## Anti-Blackness Ups

### Links: Anti-Cap Mvmts

#### Anti-Cap movements adopt Enlightenment universalism, reinforcing universal Whiteness

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IMPERIAL DEMOCRACY What ultimately undermines the Enlightenment is the claim to the universal when its theories are based on the particular. Whiteness is at the heart of Enlightenment thinking and this is no different in the supposedly radical new approaches. All are fundamentally incapable of even naming the racism that is the basis of the global political and economic system, let alone able to offer any actual solutions. We can see this in the distorted Enlightenment progress narratives that underpin the new utopias, but also in the genesis and creation myths of the social movements that have informed the theory. The sparks that lit many of the new social movements were the financial crisis in 2008, the election of Trump and the vote for Brexit, which created, in Bregman’s words, ‘more and more people hungry for a real radical antidote to both xenophobia and inequality... for a new source of hope’.40 Ground zero in this narrative is the birth of neoliberalism, ushered in by Thatcherism and Reaganomics in the eighties. Dismantling the social democratic settlement unleashed the forces of capital and sowed the seeds for the economic crash in 2008. The unemployment, insecurity and austerity that followed led to the inevitable rise of the new right as people looked for causes of their poverty. It also exposed the inherent contradictions of capital and stoked the embers of protest by revealing their oppression to the oppressed. One of the first and most high-profile responses to this crisis was the Occupy movement, which swept the globe. On 17 September 2011, protestors occupied Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan near the financial district in order to protest at the cause of the financial crisis. The movement grew rapidly, spreading to a thousand cities and racking up 6,500 arrests within its first six months.41 The occupation was prompted by the Canadian anti-capitalist magazine *Adbusters* which ‘issued a call to action for a “revolution,” a “people’s revolt in the West”’ in response to the crisis of capitalism.42 Occupy took inspiration from previous movements like the Indignados in Spain, who had occupied public space in response to rising unemployment, austerity and other structural adjustments enforced by external financial institutions.43 The Arab Spring, highlighted by the occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt in 2011, had a large influence on Occupy as the images of mass occupation of a public space took hold in the imagination. Thousands occupied Zuccotti Park for almost two months, until police raided and shut down the protest on 15 November. Occupy’s reach was such that President Obama gave the movement his approval in his 2012 re-election campaign. By focusing on the economic crisis Occupy changed the political language and ‘income inequality’ became the ‘crisis du jour’, something that all the 2016 presidential candidates at least had to address.44 The power of the economic message was its simplicity. The Occupiers declared that they were the 99 per cent standing up to the evil 1 per cent who hoarded the wealth. The only problem is that this idea is a delusional fantasy and a continuation of the universalizing of the White particular that we have seen from both left and right. Global inequality is so stark that those on the poverty line in the United States are still in the top 14 per cent of earners worldwide. The average US salary puts you in the top 4 per cent of earners. There is simply no comparison between the conditions facing the poorest in the world and those who are at the bottom in the United States, or in the rest of the West. Only by focusing on a national analysis could the ‘99 per cent’ rhetoric make any sense. By looking at its demands, or at least its articulation of the problem, it is abundantly clear that Occupy was focused on those in the West, not the victims of it. The Declaration of the Occupation of New York City, collectively produced by Occupiers, is a laundry list of national demands around healthcare, jobs and student debt. The most telling line is the complaint that the 1 per cent ‘have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers’ healthcare and pay’.45 No prizes for guessing which ‘workers’ they are referring to here. Presumably, bringing back those jobs and further impoverishing the underdeveloped world would be acceptable as long as the true ‘workers’ had access to unskilled and well-paid work. The declaration does include a line condemning the elite because ‘they have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.’ But this is so vague and contradictory to the rest of the declaration that it makes a mockery of their plea for the ‘people of the world’ to join the struggle. In the same vein as the Enlightenment thinkers, the centre of Occupy’s world was the West because it contained the fully formed workers, the movers of history. Even within the West the movement faced criticism for its tendency to ‘exclude minority voices’46 and faced serious issues of misogyny.47 There were also marked class differences, with the people who could afford to sleep in Zuccotti Park in protest brushing up against those who had already made it their home because of poverty. The classed differences also spread into tactics. Occupy Seattle angered working-class dock workers by closing down the port in protest against commercialism; their principled stance meant the people they were supposed to be fighting for, the ‘workers’, lost valuable income. Occupy prided itself on democratic decision-making but it was ‘limited by failures to build alliances beyond those implicit inside its inner community’.48 Democracy matters very little if your electorate is highly exclusive, a lesson that the left needs desperately to learn. It might be tempting to see Occupy as ‘a global movement (inspired by the Arab Spring)’, but the reality is that it was in a long tradition of Western social movements which broke out in the United States and spread into Europe and the rest of the world.49 In claiming to represent the 99 per cent, Occupy, perhaps unwittingly, followed in the path of Enlightenment universalism, speaking for the entire world through the very narrow lens of Western privilege.

