag. In both examples, there is a rupture that occurs in the fabric of Civil Society as a sacred icon (the police officer and the American flag) is desecrated in order to highlight the suffering of Black people. This rupture holds the potential to overturn the axiological framework established within this Human community, which is why there is such a fervent need to enact rituals to recover the value of these icons in the responses to BLM and Kaepernick. In what follows, I parse out how the lens of ritual can help us think through the nuances of BLM and how this reveals certain constraints and affordances given to us through the embracement of this banner of resistance which I filter through a discussion of the utility of Humanism. I argue that while post-racial logics are detrimental to liberation efforts, we must also be wary of how multiculturalism offers us the temporary reprieve of feel-good politics without truly confronting the ontological negation of Blackness. Moreover, I argue that BLM as an icon has been taken up in ways that fortify this multiculturalist obfuscation of anti-Blackness revealing how the icon has now transcended the original intentions of its founders/actors. Humanism, Black Lives Matter as Icon BLM has served as a liberation theology to those who feel the weight of the anti-Black world. BLM began as a hashtag created by three Black queer women in the wake of Trayvon Martin’s murder in 2013, even though it wasn’t until after Mike Brown was killed that it became widely circulated on social media and transformed into what it is today. Bailey and Leonard explore how the statement “Black Lives Matter” embodies a deep Black love that challenges white supremacy and offers Black people an opportunity to attain liberty and the capacity for the pursuit of happiness (69). Like any theological faction that emerges, we cannot totalize BLM as one singular movement due to its decentralized form. In fact, at the core its political theology, the movement has attempted to shatter the older model of civil rights and Black power activism. Garza’s herstory of BLM helps us to understand how the movement seeks to move away from singular charismatic male leadership models in favor of a Black feminist work that shares in collective leadership as well as challenges single-issue movements by arguing that we should think about racialized bodies as inherently queer, which would produce an alliance based in oppositional politics (Cohen and Jackson 777). In this way, BLM shatters the icons of resistance that existed before it and establishes its own model. This model has reinvigorated confrontation politics and new grassroots resistance and has the potential to reverse the counter-movements that undid progress after the 60s and 70s, and that BLM needs to draw on and modernize popular insurgency in order to move beyond failures of groups like Occupy. While the more democratic leadership established by BLM has its upsides, it also engenders more confusion over the direction of the cause which is centered over whether BLM should engage in mass action or political reform (Rickford 39). Some activists prefer to engage with politicians such as Hilary Clinton and see value in focusing on specific policy reforms (Greenblatt). On the other hand, there are BLM activists who prefer to completely disavow electoral politics and capitalism in favor of disruptive politics that break down the smooth functioning of Civil Society. The heterogeneity of BLM highlights the struggle between the more radical elements of the group as the process of converting BLM to a more mainstream icon of resistance increases in intensity and encourages the disavowal of those factions seen as being destructive to the movement. Amidst this internal struggle BLM has also encountered a good amount of pushback from more mainstream liberal and conservative theo-political factions. For example, a former member of SNCC Rev. Dr. Barbara Reynolds has openly denigrated BLM by arguing that she cannot tell the difference between the legitimate activists and mobs who’d prefer to burn and loot. At the same time, All Lives Matter supporters frame BLM as violent and guilty of victimizing other people because of the constant disruptions that allow ALM a moral high ground in popular culture as being the group that affirms life (Edgar and Johnson 31-32). In fact, many ALM supporters argue that BLM’s slogan is an act of self-segregation that stirs racial tensions (33-34). Thus, BLM activists are being pushed by some of the older civil rights activists and more mainstream groups to legitimize its movement by meeting their threshold of civil and respectable politics. This outside pressure fuels the disavowal of more radical elements of the movement buttressed by the argument that integration into the mainstream is the only way to effectively mobilize. Alongside this political debate there is a clear attempt to appease the base of BLM in order to pacify the masses who could otherwise potentially be persuaded to support the more radical factions of the movement. This has largely happened through the commercialization of BLM in order to convert the movement into a mainstream icon of resistance. One example of this is a Rolling Stone Magazine article released on July 13th, 2016 titled “Songs of Black Lives Matter: 22 New Protest Anthems” (Grant and Spanos). There’s also the infamous Pepsi commercial, the string of Nike campaigns featuring Black athletes, and a slew of mainstream politicians such as Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren, who take up the BLM mantle in a variety of ways (Victor; Velshi; Nguyen; Barron-Lopez; Glanton). Indeed, BLM is a cultural icon whose proper interpretation is hotly contested in everyday personal, social media, political, and activist circles even as anti-Black institutions have attempted to assimilate BLM into their own grammar. I am arguing that this pressure to become more respected in mainstream politics along with this internal strife has contributed to the de-radicalization of Black Lives Matter and its consumption by more mainstream social justice organizing efforts that ritually invoke the icon of BLM such as the rally I attended. This situation demonstrates how icons take on lives of their own that transcend the original intentions of those who created them. Early Christians couldn’t have known that the cross would be taken up as a symbol of Constantine’s empire. Hindu practitioners couldn’t have known that the swastika would be taken up by one of the most vicious fascist regimes in history. Colin Kaepernick couldn’t have originally known that his protest by kneeling would become a centerpiece in a marketing campaign for Nike, and Black Lives Matter couldn’t have known it would become an icon deployed in tv commercials and as a talking point for presidential candidates. Whether the original creators of these icons play a part in this or not, it is undeniable that icons become distorted in this process whether it be from negative backlash or new supporters. The civil rights movement of the 1960s is the perfect example of this kind of distortion in how the movement is misremembered to bolster a particular perspective of social movements, making it hard to fully trace its historical legacy (Edgar and Johnson 3). These narratives erase the more radical factions of the movement by reducing everything to a prophetic individual tale of heroism (e.g. Dr. King, Malcolm X) and ultimately a narrative of American progress. While it is true that Dr. King’s politics of non-violence, love, and reconciliation made his legacy more susceptible the ritual conversion I am articulating, it is also true that these narratives erase his radical anti-war politics during the Vietnam war and his communist ideology. This is how conservatives are able to invoke Dr. King’s I Have a Dream speech in order to fortify claims of white victimization and meritocracy, or how older civil rights veterans are able to claim Dr. King wouldn’t support the undisciplined and raucous nature of BLM. In the case of Dr. King, his image is not converted into an icon until after his death. However, it is important that we pay attention to how this is happening to BLM right in front of us because “The dangers of this misappropriation of ‘King-as-icon’ and his legacy are illustrative of the ways in which facts and historical figures are distorted and in which iconolatry is substituted for reasoned argument” (Turner 108). Despite its efforts to shatter icons such as the police officer, the American flag, and the civil rights model of organizing, BLM-as-icon has also fallen victim to the iconolatry that the movement was originally attempting to escape. My argument is that BLM’s embracement of Humanism is the primary reason that it has been so easy to structurally adjust this liberation theology into an icon of anti-Blackness. Whereas BLM has opened ruptures in the fabric of Civil Society through its shattering of icons, it fails to use this rupture in order to energize a demand for the end of Civil Society as we know it. Instead, BLM makes the mistake of attempting to iconize Black activists as worthy of veneration instead of purely focusing on the smashing of all icons. Put another way, instead of arguing that we must reject the axiological framework of how life is valued as mattering, this movement merely seeks to include Black lives into this Humanist framework. In this way, BLM is much closer to the ideology of All Lives Matter than some would care to admit insofar as they both agree that all Human life should be valued despite the fact that BLM indicts ALM for its postracial fantasy that this goal has been achieved. BLM’s herstory makes explicit their belief in Humanism by making clear that Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks’ humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression (Garza). What strikes me most is the desire to have members of Civil Society recognize the contributions of Black people. This declaration invites the mainstream world to include Blackness in its celebrations and to recognize Black Humanity. It is a demand to not be seen as pathological. Yet, this demand for recognition of suffering and resilience is exactly what neoliberal anti-Blackness uses in order to churn out commercials, playlists, and political campaigns that profess solidarity in order to pacify more radical resistance. Many scholars would disagree with my characterization of Humanism as destructive, and instead argue that iconolatry could be good. For example, some have argued that producing icons that project power and agency for Black people is a challenge to the “controlling images” of Black people in favor of a “Black oppositional aesthetic” that ruptures our experience of the visual through the establishment of a photographic counter-archive of the BLM movement (Schneider 2-4). Yet, this projection of power and agency is easily integrated into neoliberal anti-Blackness insofar as it can be commercialized. BLM’s official website demonstrates this most clearly in the section it has dedicated to the sale of merchandise. In this section one has the option of purchasing apparel (various shirts and sweaters) or accessories (coffee mugs, bracelets, and laptop stickers), as well as reading more about the featured artists who BLM has partnered with to create its designs (Black Lives Matter, "Shop"). One such artist, Hebru Brantley, attempts to create “narrative driven work revolving around his conceptualized iconic characters. Brantley utilizes these iconic characters to address complex ideas around nostalgia, the mental psyche, power and hope”.[[1]](#footnote-1) Here we can see an explicit move to create new Black icons for veneration in BLM-affiliated artists and activists. This iconicity is part of the larger attempt to integrate into the mainstream which is highlighted by a public service announcement put out by BLM on its website featuring Hollywood actor Kendrick Sampson who proclaims that the Black future is restorative, inclusive, and progressive (Black Lives Matter, “#BlackFutureIs”). This discourse of inclusivity, progress, and restoration can easily be appropriated.