#### Revolutionary democratic reform sustain racial exploitation and imperial narcissism – Occupy proves

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In many ways Occupy was ‘the idealist moment, the performance rather than permanence’.55 In Zuccotti Park, or in their hundreds of other locations around the world, they were performing the ideal. Occupy was performance art, a grand piece of ‘utopian theatre’ dramatizing the other world that is otherwise out of reach.56 Here we see the White left at its most stomach-churning. Reading through some of the misty-eyed reflections on the movement, they have the feeling of romantic holiday diaries. Nothing may have changed and the movement may have collapsed but no fear, we will always have Zuccotti Park. Occupy’s horizontal organization involved both a deep narcissism–with slogans such as ‘we are our demands’–and a way of building community that relied on ‘people forming loose connections quickly’ which fit perfectly into current times.57 It was the swipe-right of social movements, with no deep ideological commitments, loose connections, and the ability to find some fun elsewhere without feeling guilty. Performance over permanence is only an option to those in the land of plenty who have jobs or at least a welfare state to fall back on. What made Tahrir Square a completely different sort of movement was that the protestors had a clear demand, which was life or death, and they refused to move until it was met. We can debate how much difference came about when the military took over from President Mubarak in Egypt but not the organic commitment of the people to their struggle, nor that they risked their lives for their cause. The stakes in the West are of a different nature and therefore so are the politics. Democracy as a principle runs through the new left agenda. In Britain the new left is pushing for a more inclusive economy, similar to the demands of Occupy. Neoliberalism is diagnosed as the source of the ills of society, with the rich taking too much of the economic pie. We are promised that by a ‘democratic revolution’ we can transform the institutions of governance and society at large.58 Not only is this struggle about income but it is also about reducing the social distance between people in society so that ‘everyone can share a common life as citizens’.59 The Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn embraced these ideals when he was unexpectedly voted leader in 2015. Prior to this, Labour had been in a period of mimicking Conservative policy on the economy, fully embracing neoliberalism with the idea that the spoils could be shared across society. After Labour’s surprising success (but not victory) in the general election of 2017, Corbyn launched what he called Labour’s ‘radical and ambitious’ manifesto for the 2019 election, promising to transform both society and the economy.60 Labour’s plans mirrored much of the New Economic Foundation’s recommendations for policy reform (the NEF is a key think-tank for the new left). The NEF hits all the key notes with the goal to build a society where all people are ‘paid well, have more time off to spend with their families, have access to affordable housing, know there is a decent safety net if they need one, and are provided with a high level of care throughout their lives’.61 In order to do this they propose a four-day week, a living wage, boosting trade union membership and fashioning a ‘well-being state’ where targets are not simply economic but relate to the mental and physical health of the nation. They stopped short of a universal basic income, instead suggesting a far more modest national allowance of £50 a week that counts when calculating benefit entitlements. But they are in favour of universal basic services, nationalizing key industries and providing free childcare to support families. The Green New Deal is of course embraced as a motor for both saving the world and job creation. They are also keen on ‘people’s participation in decision making’ in both policy- making and business.62 One of the NEF’s and Labour’s main focuses is on establishing workers’ cooperatives as a model for sharing wealth. Preston, a small city in the north of England, has an outsize importance in the new economy, since it has become a model for local-government led cooperatives. The council’s decision to source more locally and create cooperatives in the city has both boosted income and dispersed that extra money somewhat more fairly. Other large local employers like the university have followed suit by engaging with local suppliers, and the city is improving. But we should be wary of celebrating a radical new dawn.63 For a start it is nothing new, with democratic reforms being part of the left-wing imagination for ‘at least a century’. Labour governments and councils attempted such projects before neoliberalism took over in the Thatcher era.64 John McDonnell, the architect of Corbyn’s economic policy, served his political apprenticeship in the eighties under Tony Benn, who developed a series of cooperative projects. The major flaw with these concepts of participation is who is included and who remains firmly on the outside. For all the talk of participation there is scant regard for the fact that those in the underdeveloped world are equally stakeholders in the economic life of the West. One of the cooperatives so praised in Preston is a coffee shop, and while we celebrate the benefits to the worker in Britain, the shop’s success is only possible because of the racial exploitation of the poor people farming the coffee beans it uses for next to nothing (it may be a surprise, but coffee does not grow in the north of England). This is Cadbury World all over again but on a societal scale. The wealth the left wants to share with those in their nations is derived in large part from global, racial exploitation. What the new left are offering is just a modified version of social democracy. A return to the days of high taxes, social housing, reduced inequality and the guarantee of a decent wage... but only in the West. In reality it is not a social but an imperial democracy they are yearning for.

### Root Cause: China Imperialism

#### Anti-black narratives underly Chinese imperialism in Africa – mirrors western imperialism

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In 2018 US president Donald Trump launched a trade war against China, railing against the ‘billions of dollars’ lost to the country each year in unbalanced trading on his favourite medium, Twitter. In a particularly alarming social media rant, even for Trump, on 23 August 2019 he declared that The vast amounts of money made and stolen by China from the United States, year after year, for decades, will and must STOP. Our great American companies are hereby ordered to immediately start looking for an alternative to China, including bringing your companies HOME and making your products in the USA. Trying to reassert American economic protectionism is one thing, but believing that he had the power to order private corporations around displayed a spectacular misunderstanding of both global capital and his own role. Trump’s concern over China was the substantial trade deficit between the two countries. In 2018 the United States exported $120 billion worth of goods but *imported* over $539 billion worth, making an almost $420 billion loss in terms of trade.1 To counter this, the substance of Trump’s trade war was to increase tariffs on Chinese imports so that companies are disincentivized from doing business in the country. China retaliated, imposing its own tariffs on American imports, with both countries using their actions as leverage for a new trade agreement. Trump’s trade war was sparked by wider fears that globalization is disadvantaging the West, and in particular working-class communities that have seen their jobs disappear overseas. The reason for the trade imbalance is that China is now the workshop of the world, leading the way in manufacturing goods for sale in the West including the United States. Nations across the West have experienced the kind of de-industrialization that has seen factories relocate to the underdeveloped world and large swathes of people lose their jobs. Trump was elected in large part because he won in the American ‘rust belt’, Midwestern states whose populations lost out when manufacturing moved overseas. The trade war was a key part of his ‘Make America Great Again’ appeal, taking on foreign nations who are attacking United States power, and reasserting economic nationalism. In this version of the new world order the real victims of the new age are the White formerly working class, left behind by a global system that now privileges foreign nations. It is undeniable that the post-war settlement has led to some interesting, and likely unintended, consequences in the operation of Western imperialism. Manufacturing was previously the domain of the West. Producing the goods to sell into newly found markets around the world was one of the main goals of empire. India’s textile industry was purposely destroyed so that Britain could lead the way in manufacturing. This situation has now been completely reversed. Along with China, India is one of the fastest growing economies and there is a real sense that centres of power are shifting to the underdeveloped world. China is now seen as the main threat to the West and there are projections that it will eventually become the largest economy in the world. It has positive trade deficits with every major nation and trillions of dollars in foreign exchange reserves.2 The new economic and political order created after the Second World War has paved the way for the rise of China and other underdeveloped nations. But if we imagine that the development of non-Western, non-White countries proves that the racial logic of empire has changed in any substantive way we are sorely mistaken. China’s rise is instructive, considering its predicted global dominance has been due to the logic of Western imperialism, not in spite of it. After the declaration of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the nation was a key part of the Communist challenge to the capitalist status quo. China’s support was central to the defeat of United States forces in Korea and Vietnam, and China also backed several African liberation struggles that threatened Western dominance on that continent.3 But the China that has emerged today is not the revolutionary Communist state that sought to reshape the economic order. In truth, it is quite the opposite. To achieve its current status China had to realize that the ‘Western order is hard to overturn and easy to join’.4 China’s economic rise only began after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the subsequent repudiation of his policies. At that point China was an extremely poor country which had undergone one of the worst famines in human history a decade earlier. From 1978 the nation embraced capitalism, undergoing a series of market reforms, welcoming foreign direct investment and making exports the basis of its economy.5 This meant opening up China to the rest of the world and fully engaging with global finance, and it was an extremely successful approach: the nation pulled 600 million of its citizens out of extreme poverty between 1978 and 2010. China’s success could be mistaken as evidence that the new economic system is not inherently racist, if an underdeveloped country can make such strides. But, as always, we should not get ahead of ourselves. China’s emergence has been due to the very reason that Trump started his trade war: its domination of global manufacturing. ‘Made in China’ has become so commonplace it is almost a surprise when an item is produced elsewhere. But this occurred because the cost of labour in China is so low relative to the West. It is the same problem I discussed in relation to India’s economic miracle. While there is lots of wealth in China, and many newly minted billionaires, there is also an abundance of poverty. China may have the second largest economy in the world, but the important measure is GDP per capita: the amount of wealth produced per person. By this measure China is 65th, demonstrating that many people are not feeling the benefits of the growing economy. China is extremely unequal and government statistics class anyone earning $295 a month as middle- income, despite the complaints from those living on that amount that they cannot make ends meet.6 Because China’s position depends on being the world’s primary exporter, mass poverty is necessary in order to sustain its economic growth. Just like India, if the standard of living rises so too do the wages and manufacturing costs. Soon enough China would find itself in the same position as the West, offshoring its factory labour to a poorer country. What Trump has seriously misunderstood in his trade war is that even if increased costs through tariffs on Chinese goods incentivized manufacturers to move, they would simply relocate to a different Black or Brown country with inhumanly low labour costs. There is only one source in the West that can compete with the wages in the underdeveloped world and that is prison labour, which no doubt explains why Trump is a supporter of increased privatization of the sector. In order to establish itself China has relied on hundreds of millions of its own citizens living in conditions and taking wages that would be unacceptable in the West. It’s one of the key principles of Western imperialism: Black and Brown life is worth less and it is therefore legitimate to exploit it. But it is not only in exploiting its own citizens that China has embraced the logic of empire. White supremacy is based on a hierarchy from White down to Black, with anti- Blackness a specific feature of the system. In order to establish a secure footing, or to move up the ladder of supremacy, there is a long history of other racialized groups using Black populations as a stepping stone. China is no different, as an examination of the nation’s increasing role in Africa demonstrates.