#### Against this, the alternative is a call to kill God. Reject the transcendental promise of liberation via divine intervention in favor of taking up the project of killing God and his White acolytes.

**Finley and Gray 15** [Stephen Finley, associate professor of religious studies and African and African American Studies at LSU, Biko Mandela Gray, Assistant Professor of Religion, African American Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies at Syracuse, 2015, Penn State University Press, “God is a White Racist: Immanent Atheism as a Religious Response to Black Lives Matter and State-Sanctioned Anti-Black Violence”, pgs. 445-448, JMH]

Largely influenced by Jones’s work on theodicy, theologian Anthony Pinn developed a sophisticated theological system he calls African American nontheistic humanism. Within his system, “God” is merely a term that has run its course anachronistically and remains as unhelpful residue of humanity’s archaic past.21 Pinn’s nontheistic stance emerges from a sustained and critical wrestling with the damage the God-construct has done to African American communities, in particular. One of his most important yet underappreciated critiques of divinity is situated in his reading of the biblical narrative of the tower of Babel. Consider his remarks in The End of God Talk: “one can reasonably argue that, through the building of the Tower [of Babel], Nimrod rebels against a certain type of metaphysically imposed limitation on human creativity and action. Mindful of this alternative read, African American nontheistic humanist theology highlights the story of nimrod for its anthropological merits by positing God as the metasymbol of restraint. **Restraint is God.”**22 For Pinn, God is a form of absolute restraint, a divine impediment to human collective creativity and freedom. We find in both Jones’s and Pinn’s work analytic and normative tools to develop immanent atheism. However, **finding the metaphysically transcendent God to be a distraction from the pressing and more concrete context of human life and existence**, **we highlight the god—**the being whose legitimacy and goodness should not be questioned and who emerges as the ultimate arbiter of guilt and innocence within the context of human experience**—with whom Black people must wrestle immanently: the state-as-god**. This god is a sociopolitical manifestation of restraint that, at best, holds back the mobility, creativity, and freedom of Black people and, at worst, eliminates them as affronts to the status quo, which is to say, kills them both existentially and biologically. Following James Cone’s injunction to “kill Gods that don’t belong to the black community” and applying insights from Jones and Pinn, immanent atheism rejects the legitimacy of the state-as-god by deconstructing the theo-logic of the state and subsequently rejecting the legitimacy of the state’s icons and idols. Immanent atheism deconstructs the myths, symbols, and national narratives of a state that operates as the ultimate arbiter of how certain groups come to matter by climbing beneath these narratives, symbols, and myths to uncover the originary set of sources that conditioned the state’s emergence as a god-construct. We turn the United States here as a case study. In Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Study of Religion, historian of religions Charles Long deconstructs the theo-logic of America, contending that America, by failing to be reflexive, self-aware, and honest about its violent origins—in particular in its relation to native Americans and African Americans—becomes unable to provide an internal critique about its inconsistencies and internal contradictions, and therefore keeps itself from reconciling the gap between itss linguistic and mythological aspects and its actual history.23 Consider President obama’s comments we referenced above. obama articulates a “better” America that no longer legally sanctions the death of or violence against Black people. The president’s statement functions in service of continued state domination by upholding narratives and mythologies that position the state as progressively good. Immanent atheist deconstruction pushes through Obama’s narrative of progress and highlights that his “better” America is made possible by cheap prison labor and a justice system that has not been able to indict its police force, even in light of incontrovertible evidence of their unlawful and extrajudicial activities. Refusing to acknowledge the horrendous structures maintaining the state’s ultimate legitimacy, President obama allows his Black skin to obscure his implicit sanctioning of sociopolitical and sociolegal forms of white supremacy. Immanent atheism “clears a space” for people to see things differently, to acknowledge that even state leaders who share our skin tone and cultural formation can be the largest proponents for our mattering negatively.24 **The deconstructive step of immanent atheism leads to an apprehension of the state for what it is: a racist god.** This, in turn, makes a way for the second movement of immanent atheism, iconoclasm. In so doing, it exposes the question of Black lives mattering as a religious question for, as Charles Long indicated above, **the myths and narratives of American exceptionalism are made possible only through the negative mattering of Black people.** Thus, the iconoclasm of immanent atheism pushes for a destruction of idols, of symbols, iconography, narratives, and practices that support the state, those that authorize its self-representational and self-legitimating accounts and thus conceal its violence and imperialism in the language of sanctity, destiny, and the heroic. This language of concealment is, by and large, religious: **America is framed as chosen, as a “city on a hill,” but this narrative is made possible only through the systematic exploitation of people of color, particularly Black people.** Immanent atheism pushes for a destruction of this religious logic through the tearing down of icons and idols.25 Given that America is able to operate in bad faith and is able to perpetuate a narrative of innocence, equality, and fundamental fairness contrary to its history, **the immanent atheist asserts that African Americans and Africana communities worldwide must reject these narratives** (that is, the founding of America by Columbus or the framing of any country as an Edenic utopia) **and the culture** (for example, literature, art, songs, and anthems that glorify war and genocide in the name of nation) **that reinforces, reproduces, and maintains them**. Practically, iconoclasm pushes against these narratives and cultural formations by critiquing and criticizing any disposition that claims property (like a pharmacy or nursing home) is more important than Black life, by refuting the politics of respectability reinforcing assimilationist dispositions (such as the idea that more stringent accountability practices such as the wearing of body cameras will produce different results), and by affirming that the current system must be razed in order for a new mode of social being to be collectively developed and maintained. With Mike Brown’s stepfather, **the immanent atheist affirms the possible necessity of “burning things down”—that is, calling for the destruction of certain structures that are dangerous to Black life—in order to affirm Black life.** Immanent atheism is (or needs to become) a counterculture that is iconoclastic and, therefore, “sensitive to the reality of historical experience.”26 That is to say, it apprehends reality for what it is and, as a result, can dispense with any American cultural idea or activity that supports state violence. This is, in a limited sense, what Edward Said attends to in his Culture and Imperialism, for imperial culture is a mechanism of the state that supports the work of domination, although Said is careful to note that all cultures are involved with one another and neither easily nor always rightfully disentangled, since they tend to be hybrid.27 He is talking about the ways that the counterculture (our term) of those who have been subjugated and colonized functions politically to dislodge colonial narratives. We often miss the political aspect of culture and, instead, focus primarily on the pleasurable and aesthetic features. But the political aspects of counterculture entail an elevation of subjugated communities—in this case Africana ones—that allows them to apprehend how colonial narratives and aesthetics valorize and reinforce the language and grammar of their subjugation. We need to be able to destroy these narratives, in part, by being able to see them for what they are—romantic yet untrue aesthetics that operate in service of white and state-sanctioned domination and violence. **We must destroy these idols and icons** (via the development of a counterculture made possible through deconstruction) **by becoming more critical of state-sanctioned political processes like voting and state-sanctioned structures like militarized police departments**. In so doing, **we create the possibility of destroying the state-gods that continue to make our lives matter negatively.** The state-as-god is a white racist, and the negative mattering of Black life sustains the mythical and theological structures maintaining the state’s theological legitimacy. Therefore, immanent atheism is the quintessential religious response of Africana communities to state-sanctioned violence against them. Such a posture requires deconstructive and iconoclastic responses if Black lives are to matter positively**. Anything short of this is an exercise in futility because the state positions itself as all-powerful and autonomous**, owing nothing to any powers other than its own, though it ostensibly appeals to and uses the language of transcendence that imbues it with a sense of awe, eternality, and immutability (the fact that the Constitution remains unchanged speaks to this). Indeed, the cultural, the political, and the religious are intertwined within the state, and the state generates and inculcates affective dispositions in those it subjugates that serve to engender allegiance and deference to its omnipotence. Immanent atheism demands that people, to whatever extent is possible, reject a state that functions as god and destroys and curtails Black life. **It is atheist in that it rejects any god that disallows the possibility of Black people thriving, and it is religious in that it is centered on the meaning and flourishing of Blackness in an anti-Black world that is its negation.**

## 2

### 1NC – Topicality

#### Interpretation: The private sector is distinct from the non-profit sector

Investopedia '20 [Private Sector, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/private-sector.asp]

The private sector is the part of the economy that is run by individuals and companies for profit and is not state controlled. Therefore, it encompasses all for-profit businesses that are not owned or operated by the government. Companies and corporations that are government run are part of what is known as the public sector, while charities and other nonprofit organizations are part of the voluntary sector.

#### Violation: Wilson solvency advocate is about removing the 568 exemption creates “high quality public schools”---For-profit and nonprofit schools are distinct from public schools.

Epps '21 [Tyler, 2/14/2021, "Private vs. Public Colleges: What’s the Difference?," https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/private-vs-public-colleges/#:~:text=Public%20colleges%20are%20government-funded,distinct%20campus%20and%20residential%20experiences.]

Both public and private colleges have faced significant challenges in recent years. A college education is still a requirement for a majority of jobs, but it's becoming increasingly unaffordable for many students. This obstacle is just one of several that's led to a drop in higher education enrollment.