#### Western imperialism inspired China’s exploitation of Africa --- capitalist drive for profit underlies resource extraction

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THE CHINESE SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA China’s links to Africa go back centuries, at least as far as the Han dynasty in 202 BC. (The idea that Europe initiated global trade and connectedness is one of the many fictions of Whitewashed intellectual history.) The Communist People’s Republic of China had strong ties to Africa and the liberation movements to end colonialism. In the global fight against capital, Mao was keen to support the armed struggle in places like Mozambique and Angola. China was a key player in the 1955 Afro-Asian Bandung Conference, which sought to create a united non-aligned front to combat the global power of both the West and the Soviet bloc. China’s credentials in Africa were well forged and included building a railway line connecting Zambia to Tanzania in the early 1970s. In return for its support, African nations backed UN recognition of revolutionary China and supported the nation’s rise to prominence on the world stage.7 China was influential in the Black radical imagination and was seen by many ‘as the land where true freedom might be had’.8 The Black Panther Party initially started fundraising by selling copies of Mao’s ‘Little Red Book’ to college students,9 and co-founder Huey P. Newton invoked Mao in his book *Revolutionary Suicide* when he argued that their revolutionary commitment was the Panthers’ ‘great leap forward’.10 Numerous Panthers visited China, including Elaine Brown who would become the party’s chairperson. Given China’s progressive history with Africa and Black politics, its increasing influence on the African continent has been welcomed by many. Indeed, China plays off its historical relationship, painting itself as an underdeveloped country aiming for a mutually beneficial relationship with a friend in need. Although China’s links to Africa are not new, its economic role in the continent has drastically changed since the start of the new millennium. From 2000 to 2012 trade between China and Africa grew twenty-fold to $200 billion.11 Between 2001 and 2010 China’s Export–Import Bank provided $67.2 billion in loans to so-called sub-Saharan African countries, $12.5 billion more than the World Bank.12 The West is wary of China’s rapid expansion in Africa due to the increased competition for resources in the region and also because Chinese money provides an alternative to the conditional loans enforcing the dreaded Washington consensus.13 China does not attach structural adjustment strings to its loans, preferring to stay out of matters of state and stick to finance. Chinese aid has empowered African countries to say no to the devilish pacts with the IMF and the World Bank. While the West has looted resources and meddled in political and economic systems, China has been busy building the roads, dams, buildings and railways that Africa so sorely needs. Not only that, but China has also invested in the manufacturing sector, to the tune of over $3 billion by the end of 2012.14 With its history of comradeship, its massive investment, and the fact it represents an alternative to the hated IMF and World Bank, it is easy to see why there is some optimism and a view that ‘the Chinese are our friends’ among many on the continent.15 But we must remember that the China that holds the revolutionary link to Africa is an historical artefact. Since China’s economic reforms, the country has embraced the same political and economic order that oppresses Africa, and in many ways has legitimized neo-colonialism by posing as a friend.16 To understand China’s neo-colonial role in Africa we need look no further than the reason for its increased involvement in the first place. After China embraced the capitalist global order, and its economy grew on the basis of production, it needed to find fresh sources of raw materials. You cannot make the goods for the world without their ingredients. China’s entry into Africa has been driven by the need to acquire resources such as oil and minerals to secure its place in the global economy. China’s expansion in Africa also occurred mostly after it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001 and it therefore operates firmly within the global economic consensus that is a major part of the continued underdevelopment of Africa. While Chinese money may not come with the requirement for structural adjustment, it is a lie to say there are no strings attached. For China finance is tied to natural resource extraction rather than political control. China’s interest rates are typically higher than those from Western financial institutions and it generally takes payment in the form of mining rights rather than cash. Therefore the vast majority of Chinese assistance goes to mineral-rich African countries. In places like Congo, Angola and Zambia, China is providing money to build infrastructure while stripping the natural resources of the countries. A classic example of this arrangement, in what was dubbed the ‘deal of the century’ when it was signed between China and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2007, is a $9 billion loan that meant China would commit to building roads, hospitals and other vital infrastructure projects in return for almost monopolistic control over the mining of cobalt and copper.17 It may sound like a good deal for Congo, but consider that the minerals in question are worth an estimated $87 billion and it is quickly apparent that China is extracting the materials from Congo for a fraction of what they are worth.18 The IMF were against the loan because they wanted to offer their own finance package with the usual conditions. But by avoiding the Western institutions the DRC has jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire. Across the African continent, countries are making the same deals with China, selling off their most valuable resources on the cheap to get at least some infrastructure built. It is not hard to see why, when Africa is in dire need of such spending, with estimates that it requires well over $22 billion spent annually to address its infrastructure problems.19 But these resources are precious to the future of Africa, which by rights should be the richest place on earth thanks to its abundance of natural wealth. By cashing in, the continent is destroying its future. Natural resources are finite and for Africa to prosper it should be maximizing the wealth produced from them to truly transform the continent. Green technology will become the next boom industry and Africa holds a bounty of the minerals necessary for the shift to sustainable energy. China, on the other hand, has only accelerated the exploitation of Africa’s resources. Worse still, the model used to build this infrastructure is of more benefit to China than Africa. When signing agreements such as the ‘deal of the century’ China insists that it provides the majority of the equipment and labour (usually 70 per cent).20 In effect the vast majority of the ‘aid’ that is given to a country is spent buying goods from China and paying Chinese companies and workers to rebuild Africa. China is basically providing a stimulus to its own economy, dressed up as foreign aid. Not only does the recipient country have to pay this loan back with interest but China also reaps massive profits from its preferential access to precious mineral resources. This model has all of the ‘*Alice in Wonderland* craziness’ about it that Kwame Nkrumah described in Western neo- colonialism.21 Even China’s support for infrastructure spending is not as benevolent as it can appear. European colonizers spent massive sums on roads, railways and the like because they were necessary to extract the wealth out of the continent. When the Chinese offer to build roads that connect an untapped mine to the sea, they are not doing so out of their wish to better the economic circumstances of Africa. China has also built forty-four sports stadiums in Africa, raising serious questions about the nature and utility of its infrastructure spending.22 These projects routinely end up as white elephants, something the rulers can use to show off but which have no long-term beneficial impact on the economy. It is abundantly clear that China’s involvement in infrastructure is not a break with the logic of Western empire. It may be a different model, but it is one that supports the principles and functioning of the current system. After all, the Chinese are extracting these resources to make products to be sold, in large part, to the West. China’s presence in Africa is also not always at odds with Western interests. There are a number of direct collaborations between Chinese and Western companies in Africa, who are after all in the region for the same reasons. The French company Total partnered with a Chinese oil company to extract oil from the Nigerian seabed,23 and Chinese companies also enrich themselves by bidding for contracts funded by Western agencies like the World Bank. Bamako International Airport in Mali underwent a $181 million upgrade between 2007 and 2012 funded by the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a US aid agency. Regardless of the fact that China and the United States may be in a struggle for global dominance, this United States government contract was carried out by Chinese workers.24 Migrant workers being imported into Africa to rebuild the continent has created a specific form of tension. It is estimated that there are now over 1 million Chinese people living in Africa, attracted to the continent by the opportunities there. It should be no surprise that the natives of the poorest continent in the world are wary. Chinese migrant workers enjoy better pay and working conditions. This marks a reversal of Chinese people being used as a cheap and discriminated-against labour force to build the original version of Western empire. China is now providing the frontier folk, seeking new opportunities. It is also not difficult to find attitudes reminiscent of the old European colonizers who went to Africa to make their fortunes. In journalist Howard French’s book *China’s Second Continent* he explains how commonplace colonial-era racism was with the Chinese migrants he spoke to across Africa. His discussion with Hao, a migrant to Mozambique, stands out. Hao had migrated with little, had not learned a local language, and yet managed to acquire 5,000 acres of land, much to the displeasure of the locals, and planned to grow cash crops to sell to Western countries. He explained his decision to try his luck in Mozambique as follows: Can you imagine if I had gone to America or to Germany first? The people in those fucking places are too smart. I wouldn’t have gotten anywhere. I don’t think I could have beaten them. So we had to find backward countries, poor countries that we can lead.25 Colonial-era attitudes could also be found among those delivering aid projects. Li Jinjun, head of the Central Agricultural Research Institute in Liberia, explained that the Chinese would only run the project for a limited time in order that the locals ‘learn to support themselves’. In classic civilizing mission language, the Institute was proud that ‘little by little... can change them in this way.’26 Of course, we cannot generalize these attitudes to the whole of the Chinese migrant population in Africa but we also should not be surprised if they are prevalent. They are only important insofar as they speak to the wider power dynamics of the Chinese neo-colonial relationship with Africa. Objections to Chinese migration are not solely down to their colonial attitudes or denying locals the opportunity to work on infrastructure projects, but tie into the other major area where China has continued the work of Western imperialism on the continent. As heralded as the increased trade between China and Africa has been, it represents the classic relationship between colonizer and colony. China’s imports from Africa are comprised of well over 90 per cent oil and other natural resources. At the same time, Africa’s imports from China are 90 per cent finished manufactured products. Africa exports its resources well below the value that they are worth to China, which manufactures goods and sells them back into Africa, collecting all the profit. As a result China is able to produce cheap goods and flood African markets at prices that local producers have no way of competing with. The result has been a de-industrialization of Africa as local manufacturers are forced out of business. In 2008 manufacturing made up 12.8 per cent of GDP in Africa, and just eight years later that figure had fallen to 10.5 per cent. Between 1980 and 2008 Africa’s share of global manufacturing was down from 1.2 per cent to 0.9 per cent.27 In Nigeria the impact of Chinese textile imports has been devastating to local manufacturing. In the 1980s there were 175 textile factories in the country, but within twenty-five years that number had declined to only twenty-five. Even though imported textiles are illegal they account for over 85 per cent of the market and are valued at $2.2 billion annually, versus only $40 million for locally produced products.28 The impact on jobs has been catastrophic, with the number of those working in Nigeria’s textile industry in 2015 declining to 20,000 from 600,000 in the 1990s.29 The result has been tension and even strikes in Senegal over the presence of the Chinese in local markets: they have become a feature as imports have flooded in. There is no doubt that the Chinese who are trading into Africa are profiting from the underdeveloped state of Africa and taking advantage of the situation created by Western imperialism. This kind of opportunism from those whose skin is not White is also nothing new for Africa. Lebanese traders were dominant as middlemen between the French and their African colonies and there was a similar relationship between South Asian communities in East Africa and the British. The only real difference with the Chinese is that they are not playing the role of middlemen to European colonizers; instead they represent one of the strongest emerging neo-colonial forces. China is certainly not a colonial power in the same way as Britain, France or any of the other European nations were. There is no invasion, violence and domination of political affairs. But, as we already know, that is not how the new age of empire works. Although the former colonial masters may have links and historical advantages in particular countries (particularly in relation to language), underdeveloped economies are open to exploitation from any nation or corporation that has the capital. There is no metropolis, no mother country, just a racialized political and economic system that allows for such exploitation.