According to data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, postsecondary enrollment in the U.S. dropped by 2.9 million from 2019 to 2020. Small private colleges, which are extremely tuition-dependent, are particularly affected by this decline. Public colleges aren't immune either.

Despite these struggles, millions of students across the country are getting ready to apply to college, and many are likely wondering how private and public colleges differ. Each school type has its own general traits and qualities that may better suit your learning style and desired college experience.

What's the difference between private and public colleges? And which type of school is right for you? Keep reading to find out.

What Are Public and Private Schools?

Public colleges and universities are higher education institutions that are mainly funded by state governments. In contrast, private colleges and universities rely more heavily on student tuition fees, alumni donations, and endowments to fund their academic programs.

Private colleges can be either for-profit or nonprofit. For-profit colleges are run like businesses and are most concerned with generating a profit, while nonprofit private colleges focus on providing students with a quality education. As a result, nonprofit colleges generally boast better reputations than for-profit schools.

4 Key Differences Between Private and Public Colleges

There are a few key differences between public and private colleges that you should consider when choosing a school.

1. Cost of Attendance

Arguably one of the biggest differences between public and private schools is cost of attendance.

Since public schools are largely funded by state and federal governments, they can afford to charge lower tuition rates — especially to in-state students. In other words, government subsidies cover a portion of the costs so students don't have to pay the full price.

For 2020-21, the average cost of tuition and fees at public, four-year colleges was $18,809 for out-of-state students but only $8,487 for in-state students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Because private schools rely on tuition for a larger portion of their funding, the cost of attendance is usually much higher. Currently, the average tuition price at private, four-year colleges is $30,065.

2. Program Offerings

When it comes to program offerings, private colleges — particularly liberal arts colleges — tend to offer fewer academic majors than public colleges. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, though. Students who know what they want to study can benefit from private colleges that offer a specialized focus in their field of interest.

Public colleges typically have a larger student body and therefore offer more degree programs. For example, Purdue University — a large, public school in Indiana — offers nearly every degree field you can think of, with more than 200 majors.

Students who are undecided going into college may prefer to attend a public university with a wider variety of majors and minors to choose from.

3. Research Opportunities

Another benefit of public universities' government funding is their ability to provide a large array of research facilities and labs.

UCLA, for example, contains hundreds of research institutes and labs across campus. Students who are serious about leveraging their school's resources to carry out academic research will often find the greatest opportunities at public schools.

By contrast, many private colleges have fewer student resources and research facilities. One exception to this is private research universities, such as Johns Hopkins University and Cornell University, which spend billions of dollars on research and development each year.

Though dozens of private research universities are similar in this regard, most smaller private colleges simply can't match public schools' research efforts.

4. Financial Aid

Both public and private colleges provide federal financial aid to students. Private institutions, however, often have more money available to award grants and scholarships due to their large endowment funds. In addition, they frequently offer more sizable tuition discounts than public schools.

According to the National Association of College and University Business Officers, private institutions extended a record average 48% tuition discount to undergraduates for the 2020-21 school year.

In short, while private colleges are often more expensive than public schools, financial aid packages and tuition discounts can sometimes make them more affordable than public schools.

#### They destroy limits – they allow antitrust to be applied to any quasi-public institution or non-profit, gutting ground as our arguments are premised on private action---that disproportionately expands neg research and destroys quality of debates

## Case

### 1NC – Case

#### The presumption that markets can be post-racial as a matter of inclusion is an attempt to efface history and rescue race from blackness, located as absent relationality or agency.

Dumas 13 (Michael J., Assistant Professor at the University of California, Berkeley in the Graduate School of Education and the African American Studies Department, “’Waiting for Superman’ to save black people: racial representation and the official antiracism of neoliberal school reform,” Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 34:4, 2013)

The rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s and 1990s shifted the relationship between governmentality and race; while in earlier periods, the state positioned itself as the leader in advancing antiracism, under neoliberal multiculturalism , it is neoliberal economic policies and ideological formations that are seen to resolve the problem of racism. The market, in this hegemonic frame, knows neither race nor racism, and is therefore regarded as best suited to facilitate racial equality. Neoliberal multiculturalism promises to usher in the post-racial period, by nurturing a new global citizenship centered around economic participation. ‘ In short ’ , Melamed contends, ‘neoliberal multiculturalism has portrayed an ethic of multiculturalism to be the spirit of neoliberalism ’ (p. 42). In doing so, neoliberal multiculturalism abandons any explicit mention of race. While liberal multiculturalism employed discourses of equity, diversity and freedom, ‘ now open societies and economic freedoms ... and consumerist diversity signify multicultural rights for individuals and for corporations ’ (p. 43; italics in original). Neoliberal multiculturalism is still attentive to racial difference and recognizes inequitable outcomes, but explains these differences as essentially not about race or (in) justice, but individual and group choices. As Melamed explains: Neoliberal-multicultural racialization has made this disparity appear fair by ascribing racialized privilege to neoliberalism ’ s beneficiaries and racialized stigma to its dispossessed. In particular, it has valued its beneficiaries as multicultural, reasonable, law-abiding, and good global citizens and devalued the dispossessed as monocultural, backward, weak, and irrational – unfit for global citizenship because they lack the proper neoliberal subjectivity. ( 2009 , p. 44) In contrast to black stigmatization under liberal multiculturalism, here the focus is on the distance between black subjects and the market. Through the neoliberal-multicultural lens, we can still feel sympathy to the extent that these subjects are perceived as being prevented from participating in the market. However, if they reject opportunities to participate in the market, no matter how rigged that system may be, then our sympathies can be justifiably withheld. Any argument that the economic sphere is already regulated by racial privilege will fall on deaf ears, as the market is already presumed to be multicultural and racially ethical (i.e. post -racial) on its face. I want to suggest that, even in a neoliberal-multicultural period, we can still identify elements of racial liberalism and liberal multiculturalism. History is never erased or transcended; dimensions of the previous periods are evident in our national-racial imagination and in the racial representations that inform and are informed by that imagination. Waiting for Superman as a cultural and political product Near the beginning of Waiting for Superman (Guggenheim, 2010 ), Harlem Children ’ s Zone founder and so-called education ‘ reformer ’ , Geoffrey Canada, recalls his childhood disappointment in learning that Superman is not real. ‘ Even in the depth of the ghetto ’ ,he explains to the off-camera interviewer, ‘ you thought, he ’ s coming. I just don ’ t know when, because he always shows up and he saves all the good people ’ . As he speaks, images of a young Canada fade to black, interspersed with images of George Reeves as the hero in tights in the 1950s TV series, Adventures of Superman : I asked my mom, do you think Superman is – she said, Superman is not real ... and I said, what do you mean, he ’ s not real? And she thought I was crying because it ’ s like, Santa Claus is not real, and I was crying because there was no one coming with enough power to save us. In inspiring the title of the controversial documentary, Canada presents an image of a poor urban black community without a sense of hope, innocent but helpless in the face of social, economic and spatial marginalization. A people in need of a savior, the young black boy reckons, would do well to appeal for help to the ultimate all-American (white) superhero. Here, his city neighborhood becomes constructed as an uninhabitable jungle (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007 ). Unlike in some rightist interpretations, the black residents of Canada ’ s ghetto are not to blame for their condition, but instead are victims of something unnamed, a tragic historical accident. Blameless, they earn our sympathies; however, they clearly do not have enough agencies to help themselves. Or as Canada suggests, poor African Americans are so far gone, their salvation may require someone with superhuman powers. The producers of Waiting for Superman use Canada ’ s childhood memory to frame the film ’ s heartbreaking, liberal racial narrative, in which racial inequities are bemoaned without any acknowledgment of racism, (good) people of color eschew collectivist racial politics, and black subjects in particular are quick to point out their own personal moral and emotional failures as the cause of their own low educational aspirations and attainment. Waiting for Superman is significant as a cultural and political product, because it has been largely embraced by corporate education reformers like wealthy philanthropists Bill Gates and Eli Broad, and because of its harsh critique of teacher unions and uncritical praise for private educational-entrepreneurial ventures like KIPP and Teach for America. Although the film generated a massive critical response from academics and progressive education advocates (see, for example, http://www.notwaitingforsuperman.org ), it enjoyed a generally sympathetic and often enthusiastic response everywhere else, from glowing newspaper and magazine stories, to favorable coverage by influential media personalities like Oprah Winfrey and Katie Couric. Waiting for Superman is also important, because it is perhaps the most influential popular-discursive effort to advance a new managerialism in education reform. Manage- rialism, as Michael Apple ( 2006 ) explains is led by an emerging group of middle-class professionals committed to using business models of profit, competition and efficiency to ‘ reform ’ education (and other public institutions and functions). This entails privatizing some schools, and financially and politically undermining remaining public institutions, which are then forced to compete with these marketized schools. Ultimately, then, the argument can be made that private entities can more effectively deliver services that have previously been understood as public, as part of our collective responsibility for the public good. Managerialism is ‘ an ideal