### Progress Possible

#### Progress is visible when viewed through an unbiased lens.

Hughes 19 [Coleman Hughes; Colombia University graduate with a B.A. in Philosophy; 9-28-2019; "The Case for Black Optimism"; Quillete; https://quillette.com/2019/09/28/the-case-for-black-optimism/; Accessed 7-23-2022; SD]

When was the last time you heard good news about the state of black America? Given the way the topic is reported in the media, you could be forgiven for not remembering. Most will be familiar with the standard portrayal: black people are disproportionately poor, incarcerated, born into single-parent homes, and harassed by cops. There’s the test score gap, which places black kids at a disadvantage when applying to college; the school-to-prison pipeline, which prepares black boys for prison by punishing them disproportionately in school; and the racial wealth gap, which won’t close for several centuries if current trends continue. In an era when bipartisan agreement is scarce, the Left and the Right seem to be united in their somber assessment of black America, though they locate the blame in different places. Democrats tend to blame systemic racism and the legacy of white supremacy. Republicans, on the other hand, tend to blame Democrats. Recall President Trump’s infamous appeal for the black vote: “You’re living in poverty. Your schools are no good. You have no jobs,” he maintained, blaming the Clintons for these circumstances. “What the hell do you have to lose?” The narrative of doom and gloom, however, is misleading. Though it has gone largely unnoticed, black Americans have been making rapid progress along most important dimensions of well-being since the turn of the millennium. Let’s start with incarceration. Without doubt, there is plenty of reason to be pessimistic about the U.S. prison system. America incarcerates a larger proportion of its citizens than any nation on earth. Black Americans, at 13 percent of the U.S. population, made up one-third of the nation’s incarcerated population in 2017. To make matters worse, conditions inside many prisons are ill-suited for rehabilitation. Alabama’s state prisons, for instance, are so rife with violence and sexual assault that Trump’s Justice Department has charged them with violating the eighth amendment to the constitution, which bans “cruel and unusual punishments.” Nevertheless, there are reasons to be optimistic. From 2001 to 2017, the incarceration rate for black men declined by 34 percent. Even this statistic, however, understates progress by lumping black Americans of all ages together. When you look at age-specific incarceration outcomes, you find two opposing trends: Older black Americans are doing slightly worse than previous generations, but younger black Americans are doing better—so much better that they more than offset, in statistical terms, the backslide of their elders. To put the speed and size of the trend in perspective, between my first day of Kindergarten in 2001 and my first legal drink in 2017, the incarceration rate for black men aged 25–29, 20–24, and 18–19 declined, respectively, by 56 percent, 60 percent, and 72 percent. For young black women, the story is similar: a 59 percent drop for those aged 25–29, a 43 percent drop for those aged 20–24, and a 69 percent drop for those aged 18–19. As a result of the divergent generational trendlines, the black prison population is not only shrinking; it’s aging too. In 2017, nearly three in ten black male prisoners were 45 years of age or older, up from one in ten in 2001. That may not seem like good news, but it is. The incarceration trendline for young blacks in the recent past predicts the trendline for all blacks in the near future. So the fact that the post-2001 incarceration decline for blacks in general was entirely caused by the plunging incarceration rate for young blacks in particular suggests that, as generational turnover occurs, the black prison population will not only continue to shrink, but will shrink at an accelerating rate. To paraphrase the economist Rick Nevin, our prison system may be overflowing today, but the “pipeline” to prison is already starting to run dry. The great incarceration decline for black youth has been matched by a decline in teenage motherhood. Between 2001 and 2017, the birth rate for black women aged 15–19 declined by 63 percent. In fact, the black teenage birth rate in 2017 was lower than the white teenage rate as recently as 2002. Nor has progress been confined to the younger generation. Between 1999 and 2015, the mortality rate for black Americans aged 65 and over shrank by 29 percent for cancer, 31 percent for diabetes, and 43 percent for heart disease. What’s more, all of those percentage drops were larger than the drops experienced by comparable whites over the same period. As deaths from disease have plummeted, black lives have extended. In 2017, black female life expectancy was 78.5 years, up from 75.1 years in 2000. Life expectancy for black men increased from 68.2 to 71.9 years over the same timespan. Not only are black Americans healthier and longer-lived than they were two decades ago, they’re also more educated. Between the 1999–2000 and 2016–2017 school years, the number of black students who earned bachelor’s degrees increased by 82 percent, from 108,018 to 196,300. Over the same period, the number of associate’s and master’s degrees awarded to black students more than doubled, rising from 60,208 to 129,874, and 36,606 to 89,577, respectively (population growth accounts for some, but not all or even most, of this growth). 2018 census data showed that 37 percent of black Americans aged 25–34 had some kind of college degree. If black America were its own country, that would place it in between Germany (31 percent) and Spain (43 percent) in terms of educational attainment. What’s more, the economist Raj Chetty has found that black women, though less likely to attend college than white women, are now more likely to attend college than white men from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Along with more education has come more upward mobility. The Federal Reserve recently reported that over 60 percent of blacks at every level of educational attainment say they’re doing better financially than their parents—a higher percentage than either whites or Hispanics. And although black men still lag behind white men in terms of upward mobility, Chetty has found that black women now go on to earn slightly higher incomes than white women from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. All told, there is more than enough data with which to tell an optimistic story about the recent history of black America. However, the same data that justify this optimism can appear to justify pessimism if you look at it differently. Recall, for instance, the 72 percent drop in the incarceration rate for black men aged 18–19 from 2001 to 2017. Framed as such, it looks like progress. But here’s the same data framed differently: In 2001, black men aged 18–19 were nine times more likely to be behind bars than comparable white men. By 2017, they were twelve times more likely to be behind bars. Framed as such, it looks like regress. This particular framing effect is just one example in a larger pattern: The evidence against racial progress tends to compare black-white gaps today to black-white gaps in the past. Here, white metrics are used as benchmarks against which to measure black progress. By contrast, the evidence in favor of progress tends to compare black metrics today against black metrics in the past. White metrics do not enter the equation. Crucially, the same data can often be made to look like either progress or regress depending on which framework is chosen. The question of black progress, therefore, is less a matter of weighing the reality of progress against the reality of regress than it is a matter of looking at the same reality through two different lenses. Through one lens, progress means reducing the size of black-white racial gaps; let’s call this the gap-lens. But through another lens, progress means improving black outcomes relative to where they were in the past; let’s call this the past-lens.