project ’ , Apple contends, ‘ merging the language of empowerment, rational choice, efficient organization, and new roles for managers all at the same time ’ (p. 25). Waiting for Superman is, in effect, a managerialist manifesto for education in the United States. What we learn in examining racial representations in the film is exactly how mangerialism aims to win for the rightist project a certain innocence vis à vis racism, and more, a sense that racial progress depends on adopting conservative ideology and reform policies. The story arc of Waiting for Superman , its primary suspense, centers on a competitive public lottery system in which children and their families vie for a severely limited number of student spots in highly-regarded charter schools. It is The Hunger Games in reverse; here, those not selected are presumed to be the unfortunate ones, condemned to suffering and abuse, while the masses watch. And like that blockbuster motion picture, Waiting for Superman is a cultural product, not simply a documentation of truth, or policy, or everyday life. The filmmakers construct a dramatic plot, with messages embedded in the images and also made explicit in the text. We meet the families, hear them share their struggles and dreams, and explain what they believe accounts for their own educational and/or social marginality. The filmmakers intend to evoke enough sympathy that as the film comes to its dramatic final scenes, we are emotionally invested in the outcome, anxious to discover if the students will be offered admission, as the number of still available seats becomes smaller and smaller. In most cases, the families experience crushing disappointment, which allows opportunities for wrenching close-ups of terrified eyes, tear-stained cheeks, and hands still clenching strips of paper with losing numbers. To a great degree, the filmmakers need, perhaps the audience too needs, or at least desires, to see suffering. Not only does it help the filmmakers make their argument about the state of public education, but it is also better theater, more compelling entertainment. Ultimately, our own humanity is affirmed, because we care so much about these strangers on the screen. In one particularly moving scene, we see a Latina mother, Maria, touring a Harlem charter school where she hopes her first-grade son, Francisco, will win a spot, to escape his low-resourced school in the South Bronx. Maria is clearly impressed with the resources of the charter school, and looks longingly at the warm, inviting classrooms. ‘ I don ’ t care if we have to wake up at 5 o ’ clock in the morning in order to get there at 7:45 ’ , she says, almost plaintively. ‘ That ’ s what we will do ’ . But, as the New York Times later reported (Otterman, 2010 ), when this scene was filmed, Maria already knew that Francisco would not get to attend this school. The scene was staged after the lottery, in order to ‘ see her reaction to the school, and her genuine emotion ’ , according to director Davis Guggenheim. For him, the scene was ‘ real ’ because the pain and longing in her eyes revealed her excitement about the possibility of having her son attend the charter school, although it might also be argued that they exploited her pain for their own purposes. It is certainly not uncommon for documentary filmmakers to re-enact and re-order scenes; my point here is to underscore that Waiting for Superman is produced , and produced in ways which evoke not only specific emotions, but produce and reproduce certain cultural discourses and ideological formations. As a racial cultural product, the film provides images of racialized bodies and differences that seem natural largely because they draw upon the familiar or the popular, that which we already accept about race, and more specifically here, blackness. As Herman Gray ( 2005 ) explains, ‘ the movement of black images and representation is never free of cultural and social traces of the condition of their production, circulation, and use ’ (p. 21). Hence, what I want to highlight in my analysis of the film is the ways in which black social actors take their (expected) place within the broader ideological conditions of official antiracisms – speaking, gazing and even moving on screen in support of that grander narrative. As I have hinted, if not said explicitly thus far, neoliberal multiculturalism, in conjunction with managerialism, brings an inherent effort to move beyond the black- white racial paradigm. This is more than an acknowledgment of a fuller plane of racial diversity, but an ideological position in which ‘ black ’ is understood as anachronistic, passé and a threat to national progress. Jared Sexton ( 2008 ) is worth quoting at length: Modernizing the nation – at least the segment of the nation with the potential to be ‘ more than black ’ or simply to move ‘ beyond black ’– and liberating it from the deadening weight of the past requires that the signature of its persistence ... be effaced. In this light, multiracialism can be read ... as an element of the ascendant ideology of colorblindness, but it is not thereby identical to it. Its target is not race per se, since multiracialism is still very much a politics of racial identity ... but rather the categorical sprawl of blackness in particular and the insatiable political demand it presents to a nominally postemancipation society. ( 2008 ,p.6) Neoliberal multiculturalism, or what Sexton calls multiracialism, seeks to rescue racial identity from blackness, which is seen as largely responsible for giving race its offensive and oppositional signification. The neoliberal-multicultural cultural product, then, finds effective ways to situate blackness and black bodies as absent of rationality or agency, and black racial politics an ineffective explanation of, or solution to persistent racial inequity. I am not suggesting that there is a direct line between racial representation and racial intent. That is, my aim is not to provide evidence that the film is racist, or that the filmmakers were motivated by racism. Rather, my argument is that the film was produced, and enters a field of already existing cultural productions, in which race and blackness have already been and continue to be imagined discursively, and in which black bodies are situated materially, disproportionately among the poorest and least regarded. What becomes important and potentially destructive about Waiting for Superman is the extent to which its representations reproduce and reify antiblack imaginations, ideologies and sentiments, even as the filmmakers claim to have offered a cultural product – an officially antiracist cultural product – that advocates for poor black people and other marginalized racial groups.