#### Black progress now --- acknowledging it sustains change!

Hughes 19 (Coleman Hughes; Colombia University graduate with a B.A. in Philosophy; 9-28-2019; "The Case for Black Optimism"; Quillete; https://quillette.com/2019/09/28/the-case-for-black-optimism/; Accessed 7-23-2022)//ror

The rationale for choosing the gap-lens is this: if not for our racist history, the racial gaps we observe today would not exist. That history includes not only two and a half centuries of chattel slavery, but also the many and varied Jim Crow era policies, from school segregation to redlining, that prevented blacks from taking advantage of the American dream. To measure the width of a racial gap, this view holds, is to measure the depth of America’s failure to redress that history. What’s more, if we fail to close statistical gaps between blacks and whites, then we would be surrendering ourselves to live in a permanently racially-stratified society, a society in which—even if everyone were doing better than their parents—whites would hold more economic power than blacks in perpetuity. Though the rationale behind it is powerful, the gap-lens, taken to its logical end, borders on the absurd. Imagine we had a button that doubled the amount of everything good for each racial group and halved the rate of everything bad—so, black wealth doubles, white wealth doubles, black incarceration is halved, white incarceration is halved, and so on. As we pressed the button repeatedly, America would increasingly approach utopia. Yet the racial gaps—that is, the ratios between black and white outcomes—would remain unchanged. Therefore, viewed through the gap-lens, we will have made no progress at all. Indeed, any amount of black progress can become invisible when viewed through the gap-lens, given sufficient white progress. That’s a problem. A framework for progress that, under certain conditions, would not recognize the difference between our current world and a quasi-utopia seems, frankly, to miss the point of the word. The gap-lens also relies on the dubious presumption that white outcomes are the best benchmark against which to measure black outcomes. One reason this presumption fails is that the median white American is a [full decade](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/30/most-common-age-among-us-racial-ethnic-groups/) older than the median black American. Thus, comparing all blacks to all whites on any outcome that varies with age—for instance*,* incarceration or wealth—is comparing apples to oranges. More importantly, when we compare black outcomes to white outcomes and blame all of the gaps on institutional racism, we treat American society as if it were a simple 8th-grade science experiment: white people are treated as the “control group”; black people are treated as the “experimental group”; and the “independent variable,” applied only to blacks, is institutional racism. On this oversimplified paradigm, we could reasonably assume that all racial outcome gaps are caused by institutional racism. But reality is more complex. Black Americans and white Americans are unique groups of people with different histories, different demographics, and different sociological characteristics. Such confounding variables make it overly simplistic to pin all [racial gaps](https://quillette.com/2018/05/14/the-racism-treadmill/) on institutional racism. Despite such flaws, the gap-lens is the default lens through which many scholars and journalists view black America today. Whether it’s wealth, incarceration, or education, the habit of framing black metrics relative to white metrics is so deeply ingrained that it seems naïve to observe that we do not view other racial groups this way. Which is to say, when we ask whether white Americans have made progress, we compare whites not against some other group but against themselves at an earlier point in time. Why, then, do we treat the analysis of black America differently? For many, the answer lies in history. It makes sense to analyze black America with a unique lens precisely because black Americans trail a unique history of oppression. There is no way to acknowledge that ugly history, in this view, without looking directly at the gaps caused by it. I understand this rationale, and have some sympathy with it. However, it ignores the downsides associated with focusing on racial gaps. There is a spectrum of possible outcomes in multi-ethnic societies with violent, segregated conflict at one end, and peaceful, integrated cooperation at the other. Somewhere in between lies a circumstance, neither disastrous nor ideal, in which members of different racial groups are encouraged to measure themselves against one another, generating racial envy and resentment. Americans in general, and black Americans in particular, currently exist in such a circumstance. Yet because it is the water in which we swim, it is difficult to recognize that such racial tensions are not the inevitable consequence of living in a racially disparate society. It is easier to see the role played by the commentariat in generating racial tensions by looking at situations in which such tensions were absent*.* For example, in his essay, “[The Politics of a Multiethnic Society](https://books.google.com/books?id=jIZ0j7wmuGUC&pg=PA334&lpg=PA334&dq=If+these+groups+had+analyzed+the+statistics,+they+might+have+found+much+to+grouse+about.+Since+the+Irish+dominated+electoral+politics,+all+other+groups+were+by+that+token+%E2%80%98deprived.%E2%80%99+Since+the+Jews+were+the+most+successful+in+terms+of+high+occupational+status,+all+the+others+were+by+that+token+%E2%80%98deprived.%E2%80%99+Yet+that+is+not+the+way+the+political+debate+went,+and+all+the+European+ethnic+groups+believed+they+had+done+well+in+America,+and+there+is+scarcely+a+one+that+bears+grievances.&source=bl&ots=1Xzml7fjUO&sig=ACfU3U0NJggY8jrTjB29V8bTKmYaGjnYTg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjgmOrJ5uXkAhWtY98KHTUiBgMQ6AEwAHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=If%20these%20groups%20had%20analyzed%20the%20statistics%2C%20they%20might%20have%20found%20much%20to%20grouse%20about.%20Since%20the%20Irish%20dominated%20electoral%20politics%2C%20all%20other%20groups%20were%20by%20that%20token%20%E2%80%98dep),” the late Harvard sociologist Nathan Glazer made the following observation about European immigrant groups in the American Northeast: If these groups had analyzed the statistics, they might have found much to grouse about. Since the Irish dominated electoral politics, all other groups were by that token “deprived.” Since the Jews were the most successful in terms of high occupational status, all the others were by that token “deprived.” Yet that is not the way the political debate went, and all the European ethnic groups believed they had done well in America, and there is scarcely a one that bears grievances. The key observation in Glazer’s analysis is not that these ethnic groups were successful (though they were), but that they believed they were successful. Implied in that observation is the idea that a group of people can be doing quite well but can nevertheless be made to believe the opposite—so long as they are habitually compared to other groups in the media. It’s a truism that a single person suffers when he measures himself by the yardstick of another, particularly when the other person had various advantages and head starts that he lacked. In a similar way, by forever measuring blacks against an improper yardstick, the gap-lens, though intended as a way of acknowledging the unique history of oppression blacks have endured, in effect punishes them twice for it. To be sure, there are circumstances in which it makes sense to define progress in terms of closing racial gaps. For instance, having political leaders who reflect the population in terms of race and ethnicity is, everything else held equal, good for the social fabric of a multi-ethnic society. To that end, I’m not arguing that we should abolish the use of the gap-lens in every case. I’m arguing that, in the great majority of cases, the past-lens yields a more useful picture of the state of black America. Which is to say, black progress can be understood independent of white progress and celebrated on its own terms. What do we gain by acknowledging progress? For one thing, ignorance of how much progress blacks have made in recent years leads many to mistakenly believe American institutions are so racist that nothing short of complete overhaul would suffice to repair them. The fact that those very same institutions have allowed for, if not ushered in, huge amounts of progress for black people in recent years suggests a more sober-minded approach. We should not burn the system down. We should reform it one increment at a time. More importantly, if we want to continue making progress, then we must understand the root causes of progress, and in order to understand its root causes, we must first acknowledge that progress has happened. In recent decades, black Americans have been progressing, sometimes rapidly, along virtually every dimension worth caring about. And, without becoming complacent, we can be cautiously optimistic that such progress will continue. A complete conversation about race and racial inequality must involve not just identifying what goes wrong, but also what goes right—for if we fail to learn from the triumphs of our own recent past, we are doomed not to repeat them.