#### Legal focus 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---this is both a question of the consequences of the plan and their speech act

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

#### Promoting the democratization of the university exists as the building block of antiblack violence, furthering societal fascism and authoritarian control over black and indigenous bodies---

Samudzi and Anderson, 18—Black feminist writer and doctoral student in Medical Sociology at the University of California, San Francisco AND freelance writer published by the Guardian, Truthout, MTV and Pitchfork, among others (Zoé and William, “Black in Anarchy,” *As Black as Resistance: Finding the Conditions for Liberation*, Chapter 1, 104-251, kindle, dml)

The United States has experienced cycles of tyranny since its inception. For some, the United States represents only this experience. A disillusioned liberal establishment has begun to worry that this country might be losing its democracy. However, the democracy some fear to lose was never achieved for many of us in the first place. The ability to participate in U.S. society has been an ongoing struggle for the descendants of the colonized, enslaved, immigrants, and asylum seekers. The U.S. empire has caused trauma endlessly from the first moment it existed. Frederick Douglass asserted:

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants brass fronted impudence; your shout of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.[1]

We must we expand the scope of Douglass’s question beyond celebrations of national independence. We who rightly take issue with the national project must also ask: Is the American Revolution the singular, purposefully romanticized tale of wealthy landowners refusing taxation and splitting from the British crown? Or is there another potential American revolution that has yet to occur?

It is deeply ironic that we are taught the glories of the U.S. birth through revolutionary resistance to the British empire but told today we must not resist, must not be revolutionary, and need to resolve differences through “reasoned dialogue” and civic engagement. Equating a revolt to escape unfair monarchical taxes to real revolution is a perversion of the concept of “revolution” itself. How revolutionary were men who saw no problems with enslavement and citizenship based on white manhood and land ownership? This “revolution” served white supremacist patriotism and the suppression of dissent. Revolt is at the foundation of the United States, yet now patience and cooperation are presented as the only acceptable ways to address inequity. The very ideals at the foundation of the state are denounced while the state itself monopolizes the right to “legitimate” revolutionary change (just as it monopolizes the right to “legitimate” uses of force and self-defense). After all, the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence reads:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness” [our emphasis].

Black people entered this settler colony through transatlantic kidnapping, chattel trade (being bought and sold as property), and forced servitude. Indigenous genocide and land expropriation (and enclosure) are intrinsic to American settlement.[2] And the use of Black labor was responsible for settler agricultural expansion and the growth of the southern agrarian economy. Once successfully cleared and claimed by white settlers, “[Native] land would be mixed with Black labor to produce cotton, the white gold of the Deep South.”[3] It is through the institution of slavery that Black people entered the American social contract. Slavery—forced servitude—was imposed upon Black people throughout the United States, and blackness thus became a marker of that enslavement that would continue even after slavery’s demise. Race in the United States evolved not only as a social identity, but also as a property relation, which was codified in the American legal system and within the social contract itself.[4] Inherent to liberal social contract values is the simultaneous maintenance of white supremacy’s capital interests, signified by anti-Indigenous and anti-Black exclusions,[5] and the purported values of equality: liberalism pays lip service to egalitarianism while complementing and structurally lending itself to fascistic logics and political encroachments.[6] “Societal fascism” describes the process and political logics of state formation wherein entire populations are excluded or ejected from the social contract. They are pre-contractually excluded because they have never been a part of a given social contract and never will be, or they are ejected from a contract they were previously a part of and are only able to enjoy conditional inclusion at best. This differs from the political fascism represented, for example, by the regimes of Benito Mussolini, Francisco Franco, Adolf Hitler, and others. It nevertheless lends itself to the formation of a political system easily susceptible to authoritarianism because it is grounded in inequity and inequality, and marked by political mechanisms and a popular consensus that allow rights and liberties to legally be taken away in the event that individuals and communities are ejected from the social contract.[7]

Black Americans are residents of a settler colony, not truly citizens of the United States. Despite a constitution laden with European Enlightenment values and a document of independence declaring certain inalienable rights, Black existence was legally that of private property until postbellum emancipation. The Black American condition today is an evolved condition directly connected to this history of slavery,[8] and that will continue to be the case as long as the United States remains as an ongoing settler project. Nothing short of a complete dismantling of the American state as it presently exists can or will disrupt this.

As Hortense Spillers makes explicit in her influential work, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Story,” blackness was indelibly marked and transformed through the transatlantic slave trade. European colonialism and the process of African enslavement—both as a profit-maximizing economic institution and a dehumanizing institution—can be regarded as “high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and males registered the wounding.”[9] Crimes against the flesh are not simply crimes against the corporeal self: the wounded flesh, rather, was the personhood and social position of the African. The wounding is the process of blackening through subjugation, a wound from which Black people and blackness writ large have yet to recover. Recovery, a positive reassertion of identity, is impossible. We are Black because we are oppressed by the state; we are oppressed by the state because we are Black.[10] Black existence within the social contract is existence within a heavily regulated state, a state in which our emancipation from enslavement was not a singular event or a moment of true actualization of freedom but rather a state-sanctioned transition from forced servitude to anti-Black subjection and exclusion.[11] We are carriers of the coveted blue passport still trapped in a zone of [citizen] nonbeing, a zone where we are not fully disappeared and eliminated but where we are still denied the opportunity and ability to self-determine: a state of precarity that only allows for the conditional survival of particular bodies in particular ways.[12] Frantz Fanon writes:

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers’ town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler’s feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you’re never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler’s town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs.... This world divided into compartments, this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species. [our emphases][13]

Within this zone, blackness is constantly under surveillance. This is not simply an allusion to the state’s literal surveillance projects (like COINTELPRO, the covert FBI program that destroyed so many mid-twentieth-century Black radical efforts).[14] We refer rather to settler colonial arrangements in anti-blackness and anti-indigeneity that co-create the framework for state racial formations.[15] The mechanisms comprising anti-Black surveillance were foundational to post-9/11 “War on Terror” securitization of Muslim, immigrant, and refugee communities across the United States. These suspensions of rights and civil liberties in favor of order are not new. They are rather being explicitly applied to another racialized group both domestically and in U.S. foreign policy. Where Islamism constitutes the enemy abroad, blackness is the perpetual enemy at home. Islamophobic and anti-Black logics become complementary (and also inextricably linked where the first Muslims in the United States were enslaved West Africans). What is citizenship within a social contract where our Sixth Amendment right to a fair trial can be suspended in the event of our completely legal (but extrajudicial) murder by police? Black liberation poses an existential threat to white supremacy because the existence of free Black people necessitates a complete transformation and destruction of this settler state. The United States cannot exist without Black subjection, and, in this way, articulated racial formations revolve in large part around anti-Black regulations. It is impossible to reform the system of racial capitalism. Those who believe in and operate according to the laws of white supremacy are not solely white people, though beneficiaries are largely and most visibly white. The supporters of this system include an internally oppressed multiracial coalition.

There are many politicians and state operatives of color, Black and otherwise, working for white supremacy. Diversity in the seats of power will not solve our problems. Simply because someone shares race, gender, or another aspect of identity does not guarantee loyalty or that they will act in the best interests of Black communities. We adopt a self-sacrificial politic in expressing openness or friendliness to the state because some of its functionaries look like us. U.S. political systems were not designed to meet our needs, and sweetening our concerns with rhetorics of “diversity” and “inclusion” will merely enable nominal representation (or a mitigation of material harms in some cases) as opposed to liberation in any real sense.

#### Their vision of critical public education achieves nothing.

Tarlau, 14—Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, Center for Latin American Studies and a Visiting Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Societal Change at Soka University of America (Rebecca, “From a Language to a Theory of Resistance: Critical Pedagogy, the Limits of “Framing,” and Social Change”, Educational Theory Volume 64, Issue 4, pages 369–392, August 2014, dml)

Nonetheless, while the hope is that critical pedagogy will offer teachers tools to help build a more equal society, scholars of critical pedagogy often fail to make the connection between radical educational practices and concrete examples of social change. The majority of critical pedagogy scholarship focuses on why public schools reproduce the same economic, social, and racial hierarchies.19 Giroux is perhaps the best known for his theories of resistance and education; however, Giroux discusses resistance primarily through an analysis of critical theory. This approach often fails to go from a “language of resistance” to a concrete analysis of the ways in which people using alternative educational practices form larger movements for change. Michael Apple notes this disconnect in the critical pedagogy literature, calling for more “substantive large-scale discussion of feasible alternatives to neoliberal and neoconservative visions, policies, and practices.”20

#### This is offense—justifying their vagueness with “try or die” actively reproduces the authoritarianism that they try to challenge.

Bowker, 17—Clinical Assistant Professor of Humanities at Medaille College (Matthew, “Review: Henry A. Giroux, America at War with Itself,” Logos, SPRING 2017: VOL 16, NOS. 1-2, dml)

In spite of the book’s usefulness in cataloging the challenges before us, however, what really seems “to connect” the tragedies Giroux describes and the “dark clouds” from whence they are distilled is that progressives are against them. While there are good reasons to be “against them,” the adversary Giroux sets up in his book is hydra-headed, invested with an almost demiurgic quality, and yet remains so vague as to inspire confusion. For instance, while Giroux is surely correct that the dangers we face are not “new,” they are most often attributed to that preferred whipping boy of contemporary progressives and academics: “neoliberalism.” The concept of “neoliberalism” has been used and abused to the point of meaninglessness, serving now primarily to unite Leftists under a common banner. Giroux, himself, holds “neoliberalism” responsible for plutocracy, militarization, racism, xenophobia, sexism, celebrity worship, entertainment-culture, the degradation of public education, the erasure of historical memory, the elimination of public spaces, the absence of solidarity among citizens, the privatization of time, and more.

And “neoliberalism” is not the only slippery signifier relied upon by Giroux. What is denounced as “fascism” on one page is decried as “authoritarianism” on another, “totalitarianism” on another, “demagoguery” on another, and “tyranny” on another. In Chapter 3, entitled, “The Menace of Authoritarianism,” there is even a subsection entitled, “The Menace of Totalitarianism.” Not only does this relationship of sub- and super-ordinacy seem counter-intuitive, but nowhere in the book can the reader find a description of (Giroux’s understanding of) the relationship between these important concepts. Later, Giroux argues that “totalitarianism throws together authoritarian and anti-democratic forms that represent a new moment in American history.” The claim that we are facing a “new” moment in history not only seems to contradict Giroux’s central thesis that current events are “not new,” but is exemplary of the confusion we face if we take seriously ideas like totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy. In calling attention to these discrepancies, it is not my intention to focus excessive attention on semantics, to be petty, or to trivialize the issues treated throughout the book. On the contrary, we learn something vital by attending to Giroux’s language.

While it is well beyond the scope of this brief review to offer definitions and distinctions between concepts such as fascism, authoritarianism, tyranny, and totalitarianism, they may be usefully distinguished by the relative importance of charismatic leadership, the influence of nativist or racist political dogma, the degree of state-intrusion into private lives of citizens, the relative influence (or lack thereof) of the rule of law, and several other identifiable (although not always quantifiable) variables. To use such terms interchangeably suggests that Giroux’s attempt to “connect” issues and problems may not be so much an intellectual endeavor as an emotional one. That is, the goal would seem to be to affirm the enemy, in all of its guises, to forge emotional identifications between readers and victims, and to form a sort of loosely-knit group defined by opposition to the overwhelming evil objects named and re-named throughout the book. Put simply, when terms and concepts like these are muddled in this way, they serve primarily to reassure us that we are in danger, that we are together, and that we are on the right side.

For instance, while it certainly holds rhetorical appeal, Giroux’s decision to call the Flint, Michigan water crisis an act of “state violence” and “domestic terrorism” seems intended to rouse us to anger more than to help us understand the (potentially interesting) connections between neoliberalism, the politics of austerity, racism, and terrorism. If we wish the idea of terrorism to be at all meaningful — and almost any reasonable definition involves terrorism’s symbolic nature: its emphasis not on the infliction of injury but on spectacular violence that engenders widespread fear and psychological distress — then naming the Flint crisis “terrorism” without further explanation teaches us little about the Flint crisis and terrorism. To say it another way, the “connection” Giroux strives to accomplish here is not a connection based on understanding but on outrage and anger. If both terrorism and poisoned water unite us in outrage in anger, then perhaps we need not think about whether it is reasonable to suggest they are the same. Or, if the goal of making this connection is, as I have suggested, an emotional one, then perhaps we would rather not think about it.

Giroux does not reflect on the irony that, in a book dedicated to resisting “the unthinkable,” antagonizing forces are made indecipherable and, to that degree, “unthinkable.” This unacknowledged internal tension, however, does not necessarily decrease the book’s value, at least not if we can read Giroux “against the grain,” as Terry Eagleton would say. Indeed, such a reading is illuminating, for it reveals that even a brilliant mind, like Giroux’s, engaged in a noble pursuit, such as formulating opposition to totalitarianism, may fall victim to patterns of thinking and emoting that are, themselves, totalizing. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is that the very title of the book, “America at War with Itself,” turns out to be nothing but a slogan, repeated eight or nine times, but not once examined or explored. It is difficult not to remark the irony in the book’s call to judgment when the reader is asked to reflect on “the banality of evil” and on the figure of Adolf Eichmann, whom Hannah Arendt famously condemned as a man who could think only in slogans.

In Part 4, which contains a single chapter, we find Giroux’s proposed solution to the overwhelming dangers we face. Giroux exhorts us to implement a “resurgent and insurrectional democracy,” although this concept is never defined. If we take “resurgency” and “insurrection” at face value, we are left to wonder whether blending these practices with democratic values would require the destruction of existing civil and political institutions, and even whether the combination of democracy, resurgency, and insurrection could uphold the basic tenets of democracy, such as political equality and the possibility of collective deliberation. But Giroux quickly returns to more familiar ground, the need for a “critical pedagogy,” a complex and controversial term popularized by Paolo Friere and Giroux, himself.

By “critical pedagogy,” Giroux means, among other things, the renewal of an “ethical imagination,” a concept that is puzzling but potentially rich. What is surprising is that the complex but possibly illuminating relationships between the imagination, criticality, and ethics are not explored here. Instead, the reader finds a description of a pedagogy that seems quite uncritical. For Giroux, pedagogy must be defined as “a moral and political exercise” in order to “‘refresh the idea of justice going dead in us all the time,’” as the poet Robert Hass would have it. Learning to be a “skilled citizen,” according to this pedagogy, means adhering to a particular set of moral and political values, which include pluralistic democracy, socio-economic egalitarianism, non-violence, and the importance of “service to a greater collective good.” And while many of us would likely applaud these ideals, the imposition of specific moral values upon any pedagogy should prompt serious questions about what we mean by terms like “critical,” “ethical,” and “imagination.”

If a “critical” pedagogy means that students are instructed to identify with the oppressed, to hate oppressors, and to dedicate themselves to particular forms of moral and political activity identified as “good” by their instructors, then it replicates, at the most fundamental level, the dynamics of totalitarian education. Even the notion that a pedagogy should “provide the conditions for students to be engaged individuals and social agents,” predetermines the meaning of “the good” as social “engagement” and “agency,” seemingly neglecting other ethical and democratic values, such as autonomy, solitude, and resistance to the imposition of any (group) identity.

Related to the democratic and pedagogical renewal Giroux proposes is a long list of needed intellectual, cultural, and global “changes” which, while laudable, lack definition and explanation. In addition to the renewal of “public spaces,” Giroux implores us to create “a new language,” a “new discourse,” new “global alliances,” a “new form of politics,” a “new political conversation,” and “new forms of agency.” We “need to invent a new system from the ashes of one that is terminally broken,” we need an entire “rethinking [of] the space of the political,” and we need always to “connect issues,” for “there has never been a more pressing time to rethink the meaning of politics, justice, struggle, collective action, and the development of new political parties and social movements.” So, faced with the specter of “the unthinkable,” urged on by indistinct and overwhelming “dark” forces with too many names to count, we must embrace the hope that an all-encompassing personal and political renewal can be accomplished by enforcing a progressive pedagogy focused on emotional identification with oppression, victimization, and injustice. Here, the language of resistance becomes difficult to differentiate from the language of totalitarianism.

1. This can be found on Hebru Brantley’s website, under the section ‘About’. Web. May 21st, 2019. <https://www.hebrubrantley.com/about>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)